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SHAPESHIFTERS[™]



by robert m. schroeck

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This book is designed for use with *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*, and *GURPS Compendium I. GURPS Bestiary, Third Edition* is useful but not required. The character and species concepts, the campaign setting, and the general information on can be used with *any* game system.

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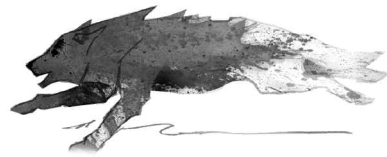
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INTRODUCTION

*Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble.*

– William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act III, Scene iv

Among the most ancient of myths is that of the shapeshifter, the skin-changer, the were-creature. And such creatures are not found only in myth and folklore; shapechangers of all descriptions appear throughout literature, from the oldest of legends to the latest science fiction. While some change at will from form to form, others are less lucky, often living their lives at the mercy of their supposed gift.

This book is the result of several years of thought, debate, and design centering on the were-creature creation rules found in *GURPS Bestiary, Second Edition*. While those earlier rules worked, many players felt that they were needlessly complicated. This edition is an effort to streamline and simplify the process, while offering new options.

Also, the original *GURPS Bestiary* rules leaned heavily toward animal-form characters built for fantasy games. While this was certainly appropriate, shapeshifters are far from specific to that genre, as any fan of *X-Files*, *X-Men*, or Japanese popular culture can tell you. A deliberate effort was made with this book to show more than just the *expected* shifters.

Grab your character sheets and your calculators – it's time to change.

About the Author

Robert M. Schroeck got into the shapeshifter business quite by accident, through superhero roleplaying. He has handled shapeshifting beasties in three other *GURPS* books: *GURPS Supers Adventures*, *GURPS Bestiary, Second Edition*, and *GURPS Werewolf: The Apocalypse*. His other past efforts in *GURPS* include *GURPS International Super Teams*, *GURPS Camelot*, *GURPS Robin Hood*, *GURPS IST Kingston*, *GURPS Y2K*, and *GURPS Mage: The Ascension*. He has contributed to and edited several *In Nomine* books. Bob is also known for the infamous multigenre *GURPS* tournaments he has created or co-created for various game conventions, including the first official *GURPS* World Multigenre Championship at Dexcon 6.

A gamer since the late 1970s, Bob collects anime, books, outdated software, and dust. He and his wife Peggy (herself a sometime *GURPS* writer, although she'll deny it if asked) live in Somerset, NJ.



About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. For a current catalog, send us a legal-sized or 9"x12" SASE – please use two stamps! – or just visit www.warehouse23.com.

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

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Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, point your web browser to www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-1/.

The *GURPS Shapeshifters* web page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/shapeshifters/.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. Other references are A to *GURPS Aliens*, BE to *GURPS Bestiary, Third Edition*, BIO to *GURPS Bio-Tech*, CA to *GURPS Camelot*, G to *GURPS Grimoire*, H to *GURPS Horror*, IN to *GURPS In Nomine*, J to *GURPS Japan*, M to *GURPS Magic*, MA to *GURPS Martial Arts*, MI to *GURPS Magic Items 1*, RO to *GURPS Robots*, RU to *GURPS Russia*, SPI to *GURPS Spirits*, STM to *GURPS Steampunk*, SU to *GURPS Supers*, UN to *GURPS Undead*, VE to *GURPS Vehicles*, and VO to *GURPS Voodoo*. The abbreviation for *this* book is SH. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORY AND MYTHOLOGY OF THE SHAPESHIFTER

Nothing in the entire universe ever perishes, believe me, but things vary, and adopt a new form. The phrase "being born" is used for beginning to be something different from what one was before, while "dying" means ceasing to be the same. Though this thing may pass into that, and that into this, yet the sum of things remains unchanged.

*– Ovid, **Metamorphoses***



It is impossible to point at any one civilization or myth and say, “*There!* That’s where we get shapeshifters from!” The myth of the shapechanger or shapestealer is one of the oldest in human history. There is almost *no* culture on the face

of the Earth that does not have a shapeshifter myth; mankind has ever been fascinated and/or repulsed by the difference between humans and beasts – and the idea that this difference can be transcended.

PREHISTORIC SHAPESHIFTERS

The origin of the shapeshifter in myth and legend traces back to the very beginning of humanity itself. Deep below the Pyrenees, there is a cave in which can be found a Paleolithic wall painting known as the “Sorcerer of Trois Frères.” It depicts a figure of mixed animal and human traits. While he stands upright, his posture threatens to turn into the four-footed gait of the bear, whose paws he possesses. Proudly antlered, with a wolf’s tail and other animal features, he stands on the threshold between human and not-human, a figure of shamanic power acquired by *becoming* the animals who are the source of that power.

Shamans and Hunters

The assumption of an intimate connection between man and beast is perhaps the primary characteristic of primitive thought. It manifests most commonly in the rituals of the hunt and of shamanism, as a kind of sympathetic magic.

Primitive hunters sought to assume the qualities of predators whose prowess they envied. To this end they would don the skins of such animals with the intent of gaining their

“virtues” and becoming better hunters. Cave paintings dating back to 6000 B.C. and earlier show hunters wearing the pelts of leopards and other predatory beasts as they make their kills. If studies of surviving primitive peoples are any indication, a conceit or actual belief that (under the right conditions) they were able to take the actual forms of their “totems” soon followed.

The shaman was the mediator between men and both animals and spirits. The spirits of animals exploited or killed were of concern to early man; the shaman’s duties included not only placating these spirits after a kill, but getting their permission and cooperation beforehand. Because these spirits dwelt in the land of the dead, the shaman’s authority stemmed from his ability to control his own spirit sufficiently to enter the land of the dead as an ersatz animal, borrowing an animal’s spiritual power to accomplish his goals.

Here are the ultimate ancestors of the shapeshifter: the hunters who sought to take on a predator’s skills, and the shaman who masqueraded as the spirit of an animal. Almost every shapechanger that has since appeared in any culture owes something to these two fundamental sources.

CLASSICAL SHAPESHIFTERS

By the start of recorded history, most of humanity had replaced shamanism with more organized religions, each with its own body of folklore and myth. Within this lore, faint memories of the older ways of the hunter and shaman remained; mutating and changing as cultures evolved, they became the basis for new stories and added color to old ones. At the same time, certain cults preserved aspects of the ancient ways more accurately. A few such even survived into modern times.

Egypt and Mesopotamia

The earliest literary traces of the shapeshifter are found in Mesopotamia and date from approximately 2000 B.C. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* includes a short passage in which the goddess Ishtar turns a shepherd into a wolf. This is the first known trace of the creature that millennia later would become the archetypal shapeshifter: the werewolf.

At the same time, the Egyptians performed rituals that drew upon ancient shamanistic traditions. These rituals expanded the Egyptian fascination with cats to include some distinctly were-like beliefs. In a process called “the passage through the skin,” for example, a panther tail was worn about the waist or knotted about the neck with the intent of drawing on the power of the animal to help protect and strengthen the

wearer – a “skin-changing” ritual that owed much to more primitive rites.

Europe

It was the ancient Greeks, though, who took their half-forgotten memories of these prehistoric traditions, filtered and revised them, and formed from them a multitude of theriomorphs. From the myth of Lycaeon (itself probably a distorted memory of a wolf-brotherhood of hunters), through the isle of Circe in Homer’s *Odyssey* and Euanthes’ story of Antaeus (cited by Pliny), to the Roman poet Ovid’s definitive *Metamorphoses*, classical myth and literature are filled with stories of men changed to animals, none more frequently than the wolf.

The vast majority of the Grecian transformations were *involuntary* – they happened either as punishment or at the whim of some divine agency. It is not until the Roman poet Virgil’s eighth *Eclogue*, written approximately 30 B.C., that the voluntary shapeshifter reappears from the mists of memory. In that tale, the warlock Moeris can turn himself into a wolf at will, among all his necromantic and other powers. While his sympathetic and indeed benevolent characterization is a complex precursor of the Baltic lands’ werewolf traditions, he also presaged other, less morally complicated images.

Were-creatures weren't the only shapeshifters in Greek myth. The Olympians were frequently shown to have morphing talents, and none more so than the sea-god Proteus. Son of Poseidon and known also for his gift of prophecy, Proteus defined the polymorphic shapeshifter to the point that his name is synonymous with the ability to change one's form without limit. The *Odyssey* describes his taking the shapes of animals, of trees, and even of running water. Ovid offhandedly mentions that he could also become a rock or a flame. The Latin mythography *Fabulae* by Hyginus mentions that it was necessary to bind him with a chain so that he could be recognized in all his myriad forms. Although there was apparently no limit to what he could become, bears, boars, snakes, and lions were among his favored shapes, and Nonnos' epic *Dionysiaca* seems to hint that he might have had a hand in the origins of the selkies (pp. 108-112).

Not all classical shifters were relegated to tales of the gods; some were part of day-to-day life. Around 500 B.C. Herodotus recorded that the Scythians believed that the Neuri, a neighboring tribe, were werewolves, forced to spend part of their lives as animals. And a hundred years later, according to the second-century writer Pausanias, an Arcadian boxer named Damarchus who had spent nine years as a wolf won an Olympic victory.

St. Patrick and His Werewolves

According to *Kongs Skuggsjo* (also known as *Speculum Regale*), a Norse account from 1250, Patricius (better known as Saint Patrick) was subjected to considerable harassment during the mission he undertook to then-pagan Ireland. The text says that "one great race" (most likely one of the larger Celtic tribes) was quite hostile to him, even trying to injure or kill him. He met with the men of this "race" in a great assembly, but when he spoke they heckled him by howling like wolves. Then, as the account says:

. . . he became very wrath, and prayed God that he might avenge it on them by some judgment, that their descendants might forever remember their disobedience. And great punishment and fit and very wonderful has since befallen their descendants; for it is said that all men who come from that race are always wolves at a certain time, and run into the woods and take food like wolves; and they are worse in this that they have human reason, for all their cunning, and such desire and greed for men as for other creatures. And it is said that some become so every seventh year, and are men during the interval. And some have it so long that they have seven years at once, and are never so afterwards.

Further west, the Druids' mystique included a reputation for taking animal forms. Celtic lore also included the *fáelad*, families who numbered lycanthropy among their legacies. The Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogion* tells how the magician Gwydion turned Blodeuwedd into an owl.

To the north, the shamanistic traditions were re-emerging in the sources of the Old Norse myths. In the *Völsunga Saga*, Sigmundr and his son Sinfjolti steal the wolf-skins which belong to two "spell-bound skin-changers" to change into wolves themselves so that they can go berserking in the woods. And outside of the sagas, the warriors known as *ulfhethnar* and *beserkir* (singular *berserkr*; see p. 49), like their prehistoric forebears, wore the skins of wolves and bears, respectively, to draw to themselves the animal's prowess in battle.

Elsewhere

In the Americas, shifters took other forms, familiar to the native peoples. The Yuki, Tarahumara, and Seris Indians worried in the dark of night about the *nahuales*, warlocks given to taking the form of black-furred coyotes. Their cave drawings clearly depict the creatures that received their attention. The *nahual* was both the magician and the magic, the primitive spirit possessed by each person; if a man could come to know it, they believed, he could practice magic and cure the sick – once again, a holdover of shamanistic beliefs.

Their cousins to the south, the Aztecs, didn't fear the *nahuales* – they venerated them. The empire protected sorcerers as sacred to Tezcatlipoca, the god of war and sacrifice.

THE MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE SHAPECHANGER

As Europe slowly recovered from the fall of the Roman Empire, the classical shapeshifter eventually reconverged with older traditions native to the once-conquered territories. In parallel with the growth of new cultures in those lands, new myths formed, often far different from those that spawned them.

Scandinavia spawned the werebear, who was usually a heroic figure. Bothvar Biarki, one of the first werebears, appears in *Hrólfs saga Kraka*. This tradition was, along with much else, shared with Germanic mythology. (Later, werebears would migrate into modern fantasy gaming via the works of J. R. R. Tolkien.) Scandinavian folklore also had its share of evil shifters; magpies, for example, were believed to be sorcerers flying to unholy gatherings.

Legends grew in Scotland of humans who could change into seals, and seals who could change into humans – *selchies* or *selkies*. Their origin was varied: most commonly, the selkies were seen as a separate race, related to but separate from mankind, but ordinary humans could become selkies as well, either because of a curse or by working magic upon themselves. In the most extreme tales, they were seen as angels fallen from grace, but not so far as to become demons.

In France was born the man-wolf. Unlike most other European weres, the creatures that would be called *loup-garou* were diabolical, driven by cannibalistic urges and the desire to do harm to innocent folk. (See box, p. 8.) The Inquisition seized upon the loup-garou, with its irredeemably evil nature and sorcerous roots, as the orthodox definition of the werewolf of medieval Catholic belief. Along with witches – with which they were usually conflated – werewolves were at the top of the Church’s list of active works of the Devil on Earth. So firmly was this anchored in the medieval Catholic mindset that doubting or denying the existence of werewolves was considered heresy and, in some areas, grounds for an Inquisitorial visit. As a result of its subsequent distribution throughout Europe, the French cannibal werewolf became the dominant shifter stereotype in Western culture (and from

there through most of the world). By the 1400s, both the Church and the law in Europe – specifically, in medieval France – had conflated the state of being a werewolf with a variety of mental disorders that often drove their victims to cannibalism.

The definitive instance of this practice is the so-called “Werewolf of Chalons,” who was discovered in circumstances so bloody and grotesque that the Paris court that convicted him on December 14, 1598, suppressed almost all documents bearing on the case. The accusation of lycanthropy leveled upon him was based entirely on the evidence of his murders. In this and other trials, the evidence of cannibalism alone was in almost every case sufficient ground to accuse and convict the individual of lycanthropy as well, even if no “witness” to his transformation or depredations in animal form could be found or manufactured. The punishment for both crimes was always the same – death by one unpleasant means or another.

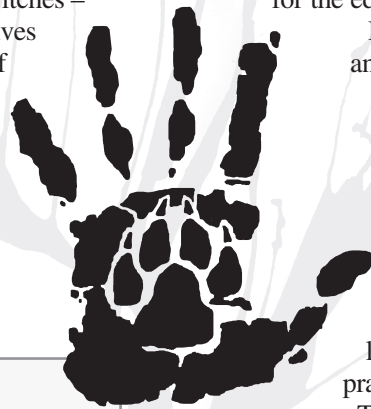
This is something to keep in mind, especially in a campaign set in medieval Europe. A particularly evil or vicious Enemy may well decide to rid himself of one or more pests (read “adventurers”) by arranging for them to appear to be cannibals. Escaping such a charge, especially with properly bribed witnesses to back it up, would be all but impossible.

The question of *why* medieval France had so many cannibals (or werewolves, depending on the frame of reference) that such a precedent and protocol for dealing with them had developed is left up to the reader. (And to the GM, to decide for the edification – or detriment – of his players.)

In contrast, the werewolves of the Baltic and Russian (and some near-Mediterranean) areas were far more benevolent, and occasionally even comical. Typical of these were the Benandanti (see pp. 93-98) and similar descendants of ancient fertility cults. These self-proclaimed werewolves saw themselves taking animal form “in the service of God.” Other, more folkloric, werewolves prowled villages in search of beer and liquor or played pranks on the unwary.

The classic bipedal “wolf-man,” far from being an invention of low-budget cinema, dates from this period and is an element of both French and Baltic medieval were lore. Naturally, the details differed. The Baltic werewolf was an ordinary wolf that walked on its hind legs, while the Gallic variety was closer to the cinematic half-man.

At the same time, other legends were appearing. In Germany there arose the tale of the *doppelgänger*, the evil twin whose appearance foretold evil to come. And the Alpine cultures had their morphing goblins.



Historical Were: Ann of Meremoisa

According to “Estonia I: Werewolves and Poisoners,” by Maia Madar (a chapter in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen’s *Early Modern European Witchcraft*), in a 1623 trial in Estonia the defendant, known only as “Ann,” testified to a four-year career as a werewolf, although the extent of her depredations was limited to one horse and several small animals. A wolfskin, which she kept hidden under a stone in a field, was required for her change.

Wolf vs. Werewolf

Before the 20th century and cinema, European folklore made it clear that there were visible differences between a werewolf and a “real” wolf. One of the oldest, most common – and most noticeable – of these was the surprising claim that the werewolf has no tail, although other more obscure or arcane “marks” have been cited.

There is a straightforward reason for this, unassociated with any supernatural cause. Real wolves – although frightening predators in their own right – are not normally horrific enough to be the traditional “monster” required by both folklore and medieval religious dogma. (For an exception, though, see *Rabies*, p. 13.) It became necessary to distinguish between the natural (if despised) predator and the hell-born creature that shared its general appearance.

This wasn’t a static, one-time change; as the werewolf became increasingly demonized by the Church and feared by the common people, it grew increasingly distant from the animal on which it was based. Eventually, the image of the humanoid man-wolf (later popularized by horror movies) appeared across Europe as the ultimate alternative to the natural wolf’s appearance.

Game Use

Incorporating this traditional feature can add considerably to the flavor of a campaign set in or strongly influenced by medieval European were mythology. When the campaign employs several different shifter types (as is the case in *Yrth*), the GM may choose the same trait for all of them or may provide separate telltales for each individual variety. The more flag traits there are, the more “false positives” may occur, and woe to any poor innocent stranger who is found in the vicinity of an ordinary animal with a deformity.

GMs who are considering this option in their games should see the Unnatural Feature disadvantage on p. C185.

Asia and the Pacific

During this period, the greater part of Japanese (and to a lesser degree Chinese) shapechanger folklore evolved, with the concept of the *hengeyokai* – animals who could become human (see p. 40). The Japanese turned the usual arrangement on its head, with human-to-animal shifters (inimical or otherwise) almost unknown while the far less malevolent *kitsune* and *tanuki* predominated in the tales told from generation to generation. While not unknown in the rest of the world, this became the primary image of Asian shapeshifters.

At the same time, more sinister weres appeared in the folklore of mainland Asia, India, and the Pacific basin. In India as in parts of Europe, were-creatures were believed to be physical forms housing the spirits of evil persons being punished after death. It would seem that as a post-mortem punishment this was less than effective, for the creatures so spawned were no less evil than they had been in life, and far more destructive.

Other shifters, primarily werewolves, were less inimical. Malaysian legend has sympathetic werewolves. And Buddhist lore tells the story of Milarepa, Tibet’s poet-saint, stranded for six months in the Great Cave of Conquering Demons, and how he transformed into a snow leopard in order to survive.

Polynesian cultures, closely tied to the sea, generated legends of ocean-going weres. Possibly the most frightening of all were-creatures comes from their stories; the wereshark was a tireless, rapacious killer possessing no redeeming qualities.

(In stark contrast to this abundance, shapeshifting creatures do not appear at all in the mythology of the aboriginal peoples of Australia.)

Africa

While it is likely that the wide variety of African beliefs actually stabilized far earlier, it is at this point in history that Europeans were first exposed to them. As in Asia, the majority of African weres were felines, although owls and even alligators had their were counterparts. But unlike many other regions, here the ancient shamanistic beliefs persisted, though evolving as well. Shapeshifting, according to typical African beliefs, was a divine gift from a spirit or a god, provided for the purpose of socially endorsed revenge. African weres did not rampage like their Gallic cousins. Instead, they attacked only those who had harmed them in their human forms. Like the Benandanti and similar groups in the Americas, bands of men who shared a transformation (or believed they did) would gather for military or ritual purposes. The best known of these were the various groups known collectively as the “leopard societies,” which survived until the early 20th century.

Still, not all African shifters were benign or feline. Folklore warned of sorcerers who took the shape of owls to work mischief in the night. And werejackals – perhaps as part of the eternal cat-dog dichotomy – were as common in legend as werelions and wereleopards.

The Americas

At this same time, the Aztecs and the other pre-Columbian civilizations of the Americas began forming various animal warrior cults. Like many others, these bands – roughly equivalent in function and status to Europe’s various orders of knighthood – sought to achieve prowess in battle by emulating the predators they admired; it is not surprising that were-myths sprang up around them.

The best known of these cults were centered on jaguars – especially melanistic jaguars with solid black fur rather than spots. Its importance was surprisingly universal. The Arawak

The Werewolf of Anspach

During 1685, a large, vicious wolf terrorized the town of Anspach (now Ansbach) in Bavaria. It was responsible for a significant death toll, including many women and children and a large number of domestic animals. For reasons not entirely clear, the town came to the conclusion that the wolf was a werewolf. And not just any werewolf, but the reincarnation of Anspach’s thoroughly detested and recently deceased burgomeister (mayor).

Local hunters eventually cornered and killed the wolf, which inconveniently did not turn back into the late mayor. To make up for this failure, the townsmen dressed the animal’s carcass as the burgomeister, going so far as to wrap it in a flesh-colored suit and put a mask and beard on it so that it might better resemble the late and unlamented mayor.

The carcass, thus costumed, was hung on a gibbet in Anspach for all to see. Later, it was put on permanent display in the town museum as proof of the existence of werewolves.

Historical Were: Susanna Martin, the Werecat of Salem

"No, my thoughts are my own when they are in, but when they are out, they are another's."

– Susanna Martin

Susanna Martin was tried as a witch at Salem, Massachusetts on June 29, 1692, and according to the testimony of one Robert Downer (as found in Part III of Cotton Mather's book *The Wonders of the Invisible World*), she had gone about transformed into a cat:

VI. Robert Downer testified, That this Prisoner being some years ago prosecuted at Court for a Witch, he then said unto her, He believed she was a Witch. Whereat she being dissatisfied, said, That some Shee-Devil would Shortly fetch him away! Which words were heard by others, as well as himself. The Night following, as he lay in his Bed, there came in at the Window the likeness of a Cat, which Flew upon him, took fast hold of his Throat, lay on him a considerable while, and almost killed him. At length he remembered what Susanna Martin had threatened the Day before; and with much striving he cried out, "Avoid, thou Shee-Devil! In the Name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Avoid!" Whereupon it left him, leap'd on the Floor, and Flew out at the Window.

And there also came in several Testimonies, that before ever Downer spoke a word of this Accident, Susanna Martin and her Family had related, How this Downer had been Handled!

believed that the ultimate shape change was transformation into a man-jaguar. The Olmecs built monuments to it. And both the Aztecs and Mayans were obsessed with the power inherent in becoming half-human, half-jaguar. The jaguar was not alone in this regard; warrior orders existed for eagles and even coyotes (see pp. 113-117).

While the jaguar warriors and other predator cults died out with the coming of Europeans – slaughtered in battle or suppressed by the Church – the *nahual* survived. Sheltered in folk belief, it remains active in South and Central American folklore to this day.

Further north, Native American myth was replete with both werewolves and werecoyotes; called "mai-coh" by the Navajo (the word for "wolf," which literally means "witch"), these were typical skinchangers, who by dint of study and an enchanted pelt or hide could turn into wolves, owls, or other predators. As with their European counterparts, they were closely associated with sorcery and cannibalism. On the other hand, werebears were common in the myths of the Pacific Northwest and in general were viewed as benevolent and even heroic figures.

Above and beyond these simple weres, North American myth had something else entirely: beings that the Navajo called *yee naaldlooshii* and the Mohawks called *limikkin*, the "skinwalkers." The nature of the skinwalkers

is somewhat confused; some tales call them sorcerers in the same vein as the mai-coh, while others describe them as beings of an order completely different from humanity. Either way, unlike the shamans who worked "within the system" with nature to assume animal identities for ritual purposes, the skinwalkers ignored the natural order to take any shape they pleased, even an inanimate one. Tales are told, for example, of skinwalkers masquerading as tents in order to steal the goods placed within them by the unwary.

Colonial America

Toward the end of this period, Europeans settled in the Americas and brought their shapeshifter beliefs with them. As might be expected, these beliefs mutated and adapted to the new land. Descended primarily from the Inquisitorial "standard," they frequently converged with and drew from Indian myths, often mutating into something completely new and different. For example, anecdotal evidence suggests that the wererat, rather than being a native of the dank sewers of Europe, may have been born in the woods of Pennsylvania.



THE MODERN ERA

The Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and the Atomic Age did surprisingly little to dismiss shapechangers from the popular imagination. Eventually the Church's obsession with werewolves faded away, and the advent of scientific thought did quite a bit to dismiss the belief in shapechangers, but the myths and legends survive even today.

With the invention of motion pictures, that survival was assured. Ransacking both the literary products of the Romantic movement and collections of folklore for ideas, the early screenwriters eventually rediscovered the werewolf. The specific image they seized upon was a direct descendant of the Gallic cannibal, and it is this particularly savage version that has come to dominate the imagination of the Western world for the past century, and as American media creep into other cultures, it works its way into them, as well. For example, Japanese folklore never had a wolf-to-man shapeshifter until Hollywood reached them, but now the *ookami-otoko* (literally the "wolf-man") is as widely known as the *kitsune* and *tanuki*, or more so.

Spirituality and Sorcery

But the presence of the were in modern cultures extends much farther than simple images of entertainment. The original spiritual aspect of shapeshifting still survives. In addition to native cultures in the Americas and elsewhere who held onto their traditional beliefs in the face of Church pressures, thousands of neopagans follow shamanistic paths that often include symbolic and not-so-symbolic assumption of animal traits and imagery as part of their rituals. Overlapping slightly with the latter are the growing communities of "furries" and theriomorphs found on the Internet – people who believe that they possess an internal animal nature that they need to express in a positive way.

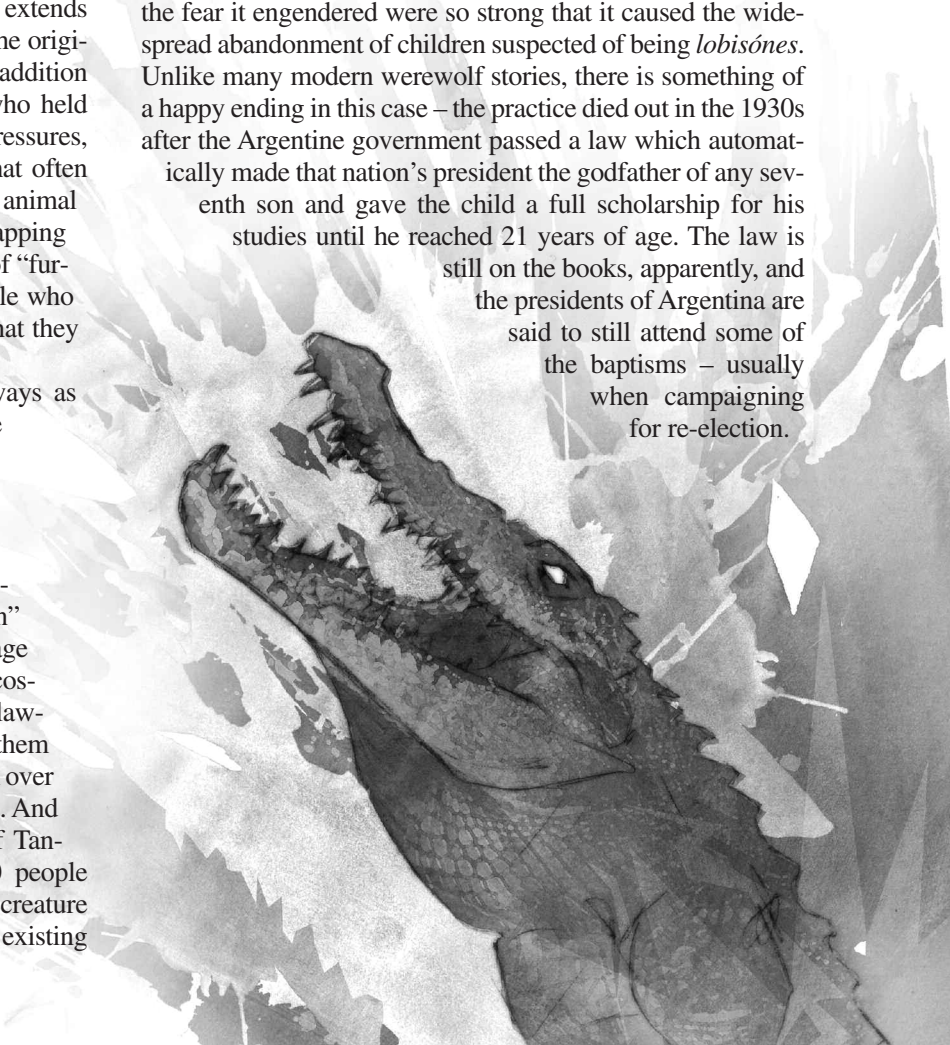
Sadly, modern belief in lycanthropy is not always as benevolent as these examples. In the early part of the 20th century, belief in witches who could take animal form was still widespread and strong in Central Africa. Several groups took advantage of these beliefs (or perhaps sincerely believed themselves that they were using such magic) to act against their enemies. In the 1930s, a secret society of "leopard men" from the Anyoto tribe went on a murderous rampage across the Belgian Congo. They dressed in bark costumes painted with a leopard-skin pattern and used claw-shaped knives to kill their enemies after stalking them through the jungle. Another band of leopard men took over a village near Lagos, Nigeria, in 1946 for a short time. And in 1946, British newspapers reported on a group of Tanganyikan "lion men" who managed to murder 50 people before being apprehended. While not "true" were-creature incidents, events such as these certainly reinforced existing beliefs and might even engender new myths.

Another story to come out of the Congo in the 1930s claimed that an English physician had managed to spy upon a secret tribal ceremony which culminated in the transformation of a *nyanga* (a "witch-doctor") and a woman into jackals. The complex, involved ritual involved both potions and a jackal skin (worn by the *nyanga*), and the witness claimed he actually saw the transformation at its end.

Werewolf panics and trials continue to this day. In one case in the late 1960s, a witch doctor in an emerging African nation agreed to turn himself into a crocodile in order to kill a client's mother-in-law. He was arrested before the killing could take place, tried, and found guilty – not only of conspiracy to commit murder, but also of "conspiracy to commit sorcery, and illegal metamorphosis into a crocodile leading to the death of a citizen." And in October 2000, a vigilante mob in Lagos, Nigeria, captured and turned over to police a man whom they accused of turning two children into dogs.

Less extreme, but just as disturbing on some levels, was the effect that the belief in werewolves had in Argentina. There, the traditional werewolf was the *lobisón*, a bloodthirsty creature born the seventh son of a human couple (some accounts say the seventh son of a seventh son). The belief and the fear it engendered were so strong that it caused the widespread abandonment of children suspected of being *lobisónes*. Unlike many modern werewolf stories, there is something of a happy ending in this case – the practice died out in the 1930s after the Argentine government passed a law which automatically made that nation's president the godfather of any seventh son and gave the child a full scholarship for his studies until he reached 21 years of age. The law is still on the books, apparently, and the presidents of Argentina are said to still attend some of the baptisms – usually when campaigning for re-election.

still on the books, apparently, and the presidents of Argentina are said to still attend some of the baptisms – usually when campaigning for re-election.



Popular Media

Despite the continuing presence and even growth of genuine shapechanger folklore in the current era, it has been popular culture that has truly ensured the continuing presence of weres and morphs in the modern imagination. From the earliest Hollywood horror films featuring werewolves to the latest anime imports from Japan, the endless recapitulation of the world's shapeshifter mythology through generations of fertile minds not only has preserved that mythology, but has forced it through a high-speed evolution. Under the relentless pressure of the entertainment industry's need for new stories and new gimmicks, the old myths (predominantly European, although this is beginning to change) not only have survived, but have become the seeds for an explosion of new varieties of shapeshifter.

It would be a mistake, though, to think that shapeshifters born of the entertainment media are any less "authentic" than their mythic precursors. The combination and recombination of features has gone on for centuries as bards, loremasters, and storytellers of all kinds recounted and reshaped the tales they were telling. All that has changed in the modern era is the rate of change and the rate at which the changed images spread to the audience.

Fiction and Film

The earliest appearance of a shapeshifter in English literature is Marie de France's *Bisclavret*, a 12th-century Breton poem about a knight of King Arthur's court who suffered from a lycanthropic curse, and how that curse was exploited by his unfaithful wife. Despite this auspicious beginning, weres made only occasional literary appearances over the next 600 years, and morphs almost none at all. One of the best known of these appearances, though, is John Webster's 1614 play *The Duchess of Malfi*, in which lycanthropy is as much a malady of a melancholic spirit as a physical transformation.

It really wasn't until the dawn of the Industrial Revolution that weres began to enter popular culture en masse. This began slowly, with George Reynolds' 1847 "Penny Dreadful" novel, *Wagner the Wehr-Wolf*. Its titular shapechanger would have been a familiar figure to the Inquisition: a German peasant who bargained with the Devil for eternal life, at the cost of changing into a wolf once every seven years.

Despite the popularity of horror stories in the 19th century, werewolves were limited to infrequent appearances in print until 1913. In that year, with the release of *The Werewolf*, motion pictures became the primary source of werewolf lore in Western culture. This Canadian film featured a real wolf as part of a then-state-of-the-art transformation scene. Several subsequent films retained the traditional four-legged form, but with the release of *The Werewolf of London* in 1935, the humanoid wolf-man came to the fore. Whether it explicitly drew upon the medieval wolf-man traditions is unclear, but thanks to the influence of the Universal Studios monster-films franchise, it remained virtually the sole pop-culture image of the werewolf until 1979's *An American Werewolf in London* brought back four-legged shifters.

Day of the Dolphin

Despite modern "enlightenment" and science, the social and spiritual forces that drove the evolution of the original were myths are still at work, evidenced by the continuing life of a body of were myth from South America. It centers on the *botos*, the pink dolphins of the Amazon. These are a freshwater variety with startling pink skin and flippers that end in five stubby fingers. Like selkies, they leave their watery home to dance with and seduce humans, only in a distinctly Brazilian style. Uncontaminated by European fears of cannibalism and devil worship, the *botos* are relaxed, fun-loving, and musical and are looked upon with fondness by Brazilians and Peruvians, even though the humans who interact with them rarely come out well in the end.

The myths surrounding the *botos* and their cousins (tales of werepigs, werehorses, weresnakes, werejaguars, and werewolves are all elements in modern Amazonian folklore) are vibrantly alive and dynamic – proving that the were-creature is far from dead, no matter how much science and rationality might besiege the human imagination to render it otherwise.



The 1985 film *Ladyhawke* brought a romanticized treatment of lycanthropy to the screen with its portrayal of a pair of lovers cursed to change from human to animal on opposite cycles.

Comic Books

During the 1950s, horror-themed comic books picked up the image of the wolf-man from the movies. From there, the concept of shapeshifters spread into the superhero titles, mutating, expanding, and occasionally cross-pollinating with other concepts assimilated by the ever-growing genre. Classic characters such as the Hulk were unabashedly patterned on these new “traditions” and their close cousins, including Stevenson’s “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.”

In another direction, the horror literature of the early 20th century influenced science fiction, itself then in its infancy. Descendants of the shapeless, shapechanging, and shapestealing creations of Derleth, Howard, Lovecraft, and their ilk, as well as the more traditional weres, showed up in the pulp SF

magazines (and later in films). These, too, jumped the gap into the superhero genre, initially via SF comic books, leading to heroes such as the morphing Martian Manhunter.

In the meantime, modern horror and thriller novels involving shifters began abandoning the devices of Hollywood for a return to their mythological roots. The half-human wolf-man became dated and even camp.

Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, we have come full circle. The predominant form of the werewolf in films and literature is the four-legged beast. The humanoid wolf-man is derided as cheap and tacky by people who have never heard of his ancestors in European myth. Lycanthropes abound in comic books. And new shapeshifting creatures arise in the popular imagination, without the help of Hollywood and TV.

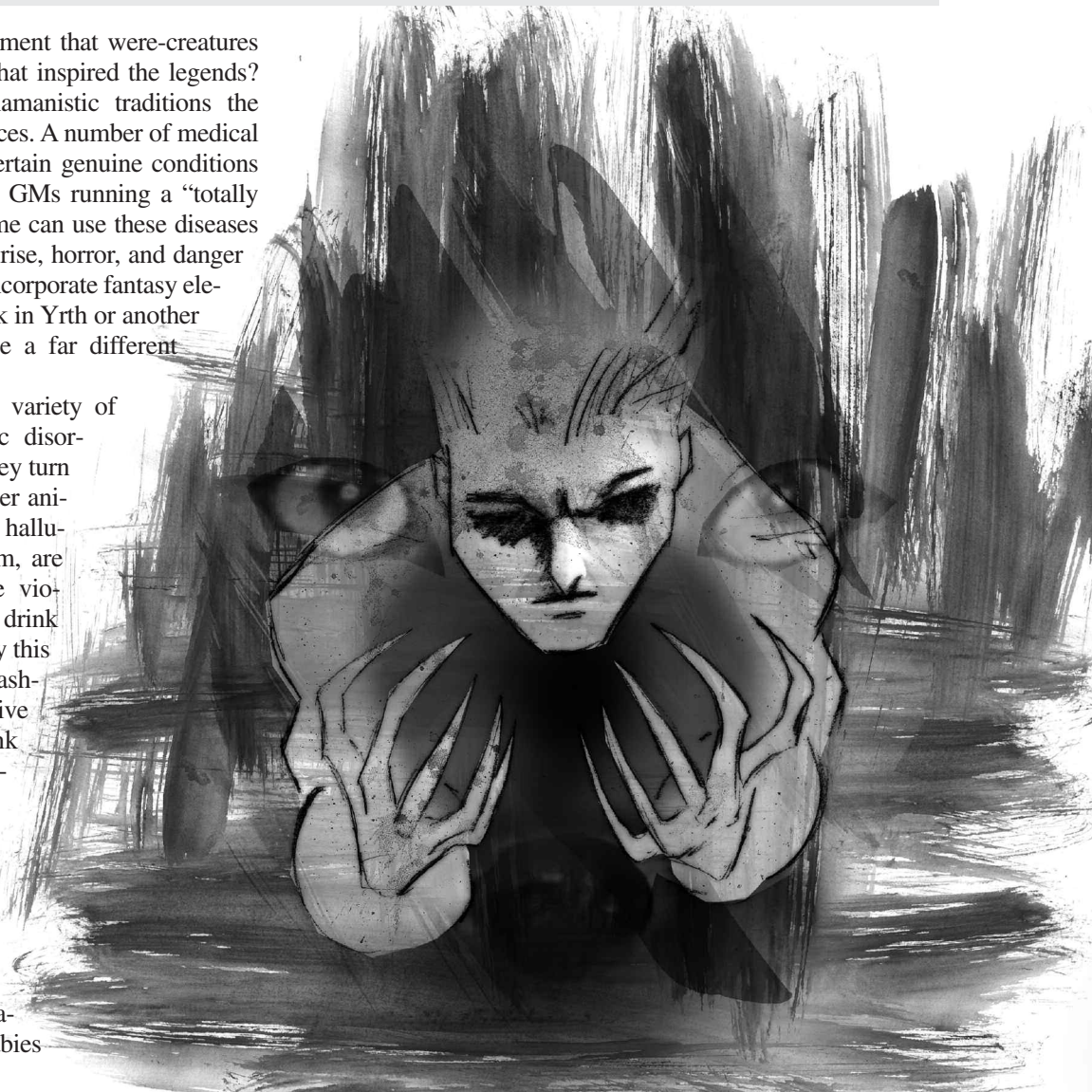
The shapeshifter is eternal. By his very nature he can never be pinned down and fit into a standard mold, not for long. The day he can will probably be the day the human imagination dies.

“REAL” LYCANTHROPY

Assuming for the sake of argument that were-creatures do not exist in the “real world,” what inspired the legends? Setting aside half-remembered shamanistic traditions the world over, there may be other sources. A number of medical practitioners have suggested that certain genuine conditions may have contributed to the myth. GMs running a “totally realistic” or no-magic medieval game can use these diseases to add an unexpected flavor of surprise, horror, and danger to the campaign without having to incorporate fantasy elements. Or perhaps a werewolf attack in Yrth or another fantasy setting may turn out to be a far different prospect.

Dementia. There is a specific variety of mental illness called “lycanthropic disorder,” whose sufferers believe that they turn into wolves (or, less frequently, other animals). They experience full sensory hallucinations of changing physical form, are given to outbursts of inexplicable violence, and feel insatiable cravings to drink blood. GMs and players can quantify this condition as a combination of Flashbacks, Delusions, and the Compulsive Behaviors of Violence and Drink Blood. Sadism is sometimes appropriate. Such a character never has any form of Pacifism, Empathy, or similar traits.

Rabies. Of the options presented here, rabies is probably the best candidate for a “realistic” encounter with an apparent were-creature. There is a historic correlation in medieval Europe between rabies



epidemics in both humans and animals and concurrent werewolf trials. According to reliable contemporary accounts, rabid wolves were known to travel long distances, besiege villages, and fearlessly attack all humans in their path. They showed no fear and charged relentlessly, decimating settlements and terrorizing peasant and noble alike with the hair-raising sounds they made with their disease-paralyzed larynxes.

Similarly, there is a correlation in behavior between human rabies sufferers and the “traditional” werewolf: victims of rabies rage deliriously, howl, and go into frenzies, attacking nearby persons and frequently biting them. And, the better for inserting horror into an otherwise “mundane” setting, rabies is just as contagious as any infectious were curse – and more destructive of its victim.

In game terms, a person bitten or scratched by a rabid animal contracts the disease unless he makes a HT-5 roll. Incubation time is HT/5 months. The first perceptible symptoms after incubation are a fever and a general sense of not feeling well. After two or three days, the victim becomes irrational as his brain cells begin to die (-3 to IQ, Bestial, Berserk, Compulsive Behavior: Bite People, Paranoia, and the GM’s choice of other mental disadvantages, including eliminating Pacifism and other “good” disadvantages). He also suffers from violent mouth and throat spasms. Although victims are also intensely thirsty, the spasms worsen if the victim tries to drink water. At this point, death occurs within the next few days – there is no HT roll to recover, and victims lose 1d-1 HT (minimum 1) per day once the spasms start.

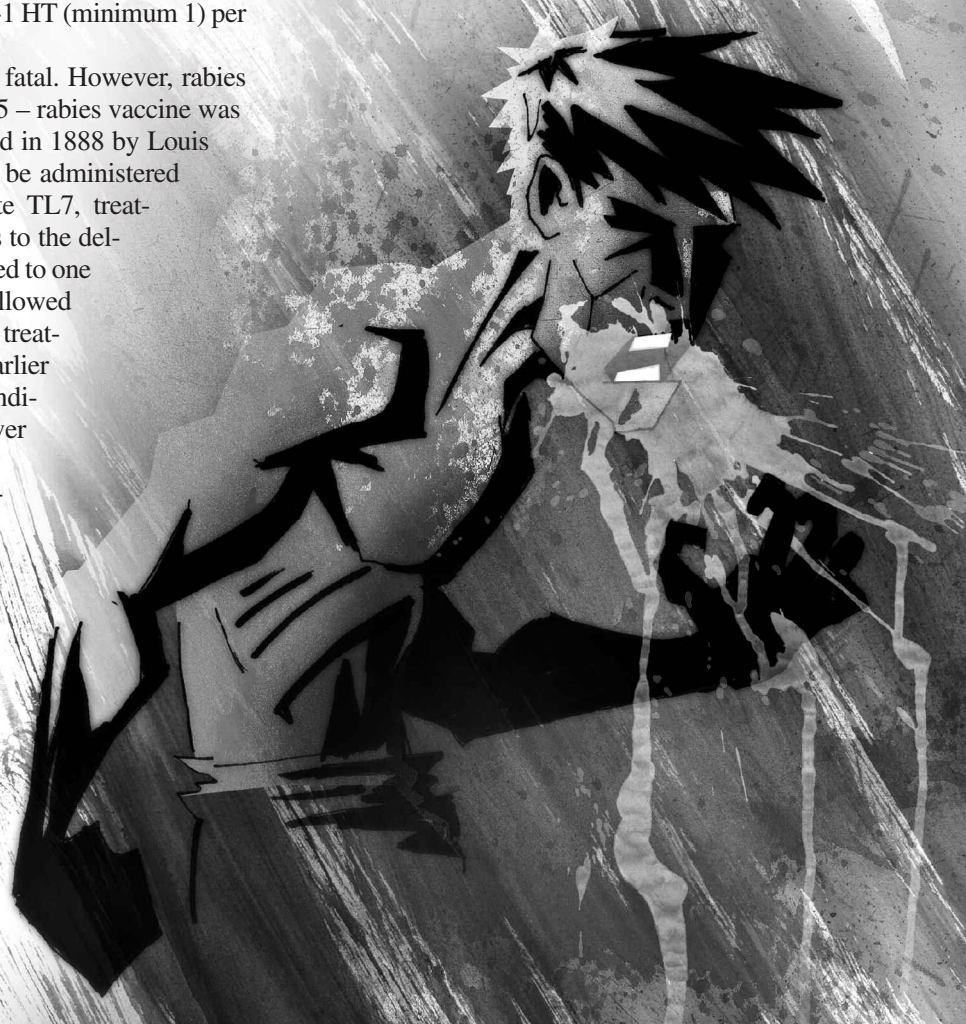
Untreated, rabies is almost 100% fatal. However, rabies treatments are available starting in TL5 – rabies vaccine was one of the earliest developed, first used in 1888 by Louis Pasteur. Unlike many vaccines, it can be administered effectively *after* infection. Before late TL7, treatment was a series of 8 to 20 injections to the deltoid muscle; after 1980, this was reduced to one vaccination into the wound itself, followed by five more in the deltoid. Late TL7 treatments are almost 100% effective; earlier treatments were somewhat less so. Individuals who are promptly treated recover with no long-term ill effects.

Porphyria. Although most commonly proposed as the “real” source of vampire myths, congenital porphyria has also been suggested as an inspiration for werewolves. It is a rare inherited disease caused by an abnormality in the blood’s hemoglobin. The symptoms vary, but the most extreme cases include severe psychological disorders such as manic-depression, extraordinary sensitivity of the skin to light (with subsequent discoloration, blistering, and mutilation), discoloration of the teeth, and occasional cravings for blood or other substances. While it

cannot be contracted like an infectious disease, it can be latent and triggered by alcohol, barbiturates, pregnancy, or even too much sunlight. Sufferers have a Weakness to sunlight (Very Common, 1d per 30 minutes). Every time they take more than HT/2 points of damage from sunlight in one exposure, they must make a HT roll or permanently lose one level of Appearance; Appearance *can* be reduced to Monstrous or Horrific in this manner. They also suffer from Chronic Depression or Manic-Depressive (or up to -25 points of other mental disadvantages, if the GM approves) and Compulsive Behavior: Unnatural Food Cravings.


There is no cure for porphyria, nor even a treatment to suppress its effects.

Congenital Generalized Hypertrichosis (also called “Werewolf Syndrome”). Another hereditary disease, hypertrichosis is an extremely rare genetic condition that leaves its victims covered in dense hair. Like porphyria, it cannot be contracted except by inheriting it. Characters with hypertrichosis grow hair all over their bodies, unless they take pains to shave or otherwise remove it. There are no other effects. In game terms, this is a maximum Appearance of Unattractive. However, in settings where it is important to look “normal” or like a certain racial/cultural ideal (such as medieval or even modern Japan), Monstrous or Horrific may be the maximum. A Social Stigma or other negative reaction modifiers may also apply.



CHAPTER 2

SHAPESHIFTING



*"A very pestilent disease, my lord,
They call lycanthropia . . .
In those that are possess'd with 't there o'erflows
Such melancholy humour they imagine
Themselves to be transformed into wolves;
Steal forth to church-yards in the dead of night,
And dig dead bodies up: as two nights since
One met the Duke 'bout midnight in a lane
Behind Saint Mark's church, with the leg of a man
Upon his shoulder; and he howl'd fearfully;
Said he was a wolf, only the difference
Was, a wolf's skin was hairy on the outside,
His on the inside; bade them take their swords,
Rip up his flesh, and try."*

*– John Webster, **The Duchess of Malfi**, V:ii:5-19*

Over thousands of years of myth, legend, and fiction, mankind has created a vast variety of creatures and beings of variable form. Despite their apparent differences, certain

common themes and mechanisms can be found among them, whatever their origins.

PARADIGMS

When creating a shapechanger, it's important to decide upon the source of your changing ability. While this is usually implemented as a *Feature* (see p. 37) and thus has no direct effect on point costs, it *can* have considerable impact on both character design and game play.

Magic. Your shifting talent is a spell, curse, or other sorcerous process affecting you. Unless otherwise specified (see the box on p. 37), it can be suppressed or perhaps even dispelled with countermagic, it deactivates in no-mana zones, and it may misbehave in high-mana zones. The early medieval European werewolf is a prime example of the magical shapechanger.

One variety of the Magic paradigm, the *magic item*, works just like inherent magic, except that all the power to change is invested in a gadget. Unlike most of the other paradigms described here, this *can* change your point costs – see *Item-Based Shifting* (p. 44).

Psi. Your ability to shift is a function of the extraordinary power of your mind. Antipsi prevents your change, as do any drugs that dull or inhibit your thoughts. You are likely to be limited to forms roughly your own mass and size. Your mental traits may cause odd side effects on your change. See pp. 42-43 for more information on how to handle psionic shifters.

The *GURPS Wild Cards* setting features several shapeshifters whose abilities are explicitly psionic in nature.

Natural. This is the way you were born, possibly because your race evolved this way. (In most cases, though, magical and psionic races should be considered as belonging to those types.) Unless the game world is *very* strange, you probably can't gain or lose mass in a shift, and you need to pay attention to other relevant laws of physics. Changing may take a long time for you, as you have to let "normal" bodily processes take their course. Your shift may also be subject to environmental or hormonal factors, and maybe special poisons. On the other hand, you are unaffected by mana level or antipsi.

The various incarnations of *Star Trek* have depicted a number of creatures that can be considered "natural" shapeshifters.

Technology. Some scientific mechanism, internal or external, has been applied to you and allows you to shapechange. (This need not be a literal device; it could be a genemod, surgical procedure, or other process derived from

science, be it current tech or more advanced.) Tech shifts are similar to "Natural" above, in that you're probably limited to your own body mass and you have to be "realistic" in other regards (although this is not a hard and fast requirement, especially with classic "rubber science"). Under some conditions, the mechanism may be jammed or run out of power. If it is an actual physical device, it may be taken away from you, and as with the magic item, this can affect your point costs – again, see *Item-Based Shifting* (p. 44).

Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde is the canonical science-based shifter.

Super. The catch-all paradigm. Although the "typical" super shapechange is an inherent power unaffected by countermagic, mana level, or antipsi, it can also resemble any of the other paradigms.

In all but the most realistic settings, though, it lacks most of their weaknesses. However, it may suffer from its own exotic vulnerabilities. The primary drawback, though, is that you need to be playing in a *GURPS Supers* game . . .

The Marvel Comics character Mystique is an example of the super shifter.



Spells and Devices

Shapechanging via external means such as spells and magic items is not really shifting as defined by this book. No matter how "internalized" his spell and his mana are, a mage with a Shapeshift spell is simply *not* a morph or a were. (Even so, a Ritual Path for shapeshifting magic, for use with the Ritual Magic system found in *GURPS Spirits*, is provided on pp. 44-45.)

But ensorceled Shapeshifts (see p. G39) and items that grant similar effects are gray areas. There's little functional difference between a person ensorceled with Great Shapeshifting and a morph with a Cure/Cursebreak limitation. Likewise, no few creatures of myth that would otherwise be defined as standard weres resemble ordinary people with extraordinary magic items.

When it comes to items, if the item works only for the individual – like the skins of selkies (p. 110) and the feathered cloaks of swan-mays – the character is a shifter (and should pay points for the ability). If anyone with the correct knowledge and the fatigue to spend can trigger the effect, then the owner is just someone with a standard magic item.

Using a Shapeshift spell in the usual manner does not make a were or morph of the recipient. But ensorceled versions are a different matter; if the problem of dwindling IQ is somehow defeated where necessary, the ensorcelment effectively turns the recipient *into* the appropriate kind of shapeshifter. The GM should feel free to calculate the point total for an equivalent shapechanging advantage – and Unusual Background, if needed in the campaign – and assess that cost against the character.

BUILDING A SHAPESHIFTER

Excluding spells and certain magic items, virtually all the shapeshifters in fiction and myth – and in gaming – can be reduced to two distinct varieties: the *morph* and the *were*. Which to choose for creating shapeshifting characters in *GURPS* depends on the nature of the character being designed. Remember, all that matters on the game level is *how* those changes are quantified, not *why* they happen. When stripped of their special effects and their unique stories, a person under a shapechanging curse (as in *Ladyhawke* or the Japanese manga/anime *Ranma ½*) is as much a were as a wolfman from a horror film; and any creature that can steal or copy another's shape is a morph. Another good rule of thumb is that (by default) a morph never undergoes a personality change no matter what form he takes, while a were often does.

The Morph

The *morph* (short for “metamorph” – see the Glossary, p. 121) is the creature of a thousand forms. Whether or not it possesses a “native” shape matters little – it survives day to day with its ability to assume other forms. It may do so either for protection or predation; it may require simple visual contact, or genetic samples, or wholesale consumption to acquire a pattern to duplicate. It may acquire the original's memories, or simply its appearance. But in the end, it can be anything or anyone.

Examples of the morph include Odo from *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, the Thing from the 1982 John Carpenter movie of the same name (as well as “Who Goes There?” the John W. Campbell story on which the film was based), and the T-1000 “liquid metal” terminator in the film *Terminator 2*.

The Were

The *were* (short for “were-creature” – see the Glossary, p. 121) is a being that alternates between two or more predefined bodies – none of which is necessarily human. Its ability to change may be entirely voluntary, or completely out of its control. Unlike the morph, it often demonstrates different personality traits and even different personalities in its different bodies. The definition is very broad and includes many types of shapeshifters who at first glance may not appear to be the same type of creature as a werewolf.

The majority of shapeshifters in myth and legend are weres. Examples range from the classic werewolf of legend and its various cousins the world over, through its more monstrous incarnations in horror films, to such apparently unlikely candidates as Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde and the victims of the Jusenkyo curses in *Ranma 1/2*.

Morph or Were?

Whether in adapting a shifter from an outside source or in creating a new character from scratch, at some point the question will be raised: is this a morph or a were? As self-evident as this might seem, it is not always clear from the source or concept. One example is the “true were,” from Spider

Robinson's later *Callahan's* stories, who turned into whatever he was closest to when the full moon rose. Despite the name, this character was clearly a morph (at least in *GURPS* terms), as he had no predefined alternate form.

The Template

The alternate forms of weres are defined by racial templates. The same is true of full morphs, when they copy the form of an existing creature. When you change into something else, the template defines what it is you are changing into.

For most classic weres, this is a “racial package” for a specific type of animal. Many animal templates can be found in *GURPS Bestiary*. If the species you want isn't among these, you can build your own from scratch using Chapter 5 of *GURPS Bestiary*.

But were-forms are by no means limited to animals. Virtually any kind of creature can become a were-form template, including other sentient races and even robotic models. This is not as outré as it may sound at first; fiction and myth hold many examples of seemingly “nonstandard” weres. See the box *You Turn Into What?* on p. 20.

Modifying the Template

A template for a natural animal normally includes traits that may be inappropriate or unwanted in the final character. Templates for other kinds of beings may also have undesired traits. Players should feel free to eliminate or add traits as needed at character creation in order to fine-tune the template for a were-form; morphs with suitable enhancements or skills can do the same. Suitable changes for animal templates include the following:

Raising the form's IQ.

Removing levels of the animal's Alertness, to the extent to which that advantage compensates for the animal's having lower IQ. (In effect, the added IQ includes the Alertness.)

Removing Presentient, for a “beast with a human mind.” Other restrictive mental disadvantages, such as Hidebound, Incurious, or Innumerate, may also be removed or reduced.

Removing Bestial, if the shapechanger retains an understanding of human law, customs, and ethics.

Removing Early Maturation and Short Lifespan, since the shapechanger is unlikely to spend enough time in the altered form to be affected by them, and may not have the same lifespan as the natural animal in any case. *Exception:* For a child, Early Maturation could be retained to describe a were-form that matured faster than the base form.

For a were-form that is not a standard animal but a bestialized human, such as the classic “wolfman,” removing or reducing disadvantages that reflect the animal's body shape; for example, Horizontal could be changed to Semi-Upright or Upright, No Fine Manipulators to Bad Grip or Poor Grip. Similarly, an animal-man template would probably not have Extra Legs.

Most animal templates are Dead Broke. This should be removed from the racial template for a were-form; it's too easy to transfer wealth from one body to another, by such methods as buying expensive equipment for the were-form to use, or hiring trusted servants to work with it. Animal templates may have other social traits such as Social Stigma (Barbarian).

Animal Template: Wolf

Adapted from p. BE112, this is a standard, "natural" wolf with two disadvantages removed: Dead Broke [-25] and Short Lifespan 5 [-50]. If it is used "as is" for a were-form, the character becomes a beast in mind as well as body, with only the broadest strokes of his personality remaining when changed. He retains all his memories, indecipherable as they may be to his wolf-mind, as well as his feelings for friends and enemies. This may make changing back voluntarily somewhat difficult.

Wolf 42 points

Attributes: ST -1 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [-6]; DX +4 [45]; IQ -5 [-40]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Acute Hearing +4 [8]; Acute Taste and Smell +4 [8]; Alertness +5 [25]; Claws [15]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell (Works as Empathy within 2 hexes, +50%) [23]; Enhanced Dodge [15]; Enhanced Move (Running) 1/2 [5]; Four Legs [5]; Penetrating Call [5]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Thick Fur [29]; Ultrahearing [5].

Disadvantages: Bestial [-10]; Chummy [-5]; Color Blindness [-10]; Dull [-1]; Gluttony [-5]; Horizontal [-10]; Innumerate [-5]; Mute [-25]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Presentient [-20]; Sleepy (50% of the time) [-10]; Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-15]; Staid [-1].

Skills: Brawling at DX [1]; Running at HT [4]; Stealth at DX [2].

While this is consistent with some werewolves in myth and fiction, it may be less than enjoyable for some players. Modifying the template to allow more self-aware behavior might produce a result such as the following:

Wolf with a Human Mind 82 points

Attributes: ST -1 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [-6]; DX +4 [45]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Acute Hearing +4 [8]; Acute Taste and Smell +4 [8]; Claws [15]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell (Works as Empathy within 2 hexes, +50%) [23]; Enhanced Dodge [15]; Enhanced Move 1/2 [5]; Four Legs [5]; Penetrating Call [5]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Thick Fur [29]; Ultrahearing [5].

Disadvantages: Bestial [-10]; Chummy [-5]; Color Blindness [-10]; Dull [-1]; Gluttony [-5]; Horizontal [-10]; Mute [-25]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Sleepy (50% of the time) [-10]; Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-15]; Staid [-1].

Skills: Brawling at DX [1]; Running at HT [4]; Stealth at DX [2].

Chapter 5 offers two different modified wolf templates, for the Cinematic Werewolf (p. 83) and the Benandante (p. 97), as well as modified versions of several other animal templates.

In addition, templates can be modified to include "supernatural" abilities, such as the supernormal damage resistance of classic lycanthropes (defined as Damage Resistance, Invulnerability, or Regeneration). Templates can also include disadvantages such as Dread, Vulnerability, or Weakness.

Building a Morph

For the most part, morph characters are more straightforward in design than were-creatures. Because they can assume templates on the fly, there is no need to create a template for an alternate form at character creation; this makes building a basic morph character quite simple. The only decision the player absolutely must make is determining the "point ceiling" for the templates his character can assume. The aliens, animals, robots, or other beings the morph encounters should be based on racial templates whose costs can be compared to this "point ceiling."

However, this should not be taken to mean that all morphs are alike – quite the contrary. Several examples of morph characters and races in Chapter 4 demonstrate the range of possibilities available to the player. Don't be fooled into thinking that one morph is like any other morph!

A morph character is now built with the following advantage. This new version of Morph replaces and updates the earlier versions found in *GURPS Compendium I* and *GURPS Supers*.



Morph

You are a shapeshifter, but unlike the classic werewolf – who has only two forms – you can take on *any number of forms!* Changing forms normally takes 10 seconds of quiet concentration.

You can always assume the form of a being that is physically present (and which you can perceive). In addition, you can memorize a number of forms equal to your IQ and use these at any time. To “overwrite” a memorized form with a new one, you must take on that form while the being is physically present and then spend 1 additional minute in total concentration. If this concentration is broken for any reason, the new form is not memorized and the old form is forgotten, leaving you with an empty “slot.”

This advantage has two levels:

Cosmetic: You can freely alter your facial features and the color and appearance of your hair, skin, and eyes. You can also change your build to a limited extent, increasing or decreasing height and weight by up to 10%. You can even mimic ordinary clothing (but you cannot remove it, as it is part of your body, and it provides none of the protection of “real” clothes). In your base, unshifted form, your

Appearance is whatever is the norm for your race, according to its template. You can change this to any other

Appearance at will, but your “real” looks are always the racial average.

Furthermore, you can assume the outward physical appearance of any creature that has the same general body layout (number and arrangement of limbs, posture, etc.) as you and is roughly the same size. When you mimic someone, you take on his external features – including his voice – but *none* of his other abilities. For instance, you do not gain magical powers if you impersonate a wizard. Similarly, you only simulate any fur, thick hide, or other body covering your template might possess; you gain none of their protective benefits. Your internal organs and life-support requirements remain unchanged. You retain your own attributes, advantages, disadvantages, and skills. **50 points.**

Full: In addition to the abilities above, you can actually *become* a generic member of any species you have met, replacing your own racial template with that of the creature you have become, regardless of physical size. This often alters your IQ and mental traits – if you become an animal whose racial IQ modifier is -6, and your previous racial IQ modifier was 0, then *you* get -6 to IQ (unless you take a special enhancement; see p. 28). You may still retain your motivations, but you won’t be very bright. Conversely, if you were

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a lion (-5 to IQ) and you shape-shifted into a man, your IQ would increase by 5.

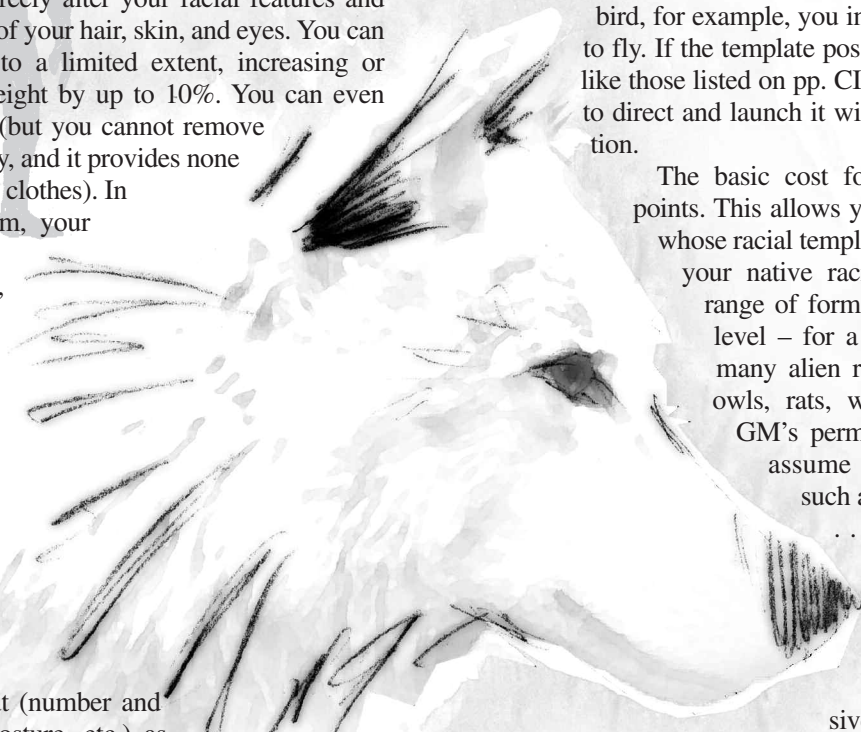
By default, a morph has the following characteristics: He can assume the form of any living creature in its presence, and memorize it for later use; he cannot acquire a form at a remove, such as via television or a photograph. None of the original model’s knowledge is acquired. The copied form is a perfect duplicate, visually, but the morph’s internal structure and genetic code (if any) do not change. He has complete control over his changes to and from his memorized forms, with no involuntary or compulsive aspects to the shift, but cannot blend or mix forms. The change is limited to the body; clothing is not acquired or lost in the transformation, although it *can* be simulated as an integral part of a memorized shape.

You automatically know how to use any and all inherent abilities of the template. If you change into a bird, for example, you instinctively know how to fly. If the template possesses a natural attack like those listed on pp. C172-73, you know how to direct and launch it without needing instruction.

The basic cost for this ability is 100 points. This allows you to become a being whose racial template costs no more than your native racial template. A wide range of forms are available at this level – for a human, this includes many alien races, butterflies, cats, owls, rats, wolves, etc. With the GM’s permission, you can even assume *nonsentient* forms, such as bacteria and plants . . . but you might not be able to turn back!

To be able to become a member of a race with a more expensive template – such as a dragon, leopard, or vampire – add the difference between the maximum racial template cost you can copy and your native template cost to the price. For instance, to assume any form worth up to 50 points more than your native template, you would pay 150 points. Points not used during a particular transition are “dormant”; you cannot spend them to customize your form. You may apply earned character points to this total after creation to increase the maximum template cost available to you.

You may freely drop traits from a template (for instance, eliminate Presentient or Bestial from an animal form) as long as you can “pay for” the resulting modified template. Additionally, you can employ cosmetic morphing to impersonate a specific member of a species. You cannot design totally new templates to shapeshift into, nor can you change into inorganic or mechanical “races” such as robots. You are limited to forms designed by the GM, or those he has designated as “available” from another **GURPS** book.



The default Morph advantage may suit many players, but not all morphs are the same. A wide variety of options are available that allow the player to fine-tune his character's shapeshifting ability. Many new morph-specific enhancements and limitations can be found on pp. 26-35.

Morph characters may find the Change Control skill (p. CI138) useful, as it makes some conceptions more practical and broadens the character's range of shapeshifting possibilities for a relatively low point cost.

Building a Were

A were character is built using the Shapeshifting advantage. This advantage supplants not only many of the pre-existing shapeshifting advantages found in *GURPS Compendium I*, but also the quick-and-dirty rules provided on p. 98 of *GURPS Bestiary, Third Edition*. Compared to a morph, a were requires somewhat more up-front work, because the template for the character's alternate form must be completely specified at character creation.

Shapeshifting ("Were")

You have the ability to shapeshift at will into an alternate "were-form." This form can be anything that can be built with points: animal, alien race, robot – *anything*. While in that form, you are indistinguishable from a normal creature or being of that type. By default, you have the following characteristics: You have complete control over your changes to and from the were-form, with no involuntary or compulsive aspect to the shift. The change is limited to your body – clothing and equipment must be removed first, or risk entanglement or damage.

A were-form is in effect a racial template you can turn on and off. When it is "off," you are in your "base" or "native" form – whatever racial template you were born with (note that some races may include a were-form as part of their templates!). When it is "on," your were-form replaces your base form's racial template. All traits specific to that template disappear, to be replaced by those in the were-form's template, along with a corresponding change in physical form. Only *racial* traits are so affected – *personal* traits such as Appearance, Hemophilia, and the like remain and are translated into the appropriate equivalent for the were-form's template.

Example: A human with IQ 9, Handsome Appearance, and Lame (Crippled Leg) who turns into a wolf using the template found on p. 17 (-5 to IQ, among other changes) would become a particularly impressive-looking wolf with a limp and IQ 4. *Exception:* If the were-form possesses a racial Advantage, Disadvantage, or Taboo Trait that would specifically preclude or contradict a personal trait, then that personal trait is "suppressed" for the duration of the shapeshift. For example, if the were-form has Illiteracy as part of its template, this would prevent the Literacy advantage from functioning. The GM has final say on what traits overrule other traits.

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Your were-form, like your base form, is an individual and does not change in appearance between uses unless you also possess the Morph advantage (p. 18), disguise magic, or another similar ability in that form. Someone accustomed to distinguishing individuals of the were-form's race would be able to recognize and identify your were-form.

Changing from one form to another takes 3 seconds of concentration; breaking concentration for any reason aborts the change, leaving you back in the form from which you started. You automatically change back to your base form when you are asleep, unconscious, or dead, again taking 3 seconds.

All wounds taken in the were-form carry over to the base form, and vice versa. If your base form's HT is much lower than your were-form's HT, you could transform from a somewhat wounded form to a *badly* wounded, or even dying, one! If you possess more than one were-form, wounds carry over between them in exactly the same manner. A dead or unconscious were reverts back to his base form. If the were loses a limb, that limb immediately changes back to its equivalent (if any) in the base form.

The basic cost for this ability is 15 points. This gives you a were-form based on a template that costs no more than your native racial template. If the alternate template costs more than your native template, increase the cost of this advantage by the difference. "Human" is a 0-point template, and thus a nonhuman template that costs 0 points or less has no extra cost for a human were; the extra cost for a more expensive template is equal to its point value.

At this point you may apply enhancements and limitations that affect the accessibility and usefulness of the were-form as a whole. Were-forms can be subject to a number of specialized enhancements and limitations. Details can be found on pp. 26-35. You may modify your were-form's template as you see fit, adding both positive and negative traits to customize it, as described on p. 26.

Fiction, folklore, and legend often ascribe other traits to those who can take another shape – regeneration, vulnerability to silver, and more.

These are not included in the basic ability to change; if they are desired, they must be purchased separately, in addition to it. Traits that affect both forms (Regeneration and the like) should be taken as part of the base form, whereas anything specific to the shifted form (Infectious Attack, for example) is part of the form template.

If the base form is subject to some infirmity – such as One Hand or Lame: Crippled Leg – that is not desired in the were-form, it is possible to "buy it off" at this time. Similarly, any traits that individualize the were-form, when compared to others of the same basic template, can be added – these often include Appearance, Charisma, and social skills (see the 1963 film *The Nutty Professor* for a prime example).

You may purchase this advantage multiple times in order to have more than one alternate form. The cost of additional alternate forms is 15 points, plus one-fourth of the amount by which the additional form's template cost exceeds the template cost of the base form.



You Turn Into *WHAT?*

Most gamers are aware that were-creatures are by no means limited to wolves. However, as counterintuitive as it might appear, the alternate form of a were need not be an animal. In fact, it need not even be a different species from the base form. Fiction is filled with people who change into different human bodies. Ranma Saotome from Rumiko Takahashi's *Ranma 1/2* is one example; Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde (from the story by Robert Louis Stevenson) can be interpreted as another. Alternate forms may also be other intelligent races, as in legends of dragons who frequently take human form.

Japanese anime and manga are particularly rich sources of unusual weres. *Ranma 1/2* has (among others) Pansuto-Taro, whose shifting curse incorporated a half-dozen different animals into a single hybrid monster resembling a winged minotaur, and Rouge, a girl who turned into an animated (and malevolent) statue of a Hindu demon. *Birdy the Mighty* postulates a symbiotic relationship between a human and an alien sharing a body that alternates between their two forms (and sexes!). *Tenchi Muyo!* demonstrates the *weremachine* (p. 26) in the form of Ryo-ohki – a rabbit-sized creature that can turn into a giant crystalline starship. And even more exotic possibilities can be found. If you can build it with points and play it as a character, you can turn it into a were-form.

Were-Forms and Split Personalities. If you suffer from a Split Personality, your were-form may be shared by some or all of the personalities or may be the exclusive province of a single one. Each personality that can use the alternate form must pay the full cost for it. If the alternate form is a personality in and of itself – that is, it has a mind of its own, does not share its shape with any other personalities, and has no access to the base form – it is in fact a *disadvantage*. See “Involuntary Shapeshifting,” p. 26.

Change Control. Normally a shift into a were-form is an all-or-nothing thing, but characters who possess the Change

The Change

It takes 10 seconds for a morph to shift his shape, and the default were change lasts 3 seconds. In each case, the shifter can do nothing else. (However, see the Active Change enhancement, p. 26.) An involuntary change (Cyclic, Triggered) in progress cannot be halted or reversed by any means; it must run its course, no matter what. The same is not true of a *voluntary* change except under the most unusual circumstances (GM's option).

A shifter's change is a strange and terrifying process. Witnesses who have never seen a change before, or didn't know the character was a shapechanger, must make an immediate Fright Check. The GM may require those who succeed to make a Will roll or else stop what they're doing and stare in fascination until the change is complete. (This is a nonmagical fascination, and won't prevent someone from defending himself or providing for his own safety, but it might make both sides of a combat break off while the change is happening, and it would certainly make an enemy easier to surprise.) Friends and family may grow used to the change; the GM may allow them to ignore both the Fright Check and the fascination if they've witnessed the change often enough. This is by no means an absolute – see *Innocuous Change* (p. 27) and *Horridifying Change* (p. 27).

Control skill (p. CI38) may perform more subtle feats of shapechanging. See the description of that skill for more details.

Example: Alison wants her wereleopard to have to change on the full moon, for a minimum of 1 hour. Her were-form is a standard leopard template (p. BE111) with no IQ penalty, for a template cost of 133 points; this template would normally cost 148 points as a were-form. She takes a Cyclic Change with a lunar cycle (a -20% limitation; see box, p. 30) and a one-hour Minimum Duration (-5%), which makes the final cost for her were-form 148 points less 25%, or 111 points.

ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND SKILLS

Under these rules, certain existing *GURPS* advantages and disadvantages have special applications. Others are overruled or replaced entirely. In addition, there are a number of new traits that apply only to shapechangers.

Advantages

Animal Form see p. CI33

This advantage has been superseded by these new rules.

Decreased Life Support
see p. CI52

Templates that are significantly smaller than humans normally possess this advantage, which can have some odd effects for weres. See the box *What Do You Mean, You Ate While You Were a Mouse?* on p. 34.



Dominance see p. CI53

Although it might seem more appropriate that it be part of a were-form, this advantage should be purchased as part of the base form. *Exception:* In the case of an Involuntary Shapeshifter (see p. 26), the were-form may buy this advantage instead of the base form.

Elastic Skin see p. CI53

Equivalent to the Cosmetic level of Morph with the limitations Fatiguing Change and Cannot Duplicate Clothing. It is still available at the point cost in *GURPS Compendium I*, which these rules do not supersede.

Hermaphromorph see p. CI57

Equivalent to a were-form whose only difference from the character's base form is its sex, subject to the -25% level of Slow Change (p. 34) and several Nuisance Effect limitations. It is still available at the point cost in *GURPS Compendium I*, which these rules do not supersede.

Lycanthropic Dominance see p. CI60

See *Dominance*.

Growth see p. CI56

Growth and its counterpart, Shrinking (pp. CI65-66), are not normally needed to quantify excessively large or small forms. As long as you're capable of assuming a template, you automatically take on its defined size (which may still require the Inconvenient Size disadvantage).

However, some character concepts might still make use of them. For instance, consider a super who can become any kind of cat, from tabby to tiger. Rather than define a separate were-form for each species or employing Morph limited to feline forms and memorizing as many varieties as it allows, such a design might be implemented by building a were using a generic feline template that includes the necessary levels of Growth and Shrinking. Cosmetic Morph might be used for changes in appearance, or the GM might simply rule the differences in pelts and other details to be a special effect.

When buying Growth for such a purpose, remember that you must also purchase the minimum ST specified in the chart on p. CI57. When a particular template's ST is less than the minimum required by the Growth level(s) needed to reach it, the Growth ST overrules the template.

Multiple Forms see p. CI62

Superseded by these rules.

Non-Reciprocal Damage see pp. CI41-42

This is no longer an advantage, but an enhancement to Shapeshifting.

Reciprocal Rest see p. CI43

This is no longer an advantage, but an enhancement to Shapeshifting.

Reputation see p. B17

In settings where shapeshifting races are part of the established social or religious order, or where they are seen as representatives of and/or messengers from totem spirits or gods, they may have a positive Racial Reputation.

If a were has a Reputation in his were-form that doesn't apply to his base form, treat this as a variant on Frequency of Recognition. Instead of rolling to see if he is recognized, base the modifier on how often he assumes the were-form: most of the time (listed value); regularly or frequently (1/2 value, rounded down); infrequently (1/3 value, rounded down). Apply the Affected Class modifier based on how many people recognize the were-form.

Shapeshifter see p. RU37

GURPS Russia offers a setting-specific Shapeshifter advantage. Despite the name, this is actually a version of Morph, based on Russian folklore. It can be reconstructed as Full Morph with the enhancements Fast Change, No Memorization Needed, Retains Intelligence, and a custom enhancement that gives the shifter no limit to the number of templates he can acquire. It also possesses the limitations Animals Only, Cannot Use Change Control, Costs Fatigue, and Requires IQ Roll. Some Russian shapeshifters also have the Unliving Forms enhancement, giving them the ability to take on a variety of other forms, almost exclusively elements of the local landscape.

In the settings described in *GURPS Russia*, the point cost of this advantage was set to 200 points. Prerequisites the GM may choose to impose include Magery and a significant Unusual Background. GMs who think Morph is too complicated as written, and want to limit morphing characters to animal shapes, should consider using this advantage instead.

Shapeshifter ("Were") see pp. CI43-44

This advantage has been replaced with the new Shapeshifting advantage on pp. 19-20. The original were-forms provided in *GURPS Compendium I* have been re-evaluated using the new advantage and can be found on pp. 22-23.



The Were-Creatures of *GURPS Compendium I*

There are 11 different were-creatures listed on p. CI44 as part of the original Shapeshifter advantage. They are redefined below using the *new* Shapeshifting advantage and full animal templates as found in *GURPS Bestiary, Third Edition*. Attributes given are (usually) “racial” norms for their species; add these to the base form’s attributes (for example, a ST 12 human would become a ST 24 werebear).

Common Traits and Modifiers

All *GURPS Compendium I* weres have as part of their were-forms the following: Slow Regeneration (Presence of silver deactivates, -30%) [7] and Vulnerability to Silver (Occasional) 2 [-20]. At the GM’s option, some also have Infectious Attack [-5]. Evil persons possessing one of these were-forms also have Compulsive Behavior: Commit Atrocities [-15]. Furthermore, all templates have IQ modifiers, Bestial, Innumerate, and Presentient removed.

The basic *GURPS Compendium I* were-form has a Cyclic Change: Monthly, Exclusive, for -40% and Minimum Duration: One Night, -10%, for a total discount of -50%. Some weres can change at will in addition to their monthly change; this eliminates the Minimum Duration limitation and the Exclusive option, reducing the limitation value to -15%.

Listings for the were-types below include the mental adjustments, the Regeneration, and Vulnerability in the template cost. Players desiring the Infectious Attack and Compulsive behaviors need to recalculate the template and were-form values accordingly.

Werebear

Attributes: ST +12; DX +3; HT +4/+8.

Template Cost: 137 points.

Were-form Cost: Lunar change only: 76 points.

Voluntary option: 130 points.

Notes: Based on Grizzly Bear template, p. BE110. Werebear characters must also possess Berserk.

Wereboar

Attributes: ST +10; DX +1; HT +5.

Template Cost: 101 points.

Were-form Cost: Lunar change only: 58 points. **Voluntary option:** 99 points.

Werebull

Attributes: ST +20; DX -1; HT +4.

Template Cost: 58 points.

Were-form Cost: Lunar change only: 37 points. **Voluntary option:** 62 points.

Notes: Template built with Bad Temper; per p. CI44, Berserk is possible instead.

Weredeer

Attributes: ST +20; DX +5; HT +3/-2 (Stag).

Attributes: ST +10; DX +5; HT +3/-2 (Doe).

Template Cost: Stag: 91 points. Doe: 47 points.

Were-form Cost: Lunar change only: Stag: 53 points/Doe: 31 points. **Voluntary option:** Stag: 101 points/Doe: 53 points.

Notes: Stag ST +20 and doe ST +10 are per p. CI44; no natural deer have ST of that level.

Were-eagle

Attributes: ST -5; DX +2; HT +3/-5.

Template Cost: -43 points.

Were-form Cost: Lunar change only: 8 points. **Voluntary option:** 13 points.

Note: Based on the eagle template found on p. 114.

Continued on next page . . .



The Were-Creatures of *GURPS Compendium I*

(Continued)

Werehorse

Attributes: ST +30; DX -1; HT +22.

Template Cost: 97 points.

Were-form Cost: Lunar change only: 56 points. Voluntary option: 96 points.

Note: Based on the warhorse template found on p. BE112.

Wereleopard

Attributes: ST +10; DX +3; HT +5/+4.

Template Cost: 175 points.

Were-form Cost: Lunar change only: 95 points. Voluntary option: 162 points.

Note: Based on the leopard template found on p. BE111.

Werelion

Attributes: ST +20; DX +3; HT +5/+8.

Template Cost: 199 points.

Were-form Cost: Lunar change only: 107 points. Voluntary option: 182 points.

Weresnake

Attributes: ST +10; DX +3; HT +5/+10.

Template Cost: 78 points.

Were-form Cost: Lunar change only: 47 points. Voluntary option: 80 points.

Note: Based on a generic mid-sized python template.

Weretiger

Attributes: ST +25; DX +4; HT +5/+10.

Template Cost: 259 points.

Were-form Cost: Lunar change only: 137 points. Voluntary option: 233 points.

Note: Tigers have the Neck Snap maneuver at ST-2.

Werewolf

Attributes: ST -1; DX +4; HT +2.

Template Cost: 40 points.

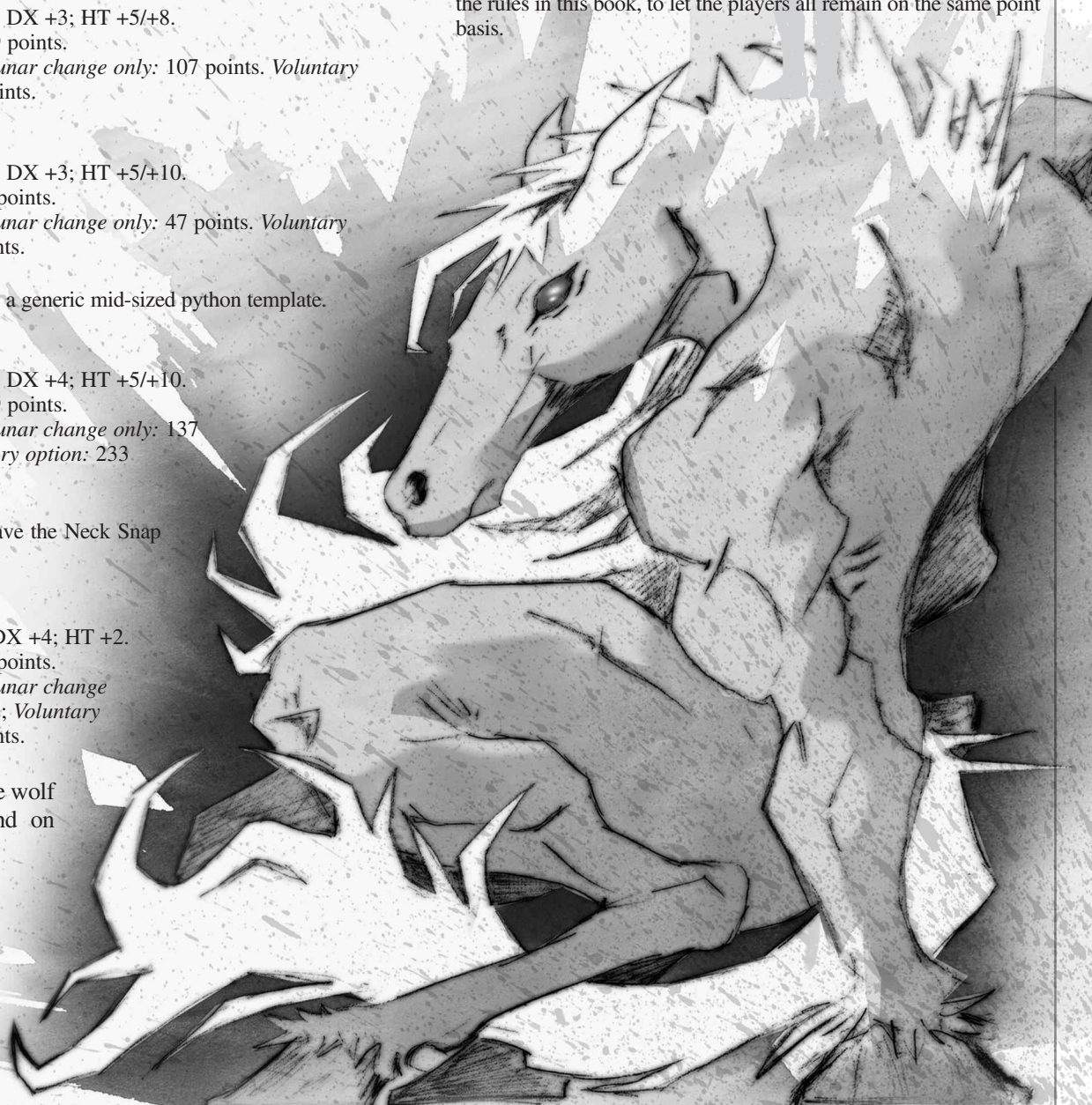
Were-form Cost: Lunar change only: 28 points; Voluntary option: 47 points.

Note: Based on the wolf template found on p. 17.

It should be obvious that the costs for these were-types do not match those found in *GURPS Compendium I*. Those costs were assigned arbitrarily, long before *GURPS* had anything approaching a consistent were-creature system. They were also assigned with the express intent of allowing a standard 100-point character to be a shapeshifter.

These revised prices break many long-time characters. But it should be pointed out that the were-forms for all of the sample types really were not fully fleshed out, being more idealized images than actual examples of their particular animals. Also, those were-forms were great bargains, implicitly giving the character, for no cost at all, a number of advantages that later weres had to pay for – Sharp Teeth, Claws, and Horns, just to cite a few examples. It's long past time that they were brought into line with the rest of *GURPS*.

That doesn't mean you, as GM, have to use them. You can always stay with the earlier versions. That's your privilege as GM. But if you do, you should avoid mixing them with weres built with the rules in this book, to let the players all remain on the same point basis.



Shrinking see pp. CI65-66

See *Growth*, p. 21.

Transformation see p. CI68

This advantage is no longer used for were-creatures. It is, however, still employed for supers with a “power-up” form.

True Faith see p. CI47

Some varieties of shapechangers are repelled by persons possessing True Faith and a holy symbol, just as undead are. To make a shapechanger vulnerable to this, add the Taboo Trait “Can be turned using True Faith.” For more information, see *Taboo Traits and Features* on p. 37.

Unusual Background see p. B23

In many campaigns, being a shapechanger requires an Unusual Background. The cost can vary widely, depending on the nature of the campaign and the power of the shifter. Shifters in a world where shapechanging is thought to be a myth should pay an Unusual Background cost of 15 or more points!

Vampiric Invulnerability see p. CI70

Certain types of weres demonstrate an ability to shrug off the effects of vast amounts of damage. Use Vampiric Invulnerability to represent this. The built-in weakness to fire can be retained or changed to another attack form (usually silver) at the player’s (or GM’s) choice.

Disadvantages

Addiction see p. B30

A were might be addicted to a drug that causes (or prevents!) his change – or to the change itself.

Bad Smell see p. CI80

In many traditions around the world, shapeshifters are frequently betrayed by a pungent scent emitted by their bodies. Races whose odors are particularly rank or noticeable should be built using this disadvantage. Use Unnatural Feature to quantify a less offensive, but still noticeable and animal-like scent.

Bestial see p. CI101

Animals do not automatically have this disadvantage. A domesticated animal does not, unless it has become feral; an originally wild animal that has been tamed does not. If a morph or were retains his normal mentality in animal form, the template for that form should not include Bestial, even if the animal would normally have it.

Code of Honor see p. B31

A character who can change shape because of his religious or cultural heritage (see the Jayagat, pp. 59-61, and the Jaguar Warrior, pp. 113-117) may possess a Code of Honor defining the proper and improper uses of his shifting talent.

Gross violations of that code may restrict or prevent his use of the talent, depending on its source.

Compulsive Behavior see p. B32

If a were-form possesses any kind of Compulsive Behavior, it must be indulged at least once each time the were-form manifests.

Morally Opposed: A were-form that is part of a Split Personality may have a Compulsive Behavior to act in a manner opposite to the base form’s moral and ethical leanings. This does not automatically make the were-form an NPC (see p. 26), but it does make it an excellent candidate for that optional rule. -10 points.

Lifewrecker: Like “Morally Opposed” but worse. The were-form not only acts opposite to the base form’s moral and ethical code, but goes out of its way to do harm to the base form’s life and friends. This can range from mysterious animal deaths that point suspiciously at the base form to killing the base form’s family, friends, and lovers. In the most extreme case, if the were-form is reasonably invulnerable, it leaves incontrovertible evidence that it is the base form where authorities (or perhaps just villagers with torches and pitchforks) can find it. Involuntary Shapeshifters frequently find that their alter egos possess this trait. -15 points.

Delusions see p. B32

One obvious delusion is “I am not a shapeshifter.” While this could be taken as “only in human form,” it may be amusing and fun to play someone in an animal form *and* in denial about it at the same time, attempting to act as if still in human form. Or a were in animal form could forget or deny that he ever had another form. Either “only in animal form” or “only in human form” is a -10% limitation.

Another delusion might be, “There is a cure for my were-form.” This can be paired with an appropriate Obsession for a particularly single-minded character.

A morph might suffer from the delusion “I really am who I appear to be,” or its inverse, “My base form is just another shape I can take; I have no real identity of my own.”

A shifter who insists on discussing his ability in an otherwise mundane setting has a delusion in the eyes of others – which he must take in the base form.

Dread see p. CI97

This is the usual way to handle a repulsion. Dread is worth -10 points plus another -1 point per yard of radius in the “forbidden zone.” This is modified for rarity – see the box on p. 55 for some suggestions.

Note: According to certain cultures’ folklore, the True Faith advantage (p. CI47, p. 37) lets the faithful repel some varieties of shapechangers with a holy symbol, just as it allows them to repel undead. This doesn’t mean that all such shifters must a Dread of holy symbols; simply being vulnerable to True Faith is a 0-point Taboo Trait for them. They *can* have a Dread of holy symbols; if so, add the radius of their Dread (minimum 1 yard) to the 1-yard “stand-off distance” specified under True Faith.

Duty see p. B39

A character who is a shapechanger because of his religious or cultural heritage may have a duty to the institution or organization that endorsed or provided his alternate form(s). Failure to live up to that duty might result in the reduction or elimination of his access to those forms.

Enemies see p. B39

Many weres have special enemies – the police, monster hunters, rival weres, the Church in medieval Europe, and so on. Even in cultures where shifters are accepted or even respected, they may have enemies in the form of citizens or agents of enemy nations or members of opposing religions.

Inconvenient Size see p. CI102

Some were-forms and morph templates may be substantially larger or smaller than a human being. Use this disadvantage to quantify this size difference instead of Growth or Shrinking, unless the template can actually vary its size at will.



Increased Life Support see p. CI102

Significantly large templates (or templates with unusual nutritional or environmental requirements) normally requires this disadvantage. It can sometimes have odd effects for weres; see the box *What Do You Mean, You Ate While You Were a Mouse?* on p. 43.

Infectious Attack see p. CI97

This disadvantage can be taken only by were-forms, not by the base forms.

Lecherousness see p. B34

When possessed by a were-form, this could be either of two different behaviors. First, the were-form could have a strong physical desire for the opposite sex of the same template as the were. If the base form and the were-form share the same mind, the were may pursue and enjoy his liaisons while in were-form, but may feel quite differently about it when back in his normal shape!

The second option is classically cinematic: the were-form, no matter what its template, has an inordinate fondness for attractive members of its base species' opposite sex.

Odious Personal Habit see p. B26

In most game worlds, “Eats Sentients” is a 15-point Odious Personal Habit. Note that if all weres are thought to eat humans, that’s a Reputation. If all weres *do* eat humans, that’s an Odious *Racial* Habit . . . and possibly a Dependency, depending on *why*.

Bestial (p. CI101) characters *cannot* have Odious Personal Habits for their beast-like behavior.

Presentient see p. CI103

If a given form is Presentient, not only can it not learn certain skills, as noted in the description of this disadvantage, but it cannot *use* any “forbidden” skills learned by/in another form.

Reputation see p. B17

In settings where weres and morphs are portrayed as bogeymen, or actually *are* creatures of evil, they should have a bad Racial Reputation unless they are completely underground.

Shrinking see pp. CI65-66

Small alternate forms should have Inconvenient Size rather than permanent Shrinking.

Split Personality see p. B37

Were-creatures traditionally suffer from some level of Split Personality, and particularly “enthusiastic” morphs may also display this disadvantage. Your were-form may be shared by some or all of the personalities or may be the exclusive province of a single one. Each personality that can use the alternate form must pay the full cost for it.

If the alternate form *is* a personality in and of itself – that is, it has a mind of its own, does not share its shape with any other personalities, and has no access to the base form – it is in fact a *disadvantage*. See “Involuntary Shapeshifting” on p. 26.

Uncontrolled Change see p. CI105

Usage for were-creatures is superseded by the new Involuntary Shapeshifting disadvantage, below.

Unnatural Feature see p. CI85

In many mythologies, and some modern fiction, some feature that appears in their shifted form frequently gives shapeshifters away. The Flawed limitation (p. 31) covers this when the feature *only* appears in the shifted form; however, if the feature is present in the base form as well (such as the tail of a kitsune), use this disadvantage when creating the template.

Untrained Shapechanging see p. CI100

Superseded by these rules. Build an “untrained” shapeshifter using a were-form with the Unconscious and Uncontrollable limitations (both p. CI112), or use the new Involuntary Shapeshifting disadvantage.

New Disadvantage

Involuntary Shapeshifting

Varies

Under a specific set of circumstances, you involuntarily assume a different physical form. This works similarly to the Shapeshifting advantage (pp. 19-20), but with some important differences.

You cannot control your alternate form, nor do you share its memories when you revert to your natural form. While shapeshifted, you are effectively unconscious. Your alternate self is an NPC, completely under the GM's control! You eventually "awaken," often under strange circumstances – away from home, covered in blood, in a jail cell, etc. The GM will describe only what you can see upon awakening; after that, it is up to you how you deal with any problems this causes. You might have nightmares about what you did while transformed, but you cannot consciously recall any details.

The price of this disadvantage is based on the frequency of the triggering circumstances for your change, not on the point cost of your alternate form. A powerful form might occasionally be useful if your associates can convince it to work toward useful goals – but usually, the trouble your alternate form can get you into is proportional to its power, which cancels out any advantages it might give.

Rare (e.g., whenever you kill, taste blood, have sex, or experience some other event that you can normally control): -5 points.

Occasional (e.g., whenever you take at least 3 HP of damage; whenever you fail to resist one specific mental disadvantage, such as Berserk or Phobia; or monthly, such as the night of the full moon): -10 points.

Common (e.g., whenever you fail to resist any mental disadvantage; weekly, such as Sunday; or any two "Occasional" triggers): -20 points.

Very Common (e.g., daily, such as at sunset or midnight; or any two "Common" triggers): -30 points.

If you have Involuntary Shapeshifting, you must also take Split Personality [-15]. Your split personality always and only manifests in your were-form. Your were-form has an entirely different list of skills, quirks, and the like, which are included in its "template cost," in an exception to the usual rules for were-forms. You can take the standard Split Personality "roll vs. IQ under stress" as an Occasional activation condition; if you take a different condition, it supersedes the Split Personality's activation condition, and you do not get a roll to resist the change.

New Enhancements and Limitations for Shifters

Various special enhancements and limitations are available for both the Morph and Shapeshifter advantages. Some of the following are suitable for both types of shifters, while others are specific to one or the other and are so noted. Shifter characters are not limited to these; many of the enhancements and limitations on pp. CI109-112 and SU49-54 can also be applied to a shapechanging talent.

The following special enhancements are possible:

Absorptive Change +5% to +25%

Weres only. When a were changes forms, his clothes don't normally change with him. This can have results ranging from the comic to the tragic, depending on the resilience of the clothing and the size of the were-form. This advantage allows the shifter to absorb clothes and carried items when he changes form; they return intact and in place when he shifts back. The cost is +5% per Encumbrance level that can be absorbed: +5% for No Encumbrance, +10% for Light Encumbrance, and so on through to +25% for Extra-Heavy Encumbrance.

The Absorptive Change is on one direction of change only. It need not be on the transition from base form to were-form; if the player so chooses, it can be on the change *back* to base form, especially if there is a great difference in relative sizes. Take this enhancement *twice* to handle changes in both directions; in such a case, the encumbrance levels need not be the same.

Active Change +10%/+20%

Weres only. The shifter can remain active during his change. At +10%, he can move and react to his surroundings, but cannot run, fight, cast spells, or use any skill. The were can roll to Dodge attacks while changing, but only succeeds on a 3 or a 4. At +20%, the were can use any skill or ability possessed and usable by both forms.

Revealing Traits

Many shapeshifters in folklore and fiction possess "giveaway" traits that reveal their natures to the informed. They may even be sufficiently strange or different so that an average person might guess that they are shapeshifters even without seeing them change. Here are a few common examples:

Natural Traits

Born "differently": during the 12 nights between December 24 and January 6 (Epiphany); with a caul (especially on Christmas or the winter solstice); after an unusually long pregnancy; feet first (breech birth); with teeth; by Caesarean section; to a woman who died in childbirth; as the seventh son of a seventh son.

Conceived at the new moon.

Possesses hairy palms or eyebrows that meet in the middle.

Has six fingers on one hand or an extra vertebra.

Has fur growing "on the inside."

Has extra nipples (a woman with this trait may be a werejaguar, in Brazilian lore).

Unnatural or Supernatural Traits

Has a body feature of the other form (a tail, animal eyes, etc.).

Spooks nearby animals.

Has no shadow, or no reflection.

Has the shadow or reflection of the other form.

Which, if any, of these indicators are true in any given campaign is up to the GM. Some of them can be represented as disadvantages such as Frightens Animals, No Reflection, No Shadow, or Unnatural Feature.

Copies Personality +100%

Prerequisite: Telereceive or the “Needs Sample” limitation

Morphs only. In addition to acquiring a target’s shape, the morph gains sufficient knowledge of memories and personality traits to eliminate the need for the Acting skill while impersonating him. The morph does not have access to anything beyond personality information and memories of friendships; he knows, for instance, how to greet a friend the target has known since childhood, but doesn’t know the combination to the safe in the target’s office. This knowledge is only available while he is in the appropriate form. If he memorizes the form he can regain the knowledge by assuming it again; if he does not memorize it, or removes it from memory, the knowledge is lost.

If the GM allows it, acquiring the *complete* memories and personality of the target is an additional +100% (and may take much longer – again, GM’s option). This can include some skills – Area Knowledges and some social skills are good candidates, but most scientific and physical skills are not. Skills are acquired at the target’s level or the attribute of the morph that the skill is based on, *whichever is lower*. Access to the target’s knowledge in other forms adds +50% to the cost. The ability to retain this knowledge after removing the form from “morph memory” is another +100%, and *all subsequent earned experience must be dedicated to paying for any skills or skill levels acquired in this manner!*

In either case, you *temporarily* acquire all the target’s mental advantages and disadvantages, and all his quirks, for as long as you retain his shape. This is not a penalty, but rather access to behavioral information, allowing you to better impersonate the target. If necessary, you can turn them off and revert to your own personality, but by default they are dominant and control your behavior. They *do not* replace or remove your own existing mental traits; they simply take precedence for as long as you let them.

Fast Change +100%

You can change shapes in 1 second (using the Concentrate maneuver), quickly enough to react to combat and other dangers (e.g., changing your face as you round a corner to avoid pursuers, becoming a butterfly as you fall off a cliff).

Genetic Match +50%/+100%

Prerequisite: the “Needs Sample” limitation at no less than -15%, or the Improved Forms enhancement

Morphs only. As part of your change, you generate a “shell” of flesh, skin, and/or hair whose cells exactly mimic the physical and genetic structure of the original model whose form you are copying. You can also produce matching bodily fluids as needed for blood tests and the like. Any samples taken from you and any remote genetic scanning performed on you thus register you as “genuine.” (Biopsies and other deep samples reveal your real genetic structure.)



This layer of skin also generates all the proper scents and pheromones for the individual or racial type that you are duplicating and reacts automatically to irritants and allergens as the original would. If you need to, you can suppress these functions with a Will roll.

The production of body fluids is *not* an automatic function, nor can you store such altered fluids in your body any longer than is needed for a sample to be taken. For example, if your blood is normally green, and you are shot while mimicking a human, you still bleed green, not red.

At the +100% level, your entire body replicates the original target’s genetic code and physical structure, “hiding” your true nature all the way down to a cellular level throughout your body. Only some means of actually scanning cell structure in detail reveals your real cells masquerading as mitochondria or other organelles.

Normally, the character must have some way of acquiring a sample to duplicate. However, morphs with both this and the Improved Forms enhancement (see p. 29) automatically produce a valid generic DNA sequence for the race or species as which they are masquerading, unless that race is imaginary or a chimerical blend. In the latter cases, any attempt at gene-mapping the form produces unusable “garbage” results, and genetic ID tests automatically fail.

This enhancement is of reduced utility in any setting where gene-typing is unknown or unreliable; halve its value if blood-typing and other simple checks are all that is available, and disallow it entirely if not even that is possible.

Horrifying Change +10%/level

The manner in which you transform is particularly gruesome; perhaps you shred your previous shape in an explosion of flesh and gore, or between your forms you melt into a pulsing mass of flesh accompanied by wet and disgusting sound effects. Whatever happens, it is a sight far more terrifying than an ordinary shift (see box, p. 20). For each level of this enhancement you have, witnesses to your change take a -1 penalty to their Fright Checks. Furthermore, companions and family *never* become injured to the change; they must always make Fright Checks at the specified penalty.

Innocuous Change +5%

Your transformation between forms is so mild in appearance that it inspires neither dazed fascination nor Fright Checks in those not used to it (see box, p. 20). You may be cloaked in a golden haze that hides you from prying eyes, or you may “blip” suddenly from one shape to another, with no intervening stages. This enhancement does not alter the *time* it takes you to shift, simply the appearance of the process.

This enhancement is not compatible with Slow Change or the “painful” level of Fatiguing Change.

No Memorization Required +50%

Morphs only. You don’t need to spend a minute memorizing a template – once you take a shape, but only while you are in that shape, you may immediately add it to your repertoire.

Non-Reciprocal Damage +50%

Weres. This enhancement replaces the advantage of the same name found on p. CI41 and is identical in effect to that advantage.

Once On, Stays On +150%

Weres only. Sleep, unconsciousness, and death do not force you out of your were-form – only the conscious intention to change does so. Severed body parts may or may not behave the same way – at the time of character creation, you should decide whether or not an amputated limb remains shifted after you change back.

Proportional Damage +0%

With this 0% feature, any damage taken by a shifter carries over to other forms *proportionally*, based on the ratio of the two forms' hit points. Divide damage suffered by the ratio when changing to a form with fewer hit points, and multiply it when going to one with more. *Example:* Tory has HT 12 in her human form and HT 12/6 as a were-fox; her hit point ratio is 2 (12 divided by 6). If she takes 4 points of damage as a human and then shifts, her fox form manifests with (4/2) or 2 points of damage. Tory then takes another 3 points of damage as a fox before she returns to human; her human form is now down 10 points – 5×2 .

Reciprocal Rest +30%

Weres only. This enhancement replaces the advantage of the same name found on p. CI43 and is identical in effect to that advantage.

Retains Intelligence +0%

Full Morphs only. You retain your IQ score when you change shape. Calculate the value of the racial template excluding its IQ cost – positive or negative. For example, a dog template has IQ -5, for -40 points, so you would need an additional 40 points of capability to become a dog. This enhancement makes it more expensive to shapeshift into animals whose low template cost is due in part to low IQ, but it makes it much easier to use those forms.

Severability +35%/+70%

Full Morphs only. This enhancement allows you to take the form, not only of a single other creature, but of a group or swarm of creatures; in effect, it lets you duplicate Body of Swarm and Independent Body Parts from *GURPS Horror* (pp. H19-20).

For +35%, bits of you that are cut off can survive and act on their own and eventually rejoin with you. You can't split parts off by a simple act of will, but if you have an edged weapon, you can deliberately cut off parts of yourself; this requires a Will roll (+3 for High Pain Threshold, -4 for Low Pain Threshold). If you have a creature of roughly comparable size to copy, or have memorized the form of such a creature, you can morph the severed part into its shape.

For +70%, you can split at will into any number of independent forms. Normally these are all the same, like a swarm

of insects or small animals; having your parts assume different forms requires a Change Control roll at -1 per extra form.

Shapestealer +100% Prerequisite: the "Needs Sample" limitation

Morphs only. You literally steal the shapes you take. The process of copying someone's form leaves the victim a fluid mass of jelly-like protoplasm. He loses all identifying characteristics, even down to species, and is comatose. If you have the "Cannot Memorize Forms" limitation, the victim regains his shape (and consciousness) as soon as you stop using it; otherwise, he only regains it when you drop it from your repertoire. Ultra-tech methods, weird science, or weird magic may also be able to restore your victims' shapes (or give them new ones), but nothing else will.

Because of the potential for abuse in this enhancement, GMs may require that the "Cannot Memorize Forms" limitation be taken with it.

Unliving Forms +50%

Full Morphs only. Not only can you become any creature – you can become any *object!* The usual limitations apply to how large (and capable) an object you can become, and you can assume robot model packages and other inorganic racial templates. (*GURPS Robots* may prove handy when quantifying objects that do more than just sit quietly in one place, but most inanimate objects less capable than a combat vehicle, a robot, or a death-ray gun have 0 or negative point costs.) A Morph who becomes an IQ 0 brick or toaster is trapped in that form unless he has the Retains Intelligence enhancement.



Optional Enhancement

Improvised Forms +100%

Full Morphs only. You can mix and match certain natural physical traits as desired without the need for a specific template, essentially creating on-the-fly templates at the moment you change. These improvised templates can range from you-plus-a-useful-trait all the way up to a chimerical shape never before seen in nature – as long as the cost of the resulting form is still less than or equal to the maximum template you can afford, as noted above. This differs from the blending of forms allowed with the Change Control skill in that the latter merely allows traits to be traded among memorized or active forms, while with this enhancement new traits can be added to a form effectively out of thin air.

Creating an improvised form requires a Change Control roll, with a GM-determined penalty proportional to the degree of improvisation. Blending two forms into a simple hybrid should be no more than a -2, while mixing and matching parts from a dozen different species and trying to make the result look natural could be -10 or even more. Failure on this roll indicates that desired traits are missing, extra unwanted ones are added, or the result has an appearance unlike that desired. A critical failure means that you not only have botched the transformation, but are stuck in the resulting form for 24 hours.

In general, you can add any trait that can be produced by changing the form or internal structure of the body or its internal organs. This includes increased ST or Extra Hit Points if they result from muscular or skeletal enhancements. New or improved sense organs, added or modified limbs, offensive and defensive structures such as claws, fangs, and natural armor, changes to the body's overall shape or flexibility, or metabolic changes such as breathing water are all possible. Disadvantages as well as advantages may be acquired.

In a fantasy setting, if some creatures have mana organs that grant them magical powers, you can acquire similar magical powers by duplicating those organs. This does not mean you can imagine a mana organ for any spell, or even any spell you know of – being an improvisational shapeshifter doesn't turn you into a master wizard! If you don't know of any creature that has the magical ability you want, you can't gain that ability by changing shape. If there are races with Magery, you can acquire Magery by changing shape, but that won't give you knowledge of any spells; you still have to learn them in the normal way.

You can't change the number of your bodies, unless you have the Severability enhancement (p. 28). You can't change the material of which your body is made, unless you also have the Unliving Forms enhancement (p. 28); this prevents your acquiring any of the *Body of . . .* advantages or Insubstantiality. You can't change the genetic structure of your body, unless you also have the Genetic Match enhancement (p. 27). You can't gain purely mental abilities such as Lightning Calculator. If there is a race that has psionic abilities you can gain those abilities, but you start out with only unskilled use; you have to learn psionic skills in the normal way.

Be aware that the possibility for abuse exists with Improvised Forms, which is why it is optional. GMs who consider it too flexible should feel free to impose additional restrictions on its use. One possibility is requiring that any improvised trait be "learned" before it can be used by memorizing an existing form in which it is "naturally" found.



Cannot Change Mass -50%

Morphs only. While you can still take any template you want, you cannot change your total mass. This may require that you stay the same approximate size, regardless of the "correct" size of your current template. Or you may be able to spread and compact your mass as necessary, becoming dense and tough when in small forms, and light and fragile in large ones. Morphs in hard science fiction typically have this limitation.

Cannot Duplicate Clothing -5%

Morphs only. You lack the ability to create the appearance of clothing as part of a morph. You always require proper costuming to successfully impersonate an individual. If you somehow copy a template that includes its own clothing, you cannot use Change Control to "share" those clothes with your other forms. -5%

Cannot Memorize Forms -50%

Morphs only. When you copy a form, you cannot memorize it. You have no time limit on how long you can use it – but once you shift to something else, it's no longer available to you. To use it again, you have to copy it again.

Cannot Use Change Control -5%

The character cannot blend aspects of his various forms (be they Morph slots or were-forms) using the Change Control skill – his shapeshifting is always all or nothing. He cannot even learn the skill.

Compound Change Varies

Weres only. You cannot change into your were-form by yourself – one or more other people (who must possess an identical were-form template with this limitation) must change with you in order to form a *single* shifted being. If any of you is too far away from the others, or resists the change with a simple Will roll, then the transformation does not take place. If you do change, you all vanish and the were-form appears in the place of the one who triggered the transformation.

The resulting were-form has a single mind, which is that of the constituent member with the highest Will. The character point cost of the were-form's template is equally divided among the individuals who compose it – for example, a were-form that would normally cost 120 points would cost three characters only 40 points apiece if they formed its "component parts."

The value of this limitation depends on the number of people who contribute to the were-form, and how close they must be. Use the following table to determine the cost based on distance:

Maximum Distance	Value
0-10 hexes	-50%
11-100 hexes	-40%
101-1,000 hexes	-30%
1001+ hexes	-20%

These values assume that one of the characters provides the were-form's mind. If the were-form is an entirely separate personality, treat this as Involuntary Shapeshifting (p. 26); the requirement that all the component individuals be within a specified range of each other is treated as a Rare condition, as they can voluntarily avoid meeting it. This limitation does not apply in that case. Each of the component individuals has Involuntary Shapeshifting at full value.

When this limitation is combined with a Cyclic Change or External Trigger, only voluntary changes can be resisted. Worse yet, distance does *not* prevent an automatic change!

This limitation is not compatible with Linked Curses.

Cure/Cursebreak

Varies

Weres only. Your were-form is unwanted, maybe even dangerous to the people around you, and there is some way to get rid of it – or it's a gift with strings attached. Either way, if some special condition is fulfilled, your shapeshifting ability goes away. This is a limitation because it is a drastic vulnerability for the were-form – enemies can exploit it, and well-meaning friends may try to accomplish it for you regardless of your wishes.

Cures may range from relatively simple (renounce the cult you serve, or undergo an exorcism) to difficult (bathe in the water of a particular spring in a remote province of China) to nearly impossible (a lost Hermetic ritual during which the were must hold a piece of moon rock). Alternately, a cure might risk (or guarantee!) harm to the were; a good example is the tradition that amputating a limb cures a were (see p. 54). The easier it is to break the curse, or the less harm the cure inflicts, the more this limitation is worth, from -50% for simple or harmless conditions to -5% for impossible and/or potentially fatal ones.

Add an additional -5% to the value if the cure is easily discovered through research or folklore, or -15% if it is common knowledge.

Reduce the value by -10% (minimum final value 0%) if the cure only works if the victim cooperates.

If the cure is only *temporary*, halve the final value of the limitation (rounding down) and define the conditions under which the were-form returns.

If the character has more than one were-form, it is not necessary to apply this limitation to all the forms, although it would be appropriate if they are linked thematically.

Furthermore, if the nature of the cure is such that it would normally cause damage either directly or indirectly, and the were-form possesses Invulnerability or Vampiric Invulnerability, the were-form *must* take a Vulnerability to the cure!

It is up to the GM whether the points spent on the were-form(s) either disappear or are available for some other use by the player when the curse is broken. (This does not apply to were-forms with "temporary" cures.) In the case of "educational" minor curses (see p. 90), it is allowable for the PC to buy off the offending disadvantage(s) with the points so freed.

At the GM's option, this limitation may also be applied to Involuntary Shapeshifting (p. 26).



Searching for a Cure

Just because the were-form has a cursebreak, it does not automatically follow that the character knows what it is, or even that it exists! More than a few weres in fiction spent a great deal of their time and energy on finding out whether or not their condition had a cure. GMs wishing to maintain suspense over this issue may wish to obfuscate the precise enhancements and limitations uniformly applied to were-forms (particularly infectious or latent ones) in their campaigns. One possibility would be to give the player an aggregate modifier value along with a list of known "features." As the shapeshifter spends time in his were-form, more information about it can be doled out as is necessary.

This option is more appropriate for a character who has acquired a were-form than for a member of a shapeshifting race (unless the latter has grown up ignorant of his abilities).

Cyclic Change

Varies

Weres only. The character is forced to assume his were-form on a regular basis. He has no choice in the matter; he changes automatically at the appropriate time. He must also remain in the were form for a certain minimum amount of time.

The base discount depends on the frequency of the change:

Less than once a year	No discount
Annually or semi-annually	-5%
Quarterly/seasonally	-10%
Monthly	-15%
Full moon	Special (see box)
Weekly	-30%
Daily	-40%

Cycles more frequent than "daily" are possible but are virtually unplayable for all but the most minor of shape changes, such as into a close variant of the base form. If the alternate form is not significantly different from the base, then there is no inherent disadvantage to any Cyclic Change, and no limitation should accrue.

The change period need not be strictly linked to the clock or calendar, as long as it is invariably regular. The GM may interpolate a value for an unusual period (as with the lunar cycle) or simply assess it at the smaller of the values between which it falls.

These values assume that the were is able to change at will at all other times. If the cyclic change is the *only* way he can change, it is worth an additional -25% to the limitation value.

Weres with a Cyclic Change must have a Minimum Duration (p. 32) as well.

External Trigger

Varies

Weres only. Some environmental condition triggers your change, whether you want to change or not. Some weres have triggers that toggle their changes on and off. Others have triggers that force shifts only in one direction. Some weres have *two* triggers – one to change, and one to change back.

Lunar Changes

All references to lunar-linked changes here assume Earth's moon or one with a similar cycle. Earth's lunar month is shorter than a calendar month, and the full moon usually spans two to three successive nights. This is a slightly special case for the Cyclic Change limitation (p. 30), worth -20%; the shifter is compelled to change not once at the "peak" of the cycle, but once per night during that peak. (The mandatory Minimum Duration in this case should not be longer than one night.)

In settings with a different lunar cycle or more than one moon, this value varies, perhaps wildly. Single moons are simple; choose or interpolate a value from the table in Cyclic Change that reflects the appropriate frequency; adjust appropriately for the duration of the full moon. Multiple moons can be a bit more complicated. Does the were change with *any* full moon, or just one of them? The latter case is obviously another simple cycle. But in the former case, if there are enough moons so that the appropriate phase could happen at almost any time, use an External Trigger (pp. 30-31) instead. Alternately, divide the number of days in a month by the total number of full moons in a month, and use the resulting averaged figure as the length of a cycle for the purposes of determining the limitation value.

Try not to link a Cyclic Change to a moon with an extremely short period – this is far more trouble to both GM and player than it is worth.

The value of a trigger is based on how common the trigger condition is:

Very Common (sunlight, cold water, darkness): -30%

Common (a particular type of garden plant, a specific emotional or physical state, electrical fields in a technological setting): -20%

Occasional (a given range of normal air temperature, a certain food, a specific mineral): -10%

Rare (a tropical plant, a special drug, radiation): -5%

These values also assume that the were is able to change at will at other times. If the external trigger is exclusive, the *only* way he can change, it is worth an additional -25% to the limitation value.

If the trigger only works for a change in one direction, halve its value.

If the difference between forms is trivial or not obvious, no benefit should accrue from an External Trigger.

A were with an External Trigger often has a Minimum Duration (p. 32) as well.

Enterprising players may attempt to manipulate an External Trigger to their advantage, to gain as much control over their conditions as possible. Some of this is acceptable; for instance, a Dark Ages were whose change is triggered by the smell of roses need not be restrained from running to the nearest bower if the Vikings attack his village. On the other hand, if the same were took to carrying a packet of dried rose petals with him, to sniff whenever his were-form might come in handy, it would no longer be precisely an External Trigger, but closer to an item-based change (see box, p. 15). The GM may declare that his were-change has become triggered only by dried rose petals, or worse, only by that *particular* packet of rose petals, and no other will do. Since item-based changes tend to be cheaper than other versions, this has no immediate negative impact on the character beyond lowering his point value – until the first time the packet is lost or stolen . . .

Fatiguing Change -10%/-20%

The shifter finds the change physically exhausting or even excruciating. At the -10% level, he loses 1d fatigue each time he changes (which cannot reduce his fatigue below 0) and suffers an equal *shock* penalty on the turn following the change, per p. B126. Fatigue lost due to the change may only be regained by rest. At the -20% level, *Painful Change*, he is also Mentally Stunned for 2d rounds following the change and must make a Will roll for each form into or through which he changes (see Form Continuum, below) to avoid crying out in pain.

A character who suffers from Painful Change may need to make a Will roll to change in a nonemergency situation. Characters with Cowardice or Low Pain Threshold have to make a Will Roll at -5 to change voluntarily at all.

Flawed -10%/-35%/-50%

Morphs only. While you may copy a template, there is always an error or flaw in the result: the wrong eye color, a double navel, missing (or extra) scars or birthmarks, a telltale tattoo, or a finger that won't bend properly. (It could even be something nonstructural, such as a constant vague smile or an inability to feel strong emotion.) The flaw is determined at character creation and manifests in every form that you take, including (optionally) your native one. If the target form already has the same flaw on its own, you are in luck; otherwise, it's a pointer to the fact that something's wrong.

At the higher levels, the copied form is not just Flawed, it is *Crude* – it only vaguely resembles the original (-35%, impersonation attempts at -10) and may only vaguely resemble its *species* (-50%, specific impersonations are impossible, and Horrific Appearance may apply). Character traits unrelated to appearance are unaffected by a Crude transformation.

Some characters may start with a Crude transformation and gradually improve it through practice. Halve the value of this limitation; now for every 10 uses of a particular form, its level of accuracy improves by one step, to a maximum of Flawed. Quarter the value of this limitation for five-use steps, or for the ability to reach a perfect representation.

Form Continuum -25%/-50%

Prerequisite: Morph, or two or more were-forms

You have multiple forms, but you cannot access them directly; you must move through a predefined sequence to reach the form you want, taking the usual change time for each one. You must select the sequence at character creation; often this is intuitive (for example, a were with human, wolfman, and full wolf forms). If you are a morph, you need to create a list of your memorization "slots" to traverse and pay attention to which slot holds what form; empty slots are skipped; taking no time.

Once defined, this order never changes.

If you are a were, and for any reason you acquire a new alternate form, you may choose to include it in the continuum (by applying this limitation) or leave it "outside" the sequence.

Random selection. At the -50% level, you cannot choose which of your forms you'll take when you shift out of base form. Determine the new form randomly, but you'll never get the form you started from. You can then traverse your continuum normally from there.

This limitation cannot be combined with the Fast Change enhancement.

Genetic Trait -0%

Weres only. Your were nature is encoded in your genes as a dominant trait; you received it from your parents, and you can pass it on to your children.

A genetic were-form can be either active or latent. If it is active, then this "limitation" is nothing more than a special effect – your shifting gift is "switched on." A character with a latent were-form, though, cannot use it until he is exposed to a trigger condition, at which time the were-form becomes available for use. The trigger is determined by the GM at character creation (see the adjacent box for inspiration), but to be fair it should be something the character has a chance to encounter.

A genetic were-form cannot have a permanent cursebreak (see p. 30), although temporary "cures" are perfectly acceptable. They rarely, if ever, have Infectious Attacks or Lycanthropic Dominance. Most other change-related traits are available, although common sense should rule in their choice and use.

The ability to morph can also be inherited, but since morphs cannot have Cure/Cursebreak, Infectious Attacks, or Lycanthropic Dominance, the heritability has no significant game effect.

How to Become a Were

If you're not a were by virtue of birth or bloodline, or your genetic were gift requires a "trigger" to turn it on, legends list any number of ways to gain the ability to shift in addition to the traditional bite. While most of these are specific to werewolves, there's no reason (beyond a GM's ruling, that is) that they cannot be used for any variety of were:

Annoy (or please) a wizard, sorceress, or god.

Be called by an animal spirit, or take a specific animal as your spiritual totem in the proper ritual.

Drink water or eat dust from a wolf's footprint.

Drink water from certain springs, especially in the Harz Mountains in Germany.

Drink downstream from wolves.

Possess and wear a moonstone.

Eat a wolf's brain.

Sleep at night in the open with the moon on your face on a certain Wednesday or Friday in summer.

In a medieval Christian setting, be denounced from the altar and remain impenitent. Or be excommunicated for seven years. Or do not get shriven or use holy water for 10 years.

Pluck and wear a rare white marsh flower from the Balkans.

Anoint yourself with a special ointment (recipe available in the grimoire of your choice).

Wear the suitably enchanted skin of a dead wolf or werewolf.

Wear a belt made of wolf's leather (or human skin, especially the skin of a hanged man), adorned with the signs of the zodiac, and with seven tongues on the buckle, which must be put into the ninth hole.

Linked Curses -25%

Weres only. You and another person (or persons, although it is most commonly a pair) are jointly afflicted with were-forms whose activations are connected. Whenever one of you changes, no matter how far apart you are, it forces the *other* to change at the same time. The link may be synchronized (you both shift into were-form and back together) or inverted (only one of you can be in your base form at a time). The type of link is determined at character creation and cannot be changed afterward.

Although their animal templates need not be the same, both characters must have otherwise identical were packages. These usually include a Cyclic Change (with equal periods), an obscure and difficult Cursebreak, and this limitation.

Maximum Duration Varies

The character cannot stay in his shifted form longer than a given amount of time. If he tries, he automatically changes back to his base form. (Unless he also has a Minimum Duration, he can change back at any time before that.)

The shorter the duration, the more this limitation is worth:

Less than 30 seconds	-75%
30 seconds to 1 minute	-65%
1 to 10 minutes	-50%
10 to 30 minutes	-25%
30 minutes to 1 hour	-10%
Sunrise to sunset or vice versa	-7%
1 to 12 hours	-5%
Greater than 12 hours	-0%

A character with a Maximum Duration may not have a Minimum Duration longer than the Maximum.

This limitation cannot be combined with Cyclic Change.

Note to GMs: This limitation is open to abuse by "combat monster" shifters who do nothing in their alternate form(s) but fight. Feel free to disallow it if necessary.

Minimum Duration Varies

The character must remain in his shifted form for some minimum amount of time before he can change back for any reason.

The longer the duration, the more the limitation is worth:

Less than 1 hour	+0%
1 to 8 hours	-5%
8 to 12 hours, one night or equivalent	-10%
12 to 24 hours	-15%
1 day to 1 week	-20%
1 week to 1 month	-25%
Greater than one month	-30%

A were with a Cyclic Change must also have a Minimum Duration. This minimum is variable, but cannot be longer than one-half the cycle length.

A character with a Minimum Duration may not have a Maximum Duration shorter than the Minimum.

Needs Sample

Morphs only. You cannot copy a person's shape without sampling him in some way. The exact value of this limitation varies with the extent of the sample required. Simply touching the target is worth -5%; a fingernail, drop of blood, strand of hair, or scrap of flesh is -15%; consuming the target whole is worth -50%, and you'd better have some way of absorbing or eating the victim *quickly*. If a sample requires flesh or other organic materials, it must be fresh and undecayed.

Varies

No Base Form

Full Morphs only. While you may personally identify with a specific race, your only racial template is the Morph advantage itself. This gives you an extra memorization "slot" – that normally occupied (permanently) by a native race – at the expense of having no native language, no default social skills, and no place in any culture or civilization that you know of.

-0%



Projected Were-Form

Weres only. Your were-form is actually your soul, traveling outside your body in a manner similar (but not identical) to astral projection. While it does so, your "real" body goes into a trance. If your physical body is killed while you are in your other shape, both it and your were-form will usually die together, unlike regular astral projection. Also unlike regular astral travel, your were-form is just as solid and physical as your "real" body, and has no range limits and no duration limits other than your ability to last out a trance. When you leave the trance, the were-form vanishes.

-25%/-50%

When you go into your were-form, you do not have to manifest it at the same location as your physical body. You can appear anywhere within direct line of sight, or at a location within 10x10 yards that is well enough known to you so that you can visualize it clearly. Similarly, you do not have to return to the location of your unconscious form to dismiss your were-shape.

Template Reassignment

Among races that naturally possess the Morph advantage, there are occasionally individuals who (for whatever reason) wish to possess a different base form than the one they were born with. Where circumstances allow, procedures are often developed to permit such a thing. Depending on the civilization involved, such procedures may be magical, alchemical, surgical, or even nanotechnological. Except in the most ultra-tech or ultra-magic societies, they are invariably uncertain and dangerous. For this reason, they are often heavily regulated if not outlawed altogether.

If a character elects to undergo template reassignment (and can find someone willing to perform the procedure), he must select the new template ahead of time and provide the "specialist" with a genetic sample. It is not possible for this procedure to reproduce a specific individual as a new base form. However, the new form *can* be "customized" if the patient cares to; his new skin, hair/fur/plumage, and eye color, height, weight, and general build can all be specified. (At the GM's option, an Appearance level can also be set, but if the result is a net improvement in the character's looks, the difference in points must be paid at the time of the procedure. A *reduction* in Appearance gains the character no points.)

Roll against the appropriate skill for the specialist performing the procedure and note the number of points by which the roll was made or missed. This is a difficult procedure; the skill roll should be at -5 or worse.

On a simple failure, the character suffers 1d of damage for every point by which the roll was missed and must make a HT roll to avoid the loss of his Morph ability for (20 - HT) weeks. On a critical failure, the character must make *two* HT rolls – one to survive the procedure, and a second to avoid losing his Morph advantage *permanently*. He also takes damage as from a simple failure.

On a critical success, there are no problems and the base form is reassigned to the desired template. On an ordinary success, the base form is also reassigned, but there may be complications. The patient must make a HT roll with a bonus equal to the specialist's margin of success. A success on this roll indicates no further problems. A failure, however, triggers an insidious affliction: the morph's body cannot handle the changes made to it and gradually loses its integrity. After HT/2 months of apparent success, problems appear with the user's Morph ability – longer change times, inability to maintain or memorize forms, flawed shifts. After another month, the sufferer's body begins losing coherence, growing translucent and bloated as it loses the ability to hold *any* shape. Roll against HT every day starting at HT/2 + 1 months after the procedure; every failure reduces HT by 1, and when HT reaches 0 the character dies, his body melting into a watery puddle of undifferentiated protoplasm.

Neither ordinary nor supernatural medical aid can halt the HT loss. Psionic and magical healing can restore lost HT, but this only extends the dying process. At the GM's option, extraordinary efforts – a Great Wish, voluntary personal sacrifice by a psionic healer, TL16+ medical technology, or the like – can rescue the sufferer, but his base form is permanently, possibly unrecognizably, altered in the process.

Alternate Projecting Weres

GMs who own *GURPS Spirits* may prefer the rules for Spirit Projection or Ectoplasmic Projection to the Projected Were-form limitation, especially if the were has several forms he can manifest.

For Spirit Projection (p. SPI76), GMs should apply the Physical Form enhancement and apply most (if not all) of the Missing Power limitations.

For Ectoplasmic Projection (pp. SPI70-72), use the Astral Link enhancement and the Always Visible and Always Tangible limitations; optionally, the Only While Asleep limitation can be applied as well.

At the -25% level, you are still “in” your physical body even when using your were-form. (You are effectively operating your were-form by remote control.) It still takes a great deal of your attention and energy, though, and you are only barely aware of your surroundings. You can hold slow, halting conversations with someone nearby, be led around, make Passive Defense rolls, or even be carried (gently). Any great shock or distraction (such as a successful attack or a vigorous attempt to “wake you up”) can break you out of your trance and cause the were-form to vanish – make a Will roll to ignore anything short of receiving a wound.

At the -50% level, you fall into a deathlike coma while in your were-form, as your soul completely leaves your body. You must take special precautions to protect or hide your body, as you are vulnerable and can be mistaken for a corpse (a Physician roll is needed to determine that you aren't really dead).

Surviving Death.

Although a character with a projected were-form usually dies if his base form is killed while he is projecting, a critical success on a Will roll at the moment of death allows him to survive in his were-form. (The GM may grant bonuses to this roll if the character was pursuing an Obsession or Higher Purpose or was involved in some other all-encompassing task to which he had dedicated himself.) Even though the surviving form is corporeal, it is actually a kind of ghost. As an undead creature it is subject to all the weaknesses of the undead as defined in the particular campaign: vulnerability to the Banishment spell and to exorcisms, Compulsive Behaviors and so on (see *GURPS Undead* for ideas and guidelines). So-called “angry ghost” weres (see p. 30) are frequently created in this manner.

For characters whose “normal” astral bodies are animals, see the box *True Astral Were-Forms*.

Slow Change

-10%/-25%

The character's changes take longer than usual. At -10%, the change time is measured in minutes instead of seconds. At -25%, it is measured in hours. If the character also has a Cyclic Change, the time to change plus any Minimum Duration must *always* be shorter than half the cycle length!

At the GM's option, change times can be much more flexible. Under this option, the -10% level can make the change take from one minute up to an hour, while the -25% could last a whole day. The GM and the player should determine the exact duration – and whether there is any random element involved – at character creation.

True Astral Were-Forms

In some traditions (particularly those of a shamanistic nature), the were-form is an entirely spiritual construct. Unlike weres built with the *Projected Were-Form* limitation (p. 33), this kind of were-form is never physical and rarely if ever interacts with the corporeal world. It is instead used to communicate with spirits of nature and the dead, in the appropriate realms.

This is simply the psionic power Astral Projection (p. P10-11), with a special enhancement: *Astral Body is an (animal type)*. For +10%, you may use any animal template costing up to your physical form's racial cost as the basis for your astral body. While in astral form, you possess all the “physical” attributes of an average animal of that type (except the Mute disadvantage) and any of its mental advantages, but retain your IQ and all your mental traits. For animal templates with higher cost, add another +10% to the enhancement value for every 50 additional points or fraction thereof by which the template exceeds the base form.

The template's physical characteristics directly translate into astral equivalents. The animal's ST, DX, HT, HP, and Dodge supersede the human values. Claws and teeth cause extra damage in astral combat. Natural PD and DR are *cumulative* with that granted by the power (astral PD is subject to the usual limit of 6). Tracking abilities, Discriminatory Smell, and the like allow pursuit in astral space where it would normally be impossible. As a bonus, flying and swimming animals add their Speed to the character's Power level to determine Astral Speed.

The specific animal template is chosen at character creation and cannot be changed. (In an explicitly shamanistic context, it often represents the character's totem animal.) However, if the GM allows, the character may buy more than one template, either at creation or with earned experience. Each template so purchased is a separate enhancement, as well as a separate form. Attributes of two different templates may not be combined; the Shapeshifting and Change Control skills *cannot* be applied to this kind of were. Furthermore, the psi cannot change forms in the middle of an astral journey; he must choose one form at the start and remains in that form until he returns to his body.

For an additional +5% per template, an animal astral body can be made *switchable*, allowing the psi to change at will from it to a “normal” astral form or any other switchable template he might possess, without having to return to his body first.

While the above description refers exclusively to astral bodies and astral travel, this enhancement is also available for any other ability that allows a character to project his spirit into an alternate metaphysical plane – such as the Marches of *GURPS In Nomine* or even some varieties of cyberspace. It does *not* apply to any power or gift that allows a physical transition to such a plane!

Template Susceptibility Varies

Morphs only. You are not in full control of your shapeshifting ability. Any time you come into contact with someone with a Will equal to or greater than your own, you must win a Contest of Will to avoid changing your shape to his. You are not affected by other shapeshifters.

The base value for this limitation is -20%, and you only need a Contest of Will upon physical contact. For an additional -5%, the target need not touch you, but merely be in the same hex. Each additional -5% (up to a maximum limitation value of -75%) expands this area by a one-hex radius. If more than one such individual is in your radius at a time, roll Contests in descending order of target Will until you either change or run out of templates. Choose randomly between templates with equal Wills.

Once you win a Contest of Will with an individual, you don't have to run another one until the next time you meet him (base version) or the next time he enters your radius. If you become intimately familiar with an individual – roommate, spouse – you automatically resist his template unless he comes upon you unawares and surprises or alarms you.

Once you copy a form, you are not susceptible to another template for (Will) minutes.

You are not required to memorize a form you take on due to Susceptibility. If you are forced into a new form while memorizing another, the memorization fails and you lose the previous form.

Template Susceptibility is not compatible with Unstable (below).

Unliving Forms Only -0%

Full Morphs only. You cannot turn into creatures; you may only turn into *objects*. You have all the capabilities listed under the Unliving Forms enhancement – but you cannot assume the template of anything *alive*.

Robotic and other inanimate Morphs often have this option. They can acquire the ability to assume living forms as a +50% enhancement, or an unusual inanimate Morph could have Living Forms Only.

Unstable -25%

Your hold on your alternate form is tenuous, either because you are just learning how to manifest it, or because it is very difficult to maintain. If you are surprised or shocked while changed, you must make a Will roll or immediately revert to your base form. (A critical success means you need not check again for the duration of the current encounter

regardless of what happens; a critical failure indicates you may not return to your alternate form for a like amount of time.) Combat for which you are prepared does not usually require a roll, although *unexpected* damage from an ambush or accident does.

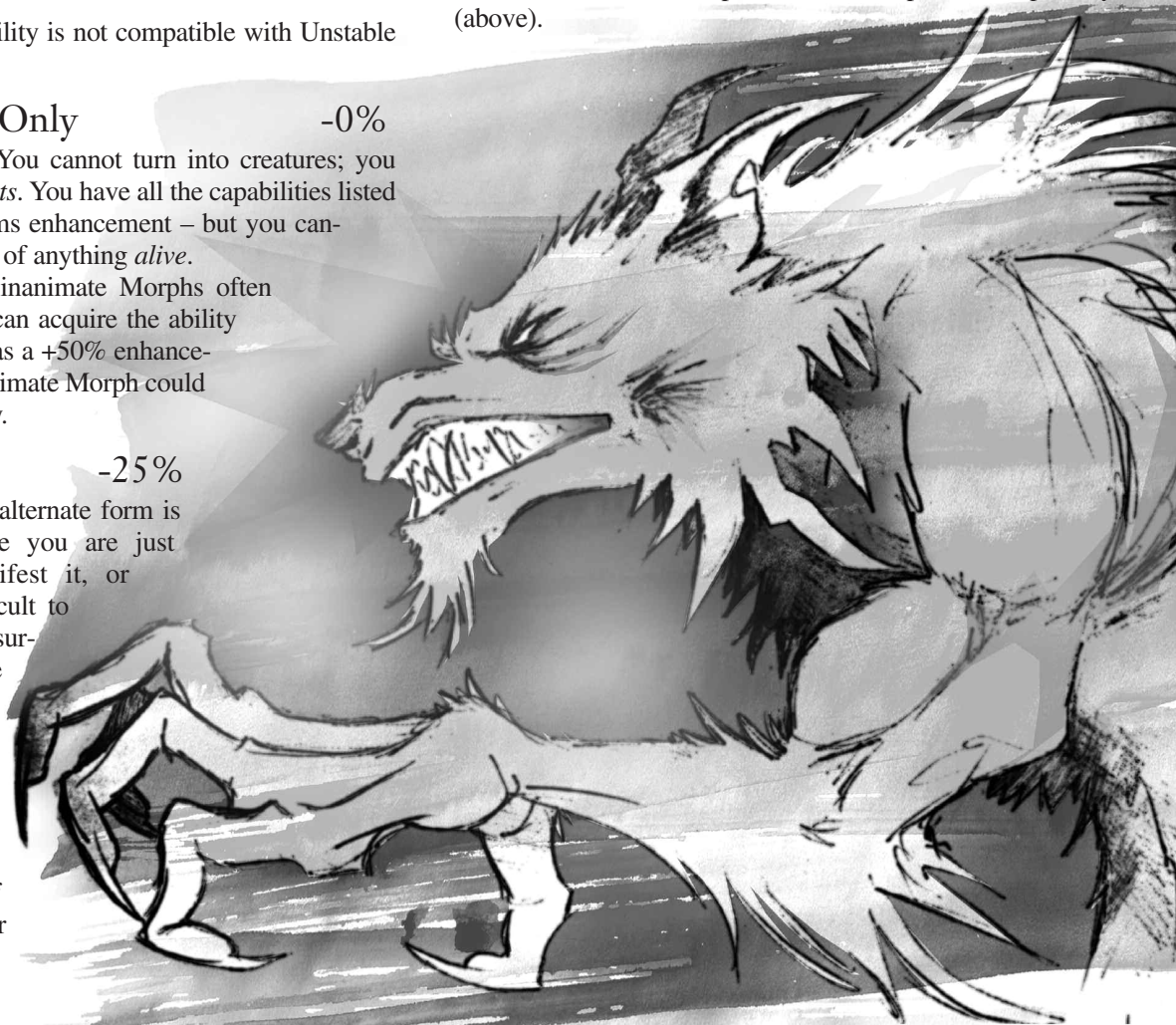
This limitation is not compatible with the Unfazeable advantage.

While more suitable for weres, this limitation can also be used with Morph; in such a case, it applies to *all* the forms the morph can take. It cannot be used with an exclusive Cyclic Change, or where an External Trigger is needed to transform back to the base form.

The GM should allow the player to buy off this limitation without any special explanation, especially if it represents inexperience with shapeshifting. Optionally, it may be bought off *incrementally*, with each -5% eliminated with earned points granting +1 on the Will roll until the entire limitation is removed.

Option: War of Wills. In a character with Split Personality, Unstable can be used to represent a constant struggle between personalities for control of the body. There is no change in the limitation value, but the Will Roll now applies to *all* forms; it becomes a Quick Contest of Will between the personalities, modified (at the GM's option) by how strongly the contesting minds feel about matters at hand. This use of Unstable should *not* be bought off easily, if at all.

Unstable is not compatible with Template Susceptibility (above).



“Once Only” Shifting

This is an optional rule, inspired by the Zerg from the game “Starcraft” as well as any number of comic books, movies, and cartoons. The character possesses a reserve of points that he may use *once* to radically alter his form and abilities.

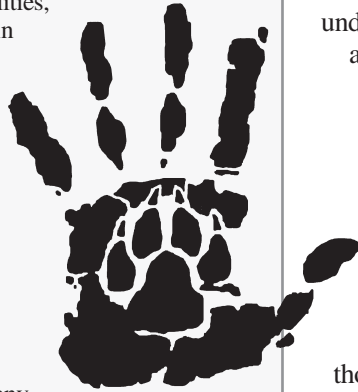
At character creation, the player sets aside a block of points, unused. He then buys a “placeholder” change advantage at a cost of one point for every 10 points reserved (minimum 1 point). As long as the block remains unused, he can add to it with earned experience, should he so choose. For every 10 points or fraction thereof added to the block, he must spend one additional point on the placeholder. (This is, in effect, a +10% enhancement.)

At any time during play, the player can invoke the change. He “spends” the placeholder, losing its points permanently. The block of reserved points then becomes available. He can use these points to raise his attributes and buy or upgrade advantages (and, at the GM’s option, skills).

With the GM’s approval, the player may “buy back” some existing advantages (Appearance, for instance) and use those points as well. He can also take any number of Disadvantages appropriate to the new form or abilities, but these are considered “acquired in play” and do not give any additional points.

Any character trait that has no point cost (details of appearance such as hair and skin color, for example) may be freely changed at this time as well.

Once the changes have been determined, they are applied to the character permanently. Any unspent points are lost. Multiple blocks and placeholders can be bought, but only at character creation, and each set is that many points by which the character is weaker than other PCs – until he uses them.



Predefined Changes

If desired, one-time shifts can be predefined; by sacrificing flexibility, the player can save – sometimes substantially – on point cost. This can be quite useful for describing races that undergo periodic metamorphosis as part of their life cycle, similarly to butterflies.

Add up *all* changes to the character, including the costs of new disadvantages acquired with the form, as if it were a racial template. (Or use a pre-existing racial template or model package.) This total *must* be positive. There must be a net improvement in the character; a predefined change *cannot* reduce a character’s point total except by the amount of the “placeholder,” which is still paid as above. The final total becomes the block of points set aside.

Typical Limitations

Obvious modifiers the GM may impose include “incubation” or “metamorphosis” times, perhaps with an actual cocoon involved; requiring the new abilities to be specifically related to the situation that triggered the change; requiring the new form to be Ugly, Hideous, or Monstrous; requiring two or more predefined changes to be sequential, building on one another; and so on. Limitations discount the reserved block *only* – the “placeholder” is never discounted, and is always based on the true point value of the change, not the limited value.

The GM should be aware of the potential for abuse in this rule – which is why it is optional.

Skills

Unlike advantages and disadvantages, any skills possessed by the base form are normally retained, even if the alternate form cannot make use of them. (For example, a shifter who has the Presentient disadvantage (p. CI103) in an alternate form loses access to all M/A and harder skills when in that form, and his M/E skills are limited to his IQ.) If a character concept requires that the alternate form utterly (and permanently) lack a skill possessed by the base form, treat it as a Taboo Trait (p. CI176).

Exception: A character with Split Personality can buy completely different skill sets for each personality.

GURPS Compendium I lists two skills that relate directly to shapechanging.

Change Control (Mental/Hard)

see p. CI138

There are no alterations to the use of Change Control under these rules, except that morphs as well as weres are allowed to possess and employ it. In either case, any form can use it to acquire traits from any other form in the character’s repertoire – even to transplant body parts from one form (such as wings) to other forms that don’t have them!

Note that morphs may include a target’s clothing as part of a copied shape, and such clothing is actually part of the morph’s body. The GM may, at his option, allow a morph with this skill to “swap” outfits between different memorized forms on a successful skill roll, as though he possessed the Improvised Forms enhancement. Differences in relative size may be handled automatically, or the GM may use the degree of success on the Change Control roll as an indicator of how well the “new” clothes “fit.”

Not being able to use the Change Control skill is a limitation on your were-form or your Morph power. See p. 29.

Shapeshifting (Mental/Hard) see p. CI144

This skill was originally published in *GURPS Voodoo* (p. VO57) and applied only to spirits that could manifest in the physical world. Its *GURPS Compendium I* use by shapeshifters is now obsolete. For more substantive alterations to an astral or dream body, see “True Astral Were-Forms” on p. 34.

Shifters and Martial Arts

A character can know and use Karate or Judo, and even more advanced martial arts abilities, in his shifted form provided the form is not Presentient. Even for sentient shifters, IQ remains critical for certain martial arts skills. A shifted form with an IQ lower than the base form may find its combat effectiveness reduced considerably. Furthermore, since such most martial arts were designed for human beings, only humanoid shapes with hands can use these skills effectively.

It is entirely possible to design a martial art expressly for use by nonhuman forms. A race of weres, for instance, may well develop two styles of Karate: one for their base form and another for their alternate. Such specialized combat styles

would count as separate skills (perhaps defaulting to each other at -4 or more). See *GURPS Martial Arts* for details on customizing martial arts styles.

Spellcasting While Changed

Shamanic shifters, hengeyokai, and other varieties of shapechangers may have the desire or need to cast spells while in an animal form. If the game world does not allow the optional Spell Ritual rules (pp. B147-148), they're out of luck unless the GM grants them special dispensation. If the Spell Ritual rules *are* in effect, the were must possess a sufficient level of skill in the desired spell to perform it within the limitations of his animal form (Mute and/or No Fine Manipulators usually being the deciding factors).

In either situation, some GMs may allow unencumbered spellcasting by weres whose animal forms are sufficiently close to human – apes or yeti, primarily, but generally anything with functional hands and a voice.

Spellcasting shifters whose base forms have no appropriate manipulators, are mute, or both (such as some varieties of hengeyokai – see p. 40) almost

always possess spells that can be cast without difficulty in those forms. Any shifter with *innate* spells also suffers no penalties for their use in any of his shapes.



Taboo Traits and Features

The final step in the creation of a shapeshifter is to fine-tune it, either to match a specific role in the campaign for which it is intended, or to ensure that it better reflects a folkloric original on which it is modeled. To this end, taboo traits and features can be applied.

Taboo traits are trivial restrictions or limitations that make sense for a given creature, but that don't affect its final cost; e.g., "Cannot use base form's social skills" or "May not enter consecrated ground." *Features* are 0-point "special effects" that don't impose any restrictions, but that change the way certain rules or traits work. The GM is encouraged to create 0-point traits as needed, but is cautioned against adding too many to a single were-form.

It would be impossible to itemize all possible 0-point traits, so most should be left implicit to save space. As a general rule, if it would make sense for a shapeshifter to be affected differently (than a human) by a relatively specialized or obscure effect, the GM should just rule that this is the case and move on.

Some 0-point traits merit additional discussion:

Affected by Animal spells. This is a Feature worth 0 points, suitable for weres whose alternate forms are more animal than human. That is to say, they not only look like animals, but possess the Bestial and/or Presentient disadvantages. Morphs are unlikely to have this feature, but some character conceptions might call for it. Shifters with this Feature are unaffected by spells intended for humans and other sentients (such as the Mind Control college) while in their animal forms.

Affected by Technology spells. This is a 0-point Feature possessed by most were-machines in their "device" forms. While in those forms, were-machines are also unaffected by any spell that normally affects living creatures only.

Aura traits. In games where psionic shifting is possible, shapechangers may possess a telltale psionic signature, have odd or disturbing auras (unusual colors, alternate forms visible or even overlapping), or even have no aura at all.

Can be repelled using True Faith. This can occasionally have severe consequences, but mortals with True Faith are extremely rare. See Dread (p. 24) for more details.

Cannot use (skill possessed by base form). Unless they are subject to a Split Personality or are Presentient, alternate forms normally have at least some access to all the skills possessed by the base. Use this trait to "lock away" a skill or set of skills from a particular alternate form that would normally be able to use it.

Magical. The character's shapeshifting skill is supernatural in origin. It usually requires at least Low mana, can be affected by some Metamagic, and is normally undetectable by technological means.

See p. CI176 for more on taboo traits.

Shifters and Mana

Magical shapechangers normally revert to their base forms in a no-mana area. This is a 0-point taboo trait. Once they leave the no-mana zone their ability to change usually returns. However, if this is inconvenient for the campaign, the GM may rule that all magical shifters must possess the basic 25-point level of the Mana Enhancer advantage (p. CI40), making them mobile low-mana zones, capable of shifting *anywhere*. Conversely, shapeshifters may possess a Dependency (p. CI81) on mana, forcing them to stay in magically active regions or die!

VARIETIES AND FLAVORS

No two shapeshifters are exactly alike. This section explores some of the themes and special effects a player can employ in customizing a shapechanger to make him unique and different – even among a race of similar beings.

Some are related to the special enhancements and limitations found on pp. 26-35, insofar as they are specific applications of them. Others are more in the line of “color,” without specific game mechanics.

Curses and Enchantments

Most of the classic were-creatures of myth and the media are victims of curses or enchantments. This is a long tradition dating back to prehistory, best exemplified in the werewolves of Arthurian lore, French medieval myth, and horror movies from the middle of the 20th century.

Such a victim often suffers a complete split personality with an inimical or savage were-form at the worst, or a bestial one at the best. This type of curse is usually imposed as a punishment or an act of revenge, usually by a skilled spellcaster who specializes in such things, or by a supernatural power. The current victim need not have been the offender – a particularly aggrieved party may turn the curse into a hereditary trait afflicting generations of descendants.

On the other hand, a particularly evil person may embrace a truly monstrous curse and revel in it. Seeing it as a tool for sowing terror and chaos, or simply for inflicting revenge on those who he thinks wronged him, such a character may be so in touch with his own bestial nature that he may not suffer a Split Personality when he enters into his were-form. This was the primary view of werewolves in the medieval church.



“Minor” Curses

Less severe curses are also possible. Far from being fodder for horror stories, these “minor” curses may be imposed to teach a moral or social lesson to the victim; giving the victim a form subject to problems and stresses usually alien to him may teach him empathy for others or simply much-needed etiquette. Often these shapes are no more than simply inconvenient, either due to their triggers, cycles, or time limits, or due to the attributes of the were-form.

Such a character usually has one or more mental disadvantages that encompass the behavior being punished. Odious Personal Habits, Intolerances, Greed, and other “deadly sins” all make good candidates.

Examples of such curses can be found in many medieval tales of Christian saints, as well as in some modern light fiction. Bottom with his ass’s head in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* could be viewed this way, although the conditions on his enchantment were far less onerous than the usual curse.

What Makes It a Curse?

While the main text discusses curses in the literal sense of the word, a curse need not be a malicious magic. A “curse” can be metaphorical rather than literal – Dr. Jekyll’s Mr. Hyde was born of science, but the impact Hyde had on the doctor’s life certainly qualified him as a curse!

A literal magical curse need not be malicious, either. The Christian apocrypha are filled with stories of curses cast by saints as tools of moral instruction and correction. One example is the werewolves of Ossory, Ireland, who were cursed for their wickedness by St. Natalis and “compelled to take two by two a wolf-shape for seven years, returning to their own form at the end of that time.” While that particular case is almost certainly not suitable for player characters, this kind of shapeshifting curse can be anything from campaign background color to a convenient plot element.

Breaking a Curse

Implicit in the concept of a curse is the prospect of breaking it. This is rarely a simple prospect – else what would be the value of a curse as revenge or a lesson? For “minor” curses, the break could simply be learning the lesson or behavior intended – which may be just as difficult as finding the rare gila-gila herb in the jungles of the Amazon, depending on the character.

The player and the GM should jointly determine the were-form’s cure. Properly defined, the curse-break could add an entire level of structure to a campaign even if the were never takes a central role in the game, by virtue of the underlying search motif it imposes. For “educational” curses, they are built-in tools and goals for character development.

Several cures from various cultures can be found in the box on pp. 53-54.

Undead and Shapeshifting

Traditionally, vampires are shapeshifters as well as undead; wolves and bats are the two animals into which they most frequently change. While the *GURPS* standard vampire package already accounts for such abilities, GMs or players may choose to create their own custom variants. In such a case, combining the vampire’s basic abilities with a full were-form or two – or worse, Morph – can result in a subtle and deadly character – or foe.

Other undead-were connections can be found; possibly best known is the undead state of the victims of a werewolf described in the film *An American Werewolf in London*. But many traditions provide a more immediate link.

The Werewolf-Vampire Connection

In Eastern Europe and other parts of the world, were-creatures and the local variety of vampires are often intimately

connected. The “standard” movie (and gaming) vampire can shift into a wolf, and even today the Greek and the Slavic languages frequently use the word *vrykólakas* or its cognates to refer to both creatures. In Gypsy folklore vampires and werewolves are related, though two different beasts. Similarly, the Filipino *aswang*, the Portuguese *bruxsa* and *cucubuth*, and the Serbian *wurdalak* all display vampiric traits. The last, though, is emblematic of the most typical belief in many regions: a werewolf is *guaranteed* to become a vampire upon its death.

Returning as a vampire – perhaps as one of the more exotic varieties found in *GURPS Blood Types* rather than the default *GURPS* vampire – may be an attractive option for some players of were-characters. Of course, the newly undead PC may find he now possesses far different priorities. If the GM chooses to implement this bit of folklore in his campaign, it is best to cloak it in as much confusion and contradiction as possible, to prevent exploitation by the players.

Werewolves and Ghosts

In Western Europe, were-creatures – particularly werewolves – were sometimes called “angry ghosts.” A typical example is the case of the Werewolf of Anspach (p. 39). If such a creature were to appear in a game, it would likely have a ghost, revenant, or similar being as its base form. (See *GURPS Undead* for complete racial packages describing many possible candidates). Additionally, the undead/were-creature would have to have a *very* good reason – at least in its own opinion – for coming back to prey upon the living in such a manner.

Alternately, the ghost-were may well be the lingering shifted form of an individual who was employing a Projected Were-Form (see p. 33) when he died. Depending on the manner in which he died, such a ghost may or may not be angry – but either way, he probably has a serious agenda to pursue.

Those that do tend to suffer from an Obsession or Compulsive Behavior, like many other ghosts. They may not always be the best company – and any other characters had best be sure that they are not included among the people central to the ghost’s particular motivation!

Shapeshifting Races

As interesting as individual shapeshifters can be, an entire race of them can be even more interesting – or more terrifying. From the wolfen of the movie of the same name to the doppelgängers and mimics of classic fantasy gaming to the

Vessels and *GURPS In Nomine*

Celestial characters in *GURPS In Nomine* are by definition beings of spirit. In order to interact with the corporeal world, they must inhabit *Vessels* – physical bodies created specifically to house them. These Vessels need not be (and frequently aren’t) human. While most Celestials usually have only one Vessel, it is possible to possess two or more. In such a case, the Celestial may change Vessels with a turn’s concentration (see p. IN35). As far as any observers are concerned, the Celestial appears to be a were or other variety of shapechanger.

If the *In Nomine* version of the Benandanti (see box, p. 97) aren’t a part of the campaign, it is possible that the myths of were-creatures in the world of *GURPS In Nomine* are the result of Celestial-human interaction. Certain angels serving Jordi, the Archangel of Animals, may have been the seed for these legends. Regardless of the truth of this speculation, it is virtually certain that demons – possibly serving Beleth, Demon Princess of Nightmares – have exploited and perverted those memories for the purpose of sowing terror and fear among humans, particularly during the late Middle Ages.



many shapechanging races of science fiction, a race of shifters almost always poses a threat to *someone* – a threat that can drive a campaign.

When designing a race with shapechanging ability, never forget to ask, “Why?” Even magical races have a reason for their shapeshifting. Is it in response to environmental pressures? For protective coloration? Or to better sneak up on their prey? Perhaps they are a race of warriors or infiltrators. Were they artificially created, or did they evolve naturally? Answer these questions, and the race practically designs itself – mental and physical attributes immediately become obvious, and even possible plot hooks begin to form.

Don’t overlook diversity within the race, though. Subcultures and sub-races not only provide helpful verisimilitude, but also keep players on their toes.

If not a naturally magical race, such creatures (usually) have to respect the laws of physics to a certain degree. As with psionic shifters, there may be limits to the sizes and shapes they can take and the degree of change that they can undergo. Remember, though, that even if major skeletal changes aren’t allowed, a

biped is not that far from a quadruped – especially if its proportions are different from humanity’s.

For players, the advantage of playing members of a shapeshifting race is that their characters need not feel the isolation of being unique or nearly unique creatures, possibly unnatural – unless they are unaware of their heritage, which in itself can drive a storyline for a campaign.

Hengeyokai – Reverse Weres

Mythologies the world over are rife with the mirror image of the were-creature: tales of animals that can change into humans can be found in almost every culture. Japanese myth and legend are particularly rich in this regard – and from them comes the name used here for this class of creature: *hengeyokai* (which can be translated as “changing spirit”). Perhaps the best known example of the *hengeyokai* is the *kitsune* (see pp. 99-105).

Hengeyokai (also called simply “henge”) always have at least two forms – their natural animal bodies and human alternate forms. (Alien worlds may have their own equivalent to *hengeyokai*, which transform into the local dominant species instead of humans.) Additionally, some varieties have a third, intermediate form combining aspects of the other two. In Asian and other myths, the human form retains some obvious feature that is indicative of the henge’s animal nature – a tail that must be hidden, hair coloration similar to fur patterns, a sharp nose that resembles a bird’s beak, and so on.

Almost any animal may be a *hengeyokai*. Cats who can become human are common in both Asian and European folklore, although in the latter they tend to have a demonic characterization. In Asian myth, *hengeyokai* birds, fish, shellfish, dogs, rats, spiders, and monkeys have also all appeared.

Shapeshifting and Childbearing

The effects of a shape change upon a child in the womb vary with the nature of the shifter. If the character is a member of a shapeshifting race, there is no problem – the child automatically shifts with the parent. Similarly, if the talent is an inheritable genetic trait, the child matches the parent’s form. Any change that is the result of ultra-technology should probably allow for this situation as well. Magical changes may or may not know what to do about a pregnancy – the GM must decide these on a case-by-case basis. But a shift from one shape to another that doesn’t take a fetus with it is a tragedy waiting to happen.

And this assumes the character remains the same sex between forms. But this isn’t necessarily the case. A female-to-male change, especially where no genetic component is involved, could be disastrous for both parent and child. Possibly worse, the fetus may simply disappear when the parent is in the “wrong” form, put “on hold” until the parent becomes female again – with the side effect of extending a pregnancy for weeks or even months!



What makes a *hengeyokai* different from other animals of its kind varies widely in myth. For many there is no explanation; they simply *are*. Others are spirits, possessing or incarnated into an otherwise ordinary animal. Some, like the Japanese *kitsune* and *tanuki*, are *both* – an ordinary animal that is at the same time a spirit of great power. For the GM wishing to insert this kind of shapeshifter into his campaign, virtually any rationale is plausible.

Playing Hengeyokai

Such “reverse weres” make entertaining characters. Because this is more a trope than a specific creature, no definitive single *hengeyokai* package is practical. Such creatures have many general traits in common, though. They are built like any other were, except that the animal template is used as a racial package for the base form. The human form is then based on the 0-point “Human” template.

Note that almost universally, *hengeyokai* are considered creatures of magic; most if not all possess at least the 25-point version of the Mana Enhancer advantage (p. CI40), Magery, and a variety of innate spells. Most frequently these are from the Illusion and Creation College.

Weremachines

Transforming robots and vehicles have been a staple of Japanese anime – and American Saturday morning cartoons – for decades. The Shapeshifting advantage can be used to recreate their signature reconfigurations, allowing both pure-robot and hybrid organic-tech characters to assume the vehicle or battlebot form of their choice.

Ultra-tech and ultra-magic societies may seek to fuse pleasing form with necessary function by creating creatures that can become needed tools and machines at will or need. Such beings are called weremachines. They are as much companions as equipment; in some ultra-magic civilizations they are often engineered to be familiars as well. They are sometimes unique creatures (suitable as plot devices in the right adventures), but in some settings they can be mass-produced.

Each “species” or model has a specific machine form that it can assume. These are rarely small and simple devices – one does not design an expensive bioengineered creature to become a toaster. Rather, they turn into large machines that can benefit from ease of maintenance and portability during their downtime: cars, starships, or weapons, for example. Some are specialty equipment – sensors, professional tools, and other devices that are small, valuable, and frequently fragile, which could profit from a sturdier alternate form. A few are bodyguard robots or escape pods. They rarely are any kind of device that is static and unmoving, such as a refrigeration unit.

A culture making extensive use of weremachines could possibly have dozens or hundreds of varieties living among them, either as pets or as almost-wildlife, available for anyone to use. Depending on the culture’s viewpoint on such things, they may be sterile or fertile; not only do fertile weremachines breed, but evolution and natural selection improve both the animal *and* the machine forms. It is rare, however, for different kinds of fertile weremachines to be interfertile, because

the results will be unpredictable – the thought of what might result should the howitzer-cat and the lynx-guardian breed can intimidate even the most anarchic of biodesigners.

For the convenience of their masters, they are often sentient. As such, they can make good player characters – or dependents and allies. Character weremachines should build their machine forms using the rules found on pp. 5-52 and 82-91 of *GURPS Robots*, treating their “model packages” as the templates for their alternate forms. The vehicle form’s brain must be identical to that installed in the base form; in the case of a weremachine, this means a cyborg brain (p. RO52) – the “natural” brain of the base form carries over into the machine. Weremachines almost always have a skill appropriate to their mechanical function, such as driving or piloting for those that turn into vehicles, or a combat skill for those that become weapons. The model point cost becomes the template cost for the vehicle form; determine the cost of the Shapeshifter advantage normally from this. Model point costs are not divided by 5 for shapeshifting robots.

Most transforming robots can’t blend features of their forms, so characters of this type should normally apply the Cannot Use Change Control limitation.

Base animal forms are best based on some variety of small mammal; cats, dogs, ferrets, and rabbits all make good starting places. Restrictive cultures may build them with Slave Mentality, Dependencies, and other disadvantages that would ensure control over them.

The definitive example of a weremachine in fiction is Ryo-Ohki from the various incarnations of the anime and manga *Tenchi Muyo!* – a hand-sized cat-rabbit hybrid that can turn into a powerful, beweaponed starship and back again. In one edition of the story, she is a unique ultra-tech creation; in another, she is a member of a breeding species. In yet a third, she turns not into a starship, but a humanoid mecha. Certainly a most versatile creature . . .

It would be much more unusual for parents to seek such abilities for their unconceived children, but a human or other sentient being who was born as a weremachine, or became one through unusual circumstances later in life, can be defined with the same rules (see box, p. 42, for an example).

Nanomorphs

GURPS Robots includes among its many possibilities the nanomorph – a TL11+ shapeshifting robot built entirely of molecule-sized machines (pp. RO71-73). The defining example of the nanomorph is the T-1000 Terminator from the film *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. While *GURPS Robots* already gives design point costs for two different varieties of nanomorph (bioplastic and living metal), these costs are in effect complete racial templates, as they include many common robotic traits that have been “rolled into” the nanomorph.

The nanomorph and its relatives are among the most capable shapeshifters in fiction and folklore. Only certain supernatural beings – gods, eldritch horrors, and the like – equal or exceed it.

For those players who wish to replicate the nanomorph’s shapechanging ability, it can be defined as follows: Full Morph, Retains Intelligence +0%, Unliving Forms, +50% (and optionally Improvised Forms, +100%), plus the special limitation Does Not Actually Change Internal Composition,

-50%. Nanomorphs can copy a vast variety of templates and normally have more than the basic 100 points invested in Full Morph. They always have the Change Control skill at a minimum level of 16.

Note, however, that Morph is not the only advantage that can contribute to a nanomorph’s abilities. For example, the “racial template” of a nanomorph (see pp. RO71-73) might include something like this:

Body of Water (Takes no extra damage from fire, +100%; Can Carry Heavy Encumbrance, +100%; Special effect: liquid metal) [120]; Extra Flexibility [10]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Brain, Neck, or Vitals) [20]; Instant Regeneration (Must have available energy source -20%) [80]; Long Talons (Switchable) [55]; Mimicry [15]; Morph, (Full, up to 345-point templates; Improvised Forms, +100%; Retains Intelligence +0%; Unliving Forms, +50%; Does Not Actually Change Internal Composition, -50%) [200]; Stretching 2 [45].

A creature based on these abilities would make a significant challenge for a campaign set in a *Supers* world or any variety of science fiction background. If it possessed even a modicum of intelligence, cunning, and imagination, it would be a fearsome opponent indeed!

Sprouting Weapons

Nanomorphs such as the T-1000 are infamous for their ability to turn limbs into striking, cutting, and impaling weapons. However, due to their construction they are limited to simple, unpowered implements of solid metal. Not all morph characters are so handicapped. Any Full Morph with the Unliving Forms enhancement can use the Change Control skill to manifest a piece of machinery or a weapon as part of his body, if he has the device memorized. (If the GM has allowed the Improvised Forms enhancement, he does not even need that.) Devices so added to another shape temporarily increase the template cost; the morph must be able to afford the new cost in order to manifest the device. Better yet, if the morph has met (and memorized) a race that has naturally evolved traits such as the ability to fire lasers (see Natural Attacks, pp. CI72-73), he doesn’t even need Unliving Forms, as long as he can afford the template.

When blending devices and flesh, use the following guidelines:

Treat simple melee weapons as Strikers (pp. CI66-67). Ranged weapons should be priced as Natural Attacks using the “Cheap” Improvement Scheme. Note that projectile weapons do not manifest loaded with the proper ammunition. A custom enhancement may (with GM’s approval) provide for creating ammo along with the weapon – but each shot fired would immediately reduce the character’s body mass! Energy weapons do not deplete the character’s mass, but may cost fatigue to fire.

Energy weapons can be manifested at any damage level at or below that of the original template as necessary to reduce either template or fatigue cost. The reverse is not possible – damage cannot be improved above the weapon’s normal maximum.

Finally, technological shapeshifters (nanomorphs, weremachines, and so on) may not replicate weapons from a TL higher than that which created them.

Sample Weremachine Character

Inspector L. Martello Rosenblum 915 points

Male; age 54; 6'4"; 180 lbs.; a tall, wiry man with a white shock of hair, metallic silver eyes, and a baritone voice.

Inspector L. (for "Leonard") Martello Rosenblum heads the police force for Prentiss City, the capital of the Earth colony established on Epsilon Indi III. A former member of the Galactic Survey Service, Rosenblum has considerable experience at handling himself in uncertain and dangerous situations – plus one other advantage. When an accident during a first contact with a race of machine intelligences left him critically injured, they did their best to repair him. As a result of a bizarre shortcut taken by the alien "medical" staff, he now has the ability to transform into a midsized helicopter.

His new abilities were too outré for the Service, and they honorably discharged him with a generous pension (after performing an extensive study on him). However, he was not ready for retirement. Eventually he found a place as a member of the police force of Prentiss City, the capital of a burgeoning colony world. He rose through the force to become one of its chief inspectors, but still retains his "hands-on" style.

Inspector Rosenblum is a powerful, experienced character suitable for use as a Contact or Patron in a normal-level *GURPS Space* game or as a PC in an unusually high-level one.

ST 10 [0]; **DX** 14 [45]; **IQ** 13 [30]; **HT** 12 [20]

Speed 6.5; Move 6.

Dodge 6; Parry 9.

Advantages: Appearance (Attractive) [5]; Comfortable [10]; Contacts (Four street, connected, Streetwise-15, 9 or less) [16]; Legal Enforcement Powers [10]; Shapeshifting (Helicopter; Cannot Use Change Control, -5%) [752]; Status 3 [15].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Honest Cop) [-10]; Curious [-5]; Enemy (Various criminals; medium-sized group, 6 or less) [-10]; Frightens Animals [-5]; Intolerance (Criminals) [-5]; Unnatural Feature (metallic silver eyes) [-5].

Quirks: Always wears sunglasses when he can get away with it; Calm under pressure; Doesn't use his first name; Sardonic sense of humor; Uncongenial. [-5]

Skills: Administration-12 [1]; Area Knowledge (Epsilon Indi III)-14 [2]; Area Knowledge (Galaxy)-12 [2]; Area Knowledge (Prentiss City)-16 [6]; Aviation-12 [1]; Beam Weapons/TL10 (Blaster)-17 [2];* Beam Weapons/TL10 (Laser)-16 [1];* Cartography/TL10-13 [2]; Computer Operation/TL10-13 [1]; Criminology-15 [4]; Detect Lies-13 [4]; Electronics Operation/TL10 (Sensors)-13 [2]; Fast-Talk-12 [1]; First Aid/TL10-13 [1]; Forensics/TL10-13 [4]; Interrogation-13 [2]; Intimidation-14 [4]; Karate-13 [2]; Law-12 [2]; Navigation/TL10-11 [1]; Piloting/TL11 (Self)-15 [4]; Planetology-13 [2]; Savoir-Faire-13 [0]; Shadowing-13 [2]; Streetwise-14 [4].

* +2 from IQ 13.

Languages: Standard (native)-13 [0].

Helicopter Form 777 points

Attributes: ST +364 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [208].

Advantages: Absolute Direction [5]; Absolute Timing [5]; Basic Communicator [15]; Damage Resistance 10 (×2 on front, back, left, right due to 60° slope; laminate, ×2 vs. shaped charges, +33%) [67]; Eidetic Memory 2 (No skill bonus, -75%) [15]; Extra Hit Points +175 (Vehicular damage, -75%) [219]; Flight [40]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Increased Endurance (5 years between refuellings) [10]; Ladar (Imaging) 3 [60]; Lightning Calculator [5]; Mathematical Ability [10]; Movement (Speed 42) [40]; Night Vision [10]; Passive Defense 3 (+2 on front, back left, right due to 60° slope) [108]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Radar (Search) 3 [15].

Disadvantages: Inconvenient Size (Over 8') [-10]; No Jack [-5]; No Manipulators [-50]; No Natural Healing [-20]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Bullhorn [0]; Can float [0]; Cargo space (10 cf) [0]; Crimescanner (+6 to Forensics rolls) [0]; Cyborg brain support [0]; IFF [0]; Inertial navigation system (+5 to Navigation rolls) [0]; Passenger space (One normal seat) [0]; Siren and flashing light [0]; Spotlight (500' beam) [0].

Design Notes: Rosenblum's machine form is a lightly built helicopter 20' long and weighing 490 lbs. empty. He has one internal passenger seat and 10 cubic feet of cargo space. His front, back, and sides have 60° slope, enhancing the value of their laminated armor. His only subassembly is a large rotor (75 hit points) linked to a 175-kW drivetrain. Power for flight and accessories comes from a compact 180-kW nuclear power unit. His external surface area is 250 square feet for his body, 50 square feet for his rotor, total 300 square feet; his structural elements are light and expensive. In addition to being armored, his surface is waterproofed, enabling him to float.

Because his body is a vehicle, Rosenblum's Extra Hit Points are bought with a special limitation:

Vehicular Damage -75%

Your hit points determine only your ability to withstand gross structural damage. If a hit on your body, or on any subassembly that contains cargo, passengers, or components, penetrates your DR, it may disable your internal systems, injure your passengers, or damage your cargo, even if the damage it inflicts is substantially less than your hit points. Internal systems failure may cause you to lose control or even crash. (See pp. VE182-184 for details.)

"Scientific" Shifting

Besides the nanosystems and other possibilities expressed in *GURPS Bio-tech*, there are other ways to quantify shapeshifting in a scientific or pseudo-scientific manner. Most of these fall into the realm of "rubber science," but as such are perfectly valid in any but the most restrictive "hard science" game. Genres from modern (*X-Files*-style) conspiracy and *GURPS Atomic Horror* all the way to any of a

million varieties of *GURPS Space* and *GURPS Cyberpunk* can accept weres and morphs with the proper handwaving.

Most of the possibilities for "scientific" shapechanging revolve around an odd, damaged, or enhanced metabolism. Again, the GM and the player should collaborate on the specifics – controlled cyclic forms of cancer, the ability to activate traits encoded in the character's introns (the genetic "dead space" in his DNA), "atavistic regression" using biofeedback methods, an engineered body exchanged with

“What Do You Mean, You Ate While You Were a Mouse?”

One of the more annoying issues raised with weres is the effect of meals across forms. Can a thimbleful of seeds eaten by a weremouse adequately nourish his human form?

If a were-form’s animal template includes the Reduced Life Support advantage, then a meal eaten in the were-form remains filling and completely nutritious when the character returns to his larger base form. However, the reverse is not true. A large were-form possessing the Increased Life Support disadvantage is *not* sufficiently fed by a meal taken in base form. Eliminating either of these traits during character creation negates its respective effects; in this case, the larger form suffers from some degree of hunger immediately upon a change to it only if the base form was hungry.

This rule of thumb obviously does not pass the reality check for any kind of “scientific” shapeshifting. The GM seeking “realism” may impose hunger upon *any* change to a larger form regardless of the Life Support trait(s) possessed. (It’s recommended that the GM not enforce the opposite conditions in *any* setting – most players wouldn’t appreciate having a weresquirrel character explode because he changed too soon after a hearty meal.)

the natural one using a dimensional shunting system. The possibilities are only limited by your grasp of technobabble.

The intent to remain “scientific” demands more rigorous attention to realism when designing the shifter. If there is a noticeable difference in mass between forms, special effects and disadvantages representing the need to absorb and dispose of that mass may be needed. The change may impose strange biological processes or needs that may be expressed as Dependencies, Vulnerabilities, and life support issues. Worse, shifting that comes from odd metabolic traits or strange diseases may also carry along “time bomb” disadvantages such as Terminally III.

No matter the cause of the change, it is certain that mind-body interface issues impose personality changes on the character. These may be large enough to merit quantification with mental disadvantages such as Split Personality, Overconfidence, or (at the very worst) the retention of an animal template’s Bestial and Presentient traits. The precise changes depend upon the shifter’s base personality and the nature of his alternate form(s).

Psionics

The psi with a strong enough Psychokinetic talent and a keen awareness of his own body structure may be able to adjust that structure at will. Strictly speaking, this is more of a choice of special effect than anything else, but designing a shifter using only “realistic” limitations can be an intriguing challenge and can result in an unusual character who can fit into all but the hardest-science games without overwhelming them.

An astral shifter of either variety is the easiest to justify, especially since the “True Astral Were” found in the box on p. 34 is a psionic to begin with. For those players desiring a

more physical experience, both morphs and weres can be in genre with suitable modifications, the former more so than the latter. In each case, the same “theoretical” basis underlies their power . . . but while the morph has complete mastery over the shape of his body, the were represents someone who has mastered one alternate form and has come to a dead end.

Except in the most rubber-science settings, psionic shapechangers of a physical nature are limited by a variety of “real-world” considerations. Chief among these would be the requirement that they cannot change their basic skeletal structure. This is normally a -15% limitation (although GMs whose campaigns include a large number of physically different races should feel free to increase its value). Such shifters can hide limbs within their flesh, but cannot form new ones. (Optionally, the GM may allow the creation of non-structural “cosmetic” limbs held rigid by cartilage or tensed muscle instead of bone. Such limbs would only be for show and would be incapable of carrying any significant weight.)

Similarly, the GM may require that the shifter’s total mass remain constant. There are exceptions, though – shapechangers in the *GURPS Wild Cards* setting (whose powers are all psionic in origin) often change their mass, either by the temporary inclusion of so-called “virtual particles” or by absorbing nearby matter for the duration of the shift.



Other typical limitations for the psionic shifter would emphasize the mental roots of the ability. To begin with, if the GM disallows psi-based shifting as a solo “wild talent,” it should have prerequisites of both Psychic Healing and enough Telekinesis to lift the shifter’s own body. Beyond that, it would not be out of place for a *physical* psionic shifter to have a need for concentration, or a Fatiguing or Slow Change. Telepathic shifters could have Copies Personality. For increased realism, require the Needs Sample limitation. And in the grand tradition of anime shapeshifters, a Flawed or Horrifying Change is always appropriate.

Shifter Supers

While the Transformation advantage (p. CI68) exists for use by super-types, and Morph had its genesis as a leveled advantage in *GURPS Supers* (p. SU63), it is possible to use the rules for weres to handle some varieties of shapechanging metahumans. Leaving aside the elements of horror fiction and film that have infiltrated the superhero genre, many character concepts could just as easily be implemented as were-forms as any other way.

The Incredible Hulk is an almost archetypal example of the were super, even if the Hulk's *body* isn't animalistic. Even more telling, the earliest version of the Hulk had a Cyclic Change, trading control with Bruce Banner at sunset and sunrise. Wolfsbane from the New Mutants is explicitly a werewolf, although one who suffers from no automatic shift. And while the owner of the Guyver (from the manga, anime, and live film of the same name) technically activates a battlesuit, that battlesuit is a living part of his body; he effectively becomes a different order of being when it wraps itself around him. His primary foes – the Zoanids and their ilk – are certainly weres, able to tap into ancient genetic potential to turn into monstrous beasts.

Morphs have an equally long history in comics, dating back to Chameleon Boy (and his criminal counterpart, Chameleon King) from DC's *The Legion of Super-Heroes*, and even further. They are more frequently found as villains (or villains' minions) than as heroes, but depending on the tone of the campaign, they can make excellent team players.

These few examples barely scratch the surface. A surprising number of character concepts work as well with a were-form as with any other mechanism; don't overlook this option when trying to implement that obscure design. Supers require less justification than most other varieties of shifter, which allows greater flexibility.

Genre considerations come into play. External triggers for weres and the need for samples for morphs are both common. Super weres often suffer from extreme cases of split personality. Super morphs are often insane, ranging from relatively simple megalomania (based on the "obvious" fact that if they can be anyone at all, they *must* be better than everyone) to a near-schizoid depression (if I can become anyone, is there really a *me*?).

Item-Based Shifting

A common myth is the shifter whose change is facilitated by some item. Such an item can be virtually anything, but usually involves some symbolic or physical link to the animal template (for weres) or the model being copied (morphs). Normally, the item becomes part of the new form, reappearing only upon the change back. A typical example is the skin-changer from myths the world over – a were who dons a complete hide of the appropriate animal template to take his were-form, and who can't change without it.

Item-based shifting combined with an Addiction or a Dependency on the change can make for an interesting character.

Shapeshifting and the Absorb Super Skills

GURPS Supers includes among its many options three super-skills that may be of interest to players trying to implement a unique or unusual design. *Absorb Attribute* (p. SU55), *Drain Skill* (p. SU59), and *Drain Super Ability* (p. SU60) all allow the character to "borrow" abilities from other characters. It is possible – and in some cases desirable – to Link (p. CI109) a shapeshifting advantage to one of these skills. Doing so can turn the super-skill into a "power supply" or catalyst for the change. This can take two forms: In the first, the character may only change shape when he is "charged up" with absorbed points. A morph using this option may be required to steal points from someone whose shape he wants to copy. In some ways, this would be similar to applying the "Cannot Memorize Forms" and "Needs Sample" limitations. In the second option, the character automatically changes into his alternate form upon absorbing the points and cannot change back until the absorbed points have worn off. For even more confusion, characters with multiple forms may have a different Absorb super-skill linked to each one.

Players considering this combination should note that the three super-skills have radically different durations spanning several orders of magnitude, and should design their characters accordingly.



Shapechange items are built using the super equipment rules (pp. SU68-70). The heart of these rules is a set of enhancements and limitations that are applied to the alternate form to specify its characteristics as a device, in addition to whatever other enhancements and limitations the ability may have. All shapechange items must take the modifier *Can Be Stolen* (and many are *Unique*) in addition to any others the player may choose.

The following is an abbreviated list of gadget modifiers. See *GURPS Supers* for a complete list.

Awkward -10%

The item, like many skins and hides, is bulkier than a wadded-up trenchcoat.

Breakable -5%/-10%

This item can be damaged; repairable items can be fixed if not totally destroyed.

DR 15 or less *and* it has 75 or fewer hit points: -15%

DR 16+, and/or 76 or more hit points: -5%

If irreparable, add an additional -15%.

Can Be Hit varies

The item is obvious and can be targeted in combat. It must be Breakable. The penalty on the attacker's to hit roll determines the value: No penalty: -25%. -2: 20%. -4: 15%. -6: -10%. -8: 5%. -10 or more: No bonus.

If the item has a -5% Breakable modifier, divide the value by 4. If the item is absorbed in the change, halve the value.

Can Be Stolen varies

The item can be taken away from you. The difficulty determines the value:

Easily snatched with DX roll: -40%

Needs Contest of DX: -30%

Need Contest of ST: -20%

Requires stealth or trickery: -10%

Halve the value if the object is inobvious.

Halve the value if the object would not work for the person who took it.

Halve the value if the item is absorbed during the change, or if it is produced during the change and absorbed in the return to the original form

Not Absorbed in Change -5% or -15%

The item does not become part of the were-form, and must be carried or protected against future use. If the item is not needed for the change back (see below), this modifier is worth only -5%; otherwise it is -15%.

If the item is not part of the were-form, but is absorbed during the change back to the native form, this limitation does not apply.

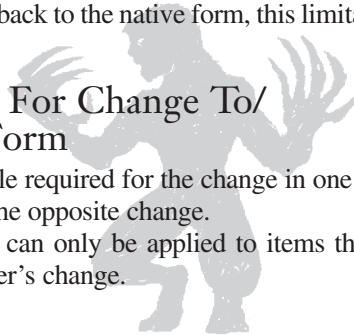
Not Needed For Change To/From Base Form +25%

The item, while required for the change in one direction, is not needed for the opposite change.

This modifier can only be applied to items that are not absorbed in the user's change.

Unique -25%

Once the item is gone, that's it. No replacement is possible. Character points spent on it are lost.



RITUAL MAGIC

In myth and legend the world over, shapechangers are as often spellcasters as they are creatures of inherent power. The Animal and Body Control colleges in *GURPS Magic* and *GURPS Grimoire* offer a number of spells along these lines. However, some settings and character concepts do not work well with the standard magic system, most notably shamans and shamanistic belief systems.

GURPS Spirits, *GURPS Voodoo*, and several other supplements describe an alternate system of magic suitable for many backgrounds for which high-fantasy-style spellcasting is inappropriate: Ritual Magic based on "Paths" – bodies of knowledge with which users can draw upon spiritual power in order to create spell-like effects. Each path is a magical specialty, such as healing or luck, in which a magician can perform rituals that produce spell-like effects. What follows is a Ritual Path specializing in shapeshifting, which can be used by shamans and the like.

The Path of Form

These rituals grant magicians knowledge of and eventually control over the fundamental nature of flesh, rendering it mutable and pliable to their wills. In the world of *GURPS Voodoo*, many on both sides of the Lodge-Voudounista conflict abhor this Path, on the grounds that it is too close to the methods of the In-Betweeners for their comfort; others say

"know thy enemy" and hope to use the monsters' weapons against them. Most Native American shamans who pursue this path focus entirely on mastering beast form transformation because they believe it symbolizes the unity of man and nature.

Unlike most other ritual paths, the effects produced using the Path of Form cannot easily be dismissed as coincidental, or otherwise be disguised; a mundane who sees a magician change shape using this path should have no difficulty believing he has just seen magic in action!

Common Effects

Any physical changes made with these rituals last 1 unit of time for every two points by which the ritual roll was made, until the caster cuts it short, or until undone by the ritual *Reveal The True Form*. The unit by which the duration is measured is based on the caster's skill with the ritual:

Level	Unit
10 or less	minutes
11-13	quarter hours
14-16	half hours
17-19	hours
20-22	half days
23-25	days
26+	weeks



In darker backgrounds, such as *GURPS Voodoo*, the GM may, at his option, rule that the rituals in this path that actually cause physical changes are *painful*, as the subject's flesh and bone structures must actually remold themselves. Individuals undergoing transformations must make a Will roll to avoid crying out in agony when the change in shape takes place. This roll receives the same modifiers as the ritual itself. Will rolls for changes back take the same penalties as the original transformation.

Standard Modifiers: All the rituals in this path that cause actual changes in shape are subject to the same general modifiers. A trivial change (hair, eye, or skin color) imposes no penalty; a minor change (facial shape, muscle tone) is -1; a medium change (height, weight) is -2; a major change (changing sex or into a near-human species) is -4; a drastic change (into an animal or other nonhuman living thing) is -8. These penalties are roughly *additive* – two or three trivial changes are equivalent to a minor change, and so on. Size and mass may be altered, with similar penalties for the magnitude of the change.

Attempting to duplicate a specific individual is more difficult than making a “generic” change. To the modifiers above, add the following:

Shape is copied from	Modifier
Verbal description	-10 or worse
Photograph or other single image	-8
Videotape or film	-4
Model observed personally once, portfolio of images, or low-quality hologram	-2
Model known to caster, high-quality color hologram	No penalty
Model at hand during casting	+2

These rituals assume a cooperating or unconscious subject, or one that does not have sufficient intelligence (or knowledge) to understand and/or resist the ritual. A conscious and unwilling subject adds his Will as a further penalty.

Disguise Defaults to Path of Form -2

This ritual changes the appearance of an individual's head and face. Changes are mostly cosmetic in nature – eye color, presence or absence of beard and mustache, hair color, length, and style – although simple changes to the bone structure of the face and skull are possible. In general, this ritual is “generic” in its effect; it is difficult, though not impossible, to duplicate a specific individual with it.

Shape of Man Defaults to Path of Form-4

The next logical step up from simple disguise, this ritual allows the reshaping of the subject's entire body, as long as it remains in a human or humanoid configuration. (Nonhumanoid followers of this path can shift to the appropriate nearby species.) Sex may be changed as well, and all changes are functional for the duration of the shift.

Succor Defaults to Path of Form-5 or Path of Health-4

Mastery of the nature of flesh eventually includes the ability to repair its wounds.

Beastform Defaults to Path of Form-6

With this ritual, the subject is granted the shape of an animal. He gains all its abilities – and all its drawbacks – but retains his own mind and intelligence. However, as with the various Shapeshift spells in *GURPS Magic* and *GURPS Grimoire*, a subject in beast form is subject to a degradation of IQ, although the more skilled the magician is with the Path, the less risk he takes. Roll versus IQ once every base unit of duration (see above) or hour, whichever is greater; for every failed roll, the subject loses 1 point of IQ, until he reaches the normal IQ for that type of animal. If IQ drops to 7, the subject is trapped permanently in beast form, unless *Reveal the True Form* is successfully cast upon him. Lost IQ is regained upon his return to human.

See the Face Beneath Defaults to Path of Form-6 or Path of Knowledge-8

Mastery of the ways of flesh makes it possible to see those who hide in other shapes. This ritual allows the caster to determine if a single person or creature is actually a skin-changer, a shapeshifter, or subject to any other kind of transformation, magical or not. On a normal success, the caster gets a simple “yes/no” result. On a critical success, a shapechanged creature's true nature/original form is revealed. On a failure, no information is revealed; on a critical failure, a wrong answer is provided.

Modifiers: Shifters subjected to this ritual resist with their skill level in the appropriate ritual or their Will, whichever is higher.

Reveal the True Form Defaults to Path of Form-7

The successful application of this ritual forces a shapeshifter back into his “native” form, no matter what means were employed in his shift. It requires absolute knowledge that the subject is a shifter in an alternate shape, or the ritual will fail; mere suspicion is insufficient.


Modifiers: Shifters subjected to this ritual resist with their skill level in the appropriate ritual or their Will, whichever is higher.

Form of the Inanimate Defaults to Path of Form-8

When properly performed, this allows the subject to take the shape of an inanimate object. Unlike the other transformative rituals, internal structure does not mirror external form, although size and mass may change dramatically. Thus, a magician transformed into a wall or door still bleeds if cut, and live flesh is exposed.

CHAPTER 3

CAMPAIGNS



Stormrider nodded to the two hunters who served this week as the guards to Runs-With-Deer's tent. They returned the nod and stepped aside to allow him to enter.

The shaman looked up at him as Stormrider pushed aside the tent flap and stepped into the darkened interior. Thickly scented smoke swirled around Runs-With-Deer as he returned his attention to the brazier before him. "Are they ready?"

Stormrider blinked away the stinging the smoke brought to his eyes. "Yes. The hunting party is in place."

Wordlessly, Runs-With-Deer rose and left the tent. Stormrider followed him as the shaman made his way into the forest, out of sight of the encampment. "Here," he said simply, and Stormrider grunted in agreement.

"I'll have the herd in the meadow by midmorning," the shaman continued. "I'll see you then. Good hunt, Stormrider."

"Good hunt, Runs-With-Deer." The two men clasped hands; then the shaman backed off. He closed his eyes. There was a swirl of light, and in his place stood a magnificent stag. The stag inclined its great antlered head to Stormrider once, turned, and vanished into the forest.

While shapechangers can be plunked down into virtually any campaign setting as bogeymen and opponents, that's far from the most satisfying course in anything but

horror/mystery campaigns – especially for PC shapechangers. History, myth, and fiction all show far more complex and interesting possibilities of which a GM can make use.

SHAPECHANGERS IN SOCIETY AND RELIGION

In Western lore, shapechangers are usually outcasts of one form or another, divorced from the society and religion that spawned them. However, as often as not, shapechangers in other cultures are integral parts of their communities, and even intrinsic to their structures and rituals. For the GM willing to do the work, it is possible to incorporate shapechangers into large societies with complex religious structures – in a role other than “bogeyman.”

Privilege and Power

An easy way for a culture to use shapechangers is to make them a part of the ruling class. Perhaps the best example of this approach is the jaguar warriors prominent in many pre-Columbian South and Central American cultures. (A fantasy variant on the jaguar warriors can be found on pp. 113-117.) A science fiction model would be the “Founders” of the Dominion in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*.

In such a system, shapechangers are a special caste or class within the society, often with specific ritual or governmental functions. If the ability to change shape does not naturally appear within the population, the authorities, secular or religious, may have the ability to grant it. In either case, there often are regular “examinations” to find new candidates for the caste. Embracing and empowering shapechangers turns potential rebels and enemies into staunch supporters of the status quo.

In some societies, only the *right* kind of shapechanger may be favored. Other varieties may be shunned or even actively hunted. Justification for such biases may be historical, political, or religious, as needed by the GM.

Since the ability to shift into the appropriate form(s) is *de facto* proof of membership in the privileged caste, the use of magic or technology that duplicates the caste's shifting abilities is an issue that the GM must address. In repressive or especially static societies, or those where the gift is inherited, the use of such abilities may well be outlawed, with severe, perhaps fatal, penalties for violators. Alternatively, some cultures may view the ability to perform such feats as evidence of one's fitness for the caste.

In such a system, shapechangers must have Status and usually Wealth. If the shapechangers take an active role in government and society, Leadership and Administration may be needed, and/or various other military skills. If the character is of the “wrong” type, Enemy, Social Stigma, and other disadvantages are required.

Skin-Changers and Other Shamanic Manifestations

Less advanced or complex societies may not institutionalize castes of shapechangers, but can still give them have critical roles within the culture. In tribal, nomadic, or other early societies, a shapechanger may be particularly suited to the role of shaman.

In many shamanistic traditions, it is part of the function of the shaman to take on metaphorically the form of an animal of which the tribe has need, either as a lure or as an appeasement. In other views, the shaman directly represents the totem animal of the tribe with metaphoric trappings. In magically active worlds – that is, worlds with shapechangers – this need not be metaphor. Two options present themselves:

Shapes of the Gods

The idea of shapechangers as an elite can be taken to its logical extreme by setting them up as objects of worship – representatives or even avatars of gods with animal aspects. Perhaps the most striking of the historical examples available is the Arcadian cult of Wolf-Zeus (also known as Zeus-Lycaeus) in ancient Greece.

As told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Lycaeon, King of Arcadia, sought to test the divinity of a disguised Jupiter by feeding him a “hash of human flesh” and was turned into a wolf as punishment. In historical times, Mount Lycaeus in Arcadia became the home of a cult of wolf-worshippers. According to contemporary accounts, the priests prepared an annual sacrificial feast that echoed the mythic events by including human flesh blended with more ordinary meat. Legend said that whoever tasted it became a wolf and could not turn back into a man unless he abstained from human flesh for nine years. Other accounts, among them one written by Plato, describe a somewhat different rite. A wolf was sacrificed and eaten; its “essence” was said to be absorbed by the cult's devotees, who became one with it and called themselves *Lycoi* (wolves).

The conflicting, contradictory accounts of the wolf-cult make it an excellent inspiration for any number of similar religions a GM may want to establish in his campaign. Are weres running the cult as a front to gain a safe haven? Or are they indeed god-touched? Do participants only symbolically become wolves? Or is the cult a “breeding ground” through which an infectious variety of shifting is passed to new recipients? Is cannibalism actually a part of the ceremonies, or is it, too, symbolic? Or are several of these things true? **GURPS Religion** offers further advice and suggestions for constructing cults.

The Shaman as Morph

Those with the talent learn to become animal(s) as needed. They defend the tribe with the shapes of dangerous beasts, use acquired knowledge and instinct to help with hunts, and so on. Morphs are seen as blessed and in touch with the powers of nature. This works best with animist and pantheist religions, but can also be blended with totemism (see pp. R126-129).

The Shaman as Were

Whether granted the ability with the position, or the position because of the ability, the shaman can take the form of a specific totem animal. In a parallel with Voudoun tradition, the totem may then “incarnate” into the shifted shaman. (This may be either a Split Personality or an actual spiritual contact, depending on the game world.) Or the shaman may symbolically “share” the totem’s strength with the tribe through ritual or more literal means.

In either scenario, competition and conflict may be common, with the “wrong” kind of shapechanger automatically an enemy within a given tribe or village. Politics between totems (or the shamans thereof) – alliances, neutralities, and enmities – affect relations between villages/tribes and between individual weres. Certain totems may be known to be neutral or friendly to all. But pity the were born in a village or tribe where he’s the “wrong type.”

Modern Shamans

Shamanism survives to this day in a number of guises. An assiduously “reconstructed” shamanism is found in many varieties of neopaganism. Most varieties content themselves with emulating American Indian beliefs or attempting to extrapolate the long-forgotten shamanistic traditions of Europe. A small subset of these explicitly tie lycanthropy into their belief systems, although it is usually employed as a metaphor for shamanic empathy/sympathy with animal spirits.

A number of other religions show distinctly shamanistic elements. In particular, Santeria and other syncretic belief systems from the many Afro-Caribbean cultures frequently involve channeling animal spirits in a manner reminiscent of the earliest duties of the shaman.

If a shaman’s ability to communicate with spirits is a real part of the game world, then these religions and any others with similar features should be considered “shamanistic,” at least for the purpose of determining who can reach the other side and who cannot.

Investment

How much divine power is actually associated with shifting talents is up to the GM. Obviously, in a world with no gods or no visible gods, shapechangers have only their innate talents. This may or may not include spellcasting – shamans

are traditionally users of magic in many forms, and spells are among them.

Potentially more interesting is a world with active gods. GMs have a wide variety of options for equipping shamans with “clerical magic”: *GURPS Spirits*, *GURPS Magic*, and *GURPS Religion* all have suggestions. The spirit-based magic “path” system in *GURPS Spirits* lends itself especially well to shamanistic-style magic. (A sample ritual path for shapechanging can be found on pp. 45-46.) In the face of all these options, however, do not forget that the primary qualification of a shaman is the ability to shift. The attentions of the gods/spirits/totems and the gifts they grant should be related to this talent in some way, supplementing or extending it to better serve both them and their people.

For more information on the abilities and obligations of shamans, see the template on p. 117.

Independent Shapechangers

A privileged class of shapechangers does not necessarily need either ecclesiastic or temporal authority to exist within a given society. The Viking *ulfhethnar* and *beseikir* are good examples. These wolf- and bear-skin warriors constituted a highly regarded, autonomous fighter class within Viking society, recruiting and fighting but answering to no authority but their own. While their reputation as skinchangers was (at least in the real world) either folklore or clever propaganda, they are an excellent example of how an independent but not malicious group of weres could function in a campaign setting.

In settings such as these, shapechangers must take at least one level of Status or Military Rank, depending on the requirements of the culture. Some combination of Duty, Code of Honor, Patron, Sense of Duty, and Vow would probably be required; those societies that create their shapechanger elites would probably do so with a Cursebreak (p. 30) or an Ensorcelment condition that would destroy the talent if the recipient betrayed them in some way. Alternately, they might pamper and indulge the shapechanger, buying and ensuring his loyalty with all manner of luxuries and indulgences. The GM may count this as Wealth or as a higher level of Patron. Ally Group is appropriate as well.

Groups without any official sanction won’t receive as much in the way of advantages. Status and/or Rank would still be present, if probably lower than for an equivalent state- or church-backed group. Wealth and Patron would be much less available, but an Ally Group may well be higher in level and in frequency of appearance.

Either variety should possess all necessary skills for their function. Whether this is military, religious, or something else entirely, a level of 12 is a bare minimum. Reputations – especially among their usual enemies – are also common.



Hidden Subcultures

Conflict with a hostile government or religion does not always result in a culture of solitary shapechangers eternally on the run from those who would persecute them. When shapeshifting runs in families or bloodlines, or typifies a sub-race that is otherwise identical to the dominant one, underground communities may form under the very noses of the authorities who desire to wipe them out. The ultimate goal of such a tactic is to disappear from official sight and outlive any reputation or prejudice that may afflict the shapeshifters, while still preserving their unique way of life. (Whether this is a laudable goal or not is up to the particular variety of shapechanger and those persecuting them.)

There are several ways such a society of shapechangers might go about this. Ghettoization is possibly the simplest – creating their own insular communities is a time-honored way for minorities of all stripes to maintain their cultural integrity. This could range from neighborhoods in large cosmopolitan cities, where any oddities would vanish into the “background noise” of a score or more of different cultures meeting in a single place, to entire small towns that are either founded or co-opted by the shapechangers. (The recent television series *Wolf Lake* depicted one of these.) Alternately, individual families could live undercover in “normal” communities, but this risks losing touch with the central shapechanger culture, with the result that the family forgets its heritage and is assimilated into the dominant culture. (The *Teen Wolf* movies show such a family, which has maintained its own integrity, if not a connection with any greater werewolf society that might exist.)

Regardless of the method chosen, these hidden subcultures can make excellent campaign hooks – either for an all-monster campaign (the PCs must protect their village) or for a straight horror campaign (what’s going on in Garwafburg?). On a more individual level, a shapechanger family that has forgotten its roots is an excellent source for an otherwise unexplained “wild talent,” while one still in touch with its heritage can offer much to a campaign, either as friend or foe.

Were-Forms as Punishments from the Gods

In some campaigns, there are no “fortunate” weres; they are always victims of curses or their own lust for power or wealth. (This is not an option that supports Morphs easily.) The medieval Catholic church espoused this opinion, and most horror films have followed its model. While obviously well suited to campaigns set in a “realistic” medieval Europe or some derivative, it plays equally well in other settings. Oddly enough, there need not be active gods in the campaign for this option to be available; the punishment can be an automatic consequence of the sin, and curses may be inflicted upon the innocent by a perfectly worldly source.

To the modern way of thinking, there is a clear qualitative difference between someone like the mythical medieval witch

Shifting Drugs

In Victorian literature (among other sources), drugs and potions can cause shifting or similar behavior. *GURPS Steampunk* lists one such drug (p. STM92), based on the mysterious mixture consumed by Henry Jekyll in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*: atavismine, the use of which can result in permanent *ethomorphism* (see pp. 85-88).

Not all such compounds have so drastic a set of side effects; presumably drugs that cause shape change will become safer and more controllable as the biosciences progress. The fact that the manufacture of such compounds as atavismine is even possible at TL5 may mean that they have as much in common with primitive or medieval magic as with science. Folk traditions abound in mystic and mysterious mixtures that grant shapeshifting abilities to their users. Whether these are true magic or misunderstood science is up to the GM and the campaign.

Atavismine

This drug produces temporary evolutionary regression to a more primitive state ruled by impulse. A user acquires a temporary Split Personality at the 15-point level. Basic IQ is unchanged, but psychological traits that reflect self-control and humanity are lost (for example, Empathy, Code of Honor, and Sense of Duty), while traits that reflect impulsiveness and brutality become worse (for example, Bad Temper to Berserk) and new ones may be acquired. Finally, the user’s appearance changes, making him unrecognizable; in the process he becomes one level less attractive through a subtle quality of deformity. A Will roll is required each time the drug is taken; on a failure the user becomes addicted, on a critical failure he becomes vulnerable to flashbacks (treat as permanent Split Personality), and on a natural 18 the atavistic personality becomes the baseline personality. Cost is \$0.05 per dose in a Victorian setting, \$1 per dose in a modern setting – or possibly much more if the ingredients include controlled substances.

who takes on a were-form as a means of sowing chaos and mayhem and a person on whom an animal shape is inflicted as a torment. Religious authorities may not see things that way, though. One religion may differentiate a curse victim from a servant of evil, seeking to save the one and destroy the other. Another religion may see no difference whatsoever, regarding both as tainted with darkness and sin, and both as deserving of whatever measures are prescribed in its dogma.

Simply trusting to the mercies of an “enlightened” religion may not help; even sympathetic religions may see execution as the only mercy possible for the accursed.

Worse yet may be the case where both types of were are known in folklore and popular myth – falsely. Only one type may actually exist – and only the weres know which for sure. Imagine the possibilities for mayhem if only evil shapechangers existed, yet folklore insisted that some shapechangers were innocents trapped by the machinations of evil. And imagine the potential for tragedy in the opposite case.

Mechanics

Under this option, weres are reduced to two different varieties. Note that these characterizations are by no means definitive.

The Cursed have a Split Personality with an inimical were-form (if not the Involuntary Shapeshifting disadvantage). Their change is Cyclic or Triggered, and they have no ability to shift at will. If they are lucky, there is a Cursebreak, but it is rare, dangerous, uncertain, or some combination of all three. The alternate form may be of any species; it may be pure animal, or it may lack Bestial and/or Presentient and have IQ equivalent to the base form. In either case, it usually possesses some compulsion to do harm to others ranging from the inconvenient (chasing off and/or killing local livestock) to the deadly (hunting the base form's family and friends). A highly ethical or strong-willed were can try to lock himself away when the Change comes upon him; this will not always be successful, given the cunning and intelligence of the average cursed were-creature.

The source of the curse can vary – it could be a hereditary condition or an Infectious Attack, or it could have been deliberately inflicted. In the latter case, who, why, and how are all excellent campaign hooks.

The Evildoer has an agenda: terror, chaos, or just personal profit. He possesses one or more of the classic “evil” disadvantages – Selfish, Greed, or Sadism, at the very least. Certainly he has a lust for power that has grown dangerously large, for he has called upon some form of supernatural evil to grant his desires. Depending on the involvement of the divine in the campaign, he may have made a pact with dark forces, or he may simply possess certain banned grimoires. Either way, he has acquired the ability to shift.

The Evildoer's change is also a were-form. Medieval European myth specifies that this variety of were normally takes the form of a cat or a wolf, and their change is often linked to some item – an ointment that is applied to the skin, or a belt or skin of the appropriate beast that is worn when the power is invoked. Evildoers have full possession of their faculties in their alternate forms, although they may be seized by odd compulsions or obsessions. Judging from testimony given to the Inquisition, they would specifically attack and terrorize those who, they felt, had harmed or inconvenienced them in some way – even when doing so was blatantly self-destructive.

DETECTING AND THWARTING SHAPECHANGERS

Whether as the good guys or the bad guys, the shapechangers in a campaign will eventually want to be someplace where they are not supposed to be, and use their abilities to get there. Naturally enough, there will also be those who want to catch them at it.

Depending on the paradigm(s) under which shapechanging operates in a given campaign, there may be many ways to discover a shapechanger, or none. Before introducing any variety of shapechanger into his campaign, the GM should think carefully about the countermeasures available for use against them. The herb moly (see box, p. 54), for instance, is a low-tech method from classical literature, but requires the user to discover the shapechanger via other means. (It may also require that the shapechanger be magical in nature – although that is not necessarily so. Imagine a carefully orchestrated infiltration of high-tech morphs into a low-tech society foiled because a rare herb disrupts their changing mechanism!)

The majority of the following suggestions assume that the “opposition” is a morph, although some are just as applicable to weres. Many of the suggestions tend more toward the (pseudo-) scientific end of the spectrum, but there is no reason that should make them any less valid in a more fantastic setting. As always, the GM should tightly control this information. Some “folklore” or “common knowledge” may be available, but it can easily be wildly inaccurate, misleading, or even hazardous!

Note that this is not *just* a checklist of ideas for player characters besieged by shapechanger enemies. Sufficiently clever NPCs should think of any (or all!) of these methods should the PCs be the ones doing the besieging!

Anticipation and Suspicion

Outside of a high fantasy campaign where just about anything might be expected, or a horror game where those involved know what they're up against, a shapechanger may come as a complete surprise. Still, there are ways to anticipate the possibility.

If the shapechanger is a natural part of an unfamiliar ecosystem, be it another planet, a different plane, or simply an isolated ecosystem in some “lost” part of the world, other creatures around it may have similar abilities. Witnessing a flock of grazing animals suddenly turning into birds to escape a predator would be a good indicator. Even more telling would be the predator similarly changing shape to pursue its prey! If the ecosystem favors morphs, having an unintelligent morphing creature attempt (however inadequately) to duplicate one of the outsiders can be humorous or disturbing, depending on how the GM plays it – and can set the stage for a far more competent interloper later.

If the shapechanger is an infiltrator, its feeding habits may give it away. A sudden increase in predation rates (especially among skittish herd animals or protected domestic beasts) with no apparent increase in the natural predator population may indicate that something out of the ordinary has inserted itself into the food chain. Sentient shapechangers might give themselves away by showing too much intelligence and planning in their kills, or conversely, excessive cruelty or bloodlust.

Tactics and Countermeasures – Finding the Infiltrator

Regardless of the justification for a shapechanger's abilities, at least one of the following strategies is likely to prove a fruitful avenue of investigation when it comes time to find a way to detect the creature:

Energy

Shapeshifting may require a large amount of energy, especially if it is "complete to the atomic level." Look for the burst of waste heat that accompanies the shift. Or conversely, watch for sudden and unexpected cold spots, if the change requires the *absorption* of energy from the local environment to initiate or complete the process.

In a high-tech setting, a computer-controlled environmental system could be programmed to monitor the thermostat sensors in each room, allowing a shape-shifting event to be tagged in time and location. A temporarily elevated body temperature can indicate a person who has been duplicated (it probably takes some time to cool down after a shift).

Unless it can somehow draw on external power, the shapechanger's body needs a way to store this energy. Does it have energetic nitrogen compounds suffusing its internal organs? Does it have extra mitochondria, or excess ATP?

Look for the energy recharge mechanism. Does the shapechanger have an incredibly voracious appetite after shifting? Does it chow down on candy bars or even raw sugar? Or plug in to a nearby electric outlet? Does it bask in front of a microwave beam? Fantasy shapechangers are notoriously dependent upon local mana – perhaps the mana level around them drops precipitously for a short time during the change, or for as long as they're in their alternate form (making them even more of a threat to spellcasters). Some shapechangers have the Mana Enhancer advantage – the local magic level might go *up* when they're around.

Similarly, shapechangers may have identifiable *patterns* to their energies, even if they don't appear to consume or radiate excess power in the wake of their changes. Psionic shapechanging probably has its own specific signature, which a sniffer or other sensitive might detect, for example. Fantasy shapechangers who are otherwise well-cloaked may be revealed by the proper use of Analyze Magic. And so on.

Structural/Biological Traits

Look for internal features unique to the shapechanger. A duplicate can't be *completely* identical to the original, or it would be unable to ever change again (since the original can't change). So it must retain the shapeshifting mechanism and, by extension, the "plans" for the original form. Does it keep two sets of DNA? Or does it rearrange the introns ("dead," inactive sequences) in its DNA and swap which parts are turned on and off? Genetic testing would probably detect the first; the second would probably confuse both experts and software unfamiliar with the phenomenon.

A Sample Shapechanger Race

Rakshasa 290 points

Attributes: ST +10 (Natural, -40%) [66]; IQ +4 [45]; HT +5 [60].

Advantages: Fangs [10]; Morph (Full, up to 100-point forms; Horrifying Change 4, +40%; No Memorization Required +50%) [190]; Talons [40].

Disadvantages: Bad Temper [-10]; Bloodlust [-10]; Bully [-10]; Callous [-6]; Compulsive Lying [-15]; Greed [-15]; Inconvenient Size (Over 8 feet tall) [-10]; Lecherousness [-15]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats sentient) [-15]; Sadism [-15].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Loves the taste of human flesh [-1]; Prefers to appear as a very beautiful/very handsome human [-1]; Proud [-1].

Skills: Acting at IQ [6];* Change Control at IQ [4]; Fast-Talk at IQ [6];* Intimidation at IQ [6];* Sex Appeal at HT [6].*

* Includes -2 from Callous.

Carnivorous, shapeshifting demons from the mythology of India, rakshasa resemble tiger-human hybrids when in what is believed to be their "natural" form. They are fiendishly intelligent, frightfully strong, and prone to all manner of vices, though they hide them well. They delight in obstructing the good works of others and work to undermine individuals, communities, organizations, and even entire governments with rumor, innuendo, direct corruption, and outright murder. This last they enjoy greatly, as they love the taste of human flesh. They are often very subtle, sowing distrust and fear and letting humanity's own worse nature do most of the work for them. They often spur groups of humans to slaughter each other and then feast upon the bodies of the slain.

The Rakshasa Compulsive Lying disadvantage represents their willingness to spread lies about other people, not about themselves.

In addition to this basic racial package, Rakshasa can also have Magery and a wide variety of spells, often specializing in the Illusion and Creation and Mind Control colleges.

Unless it also undergoes a complete personality shift as well, its brain structure can't change too radically. A CAT scan or MRI might reveal the truth, as might an EEG. On the other hand, the brain inside the copied skull might be a "dummy," with the real one hidden somewhere else in the body, perhaps disguised as another organ. (X-rays, ultrasound, or other non-intrusive procedures may or may not detect such a hidden brain.) Natural shapechangers rarely have such an extreme ability, but it may well be a "standard feature" for *manufactured* shapechangers, especially those designed to infiltrate other races.

Any replication that is less than cell-for-cell perfect may mimic the *form*, but not all the functions. Detection may rely upon the fact that certain reflexes or body processes might not be copied, or might be copied imperfectly. In John W. Campbell's Golden Age SF story "The Brain Stealers Of Mars," space travelers discover the alien morph among them in just that way: presented with pepper up the nose, the alien couldn't duplicate a reflex that involved some 500 sets of muscles and an autonomic nervous system tuned by millions of years of earthly evolution – the sneeze.

Mental/Social

Against morphs who do not gain extensive copies of their targets' memories, non-body-specific identifiers may be sufficient. These include various social behaviors – such as religious rites, idiosyncratic behaviors, and cultural preferences – and obscure skills or items from personal history, specifically cataloged for just this purpose, which a morph undergoing a simple body-only change will find hard or impossible to duplicate.

Cures for Shapechangers

Both film and folklore hold out hope of a cure for those suffering from a shapeshifting curse. However, to exacerbate the horror in which these sufferers live their lives, these cures are often breathtakingly rare or all but impossible to accomplish.

Alternately, these can be seen as weaknesses to exploit when attacking an evil shapechanger. However, some folklore claims that for any cure to work, the shapechanger must sincerely want to be cured. Without that, even the most powerful working will fail. Worse yet (for player characters, at least), some of the most extreme cures work by killing the sufferer to save his soul.

The following is a list of traditional cures for lycanthropy, testified to by folklore and legend. It's anything but exhaustive, being a sample extracted from common myths, but players and GMs alike should find it useful and inspirational. It is, as always, up to the GM if any, all, or none of these work, for how long, and for which were-types. It is quite within the GM's purview to allow a were-form with a Cursebreak (p. 30), but not tell the player what the cursebreak is.

Exorcism. A traditional Church solution to all seriously evil problems. The justification is that the were-form is actually a malevolent spirit possessing the victim (or cooperating with a witch). A priest can perform the full “bell, book, and candle” ritual; for the unordained, simple prayer, sprinkling holy water, and proper invocations of the victim's baptismal name in the name of the Trinity are said to be efficacious. (The GM may require True Faith or another “holy” advantage for an “informal” exorcism to succeed, though). In the case of calling the victim's name, three repetitions in the presence of the animal form is the prescribed ritual.

Alchemical/magical approaches. Some of these operate on the same principles as exorcism, being attempts to expel a hostile spirit. Others treat lycanthropy as a spell that has to be broken or dispelled. However it is approached, though, the process usually requires a great number of odd and unusual ingredients combined according to an improbable recipe and/or a complex ritual that would put a full Catholic mass to shame.

Doctrine of opposites. To the mind versed in medieval European thought, the world was balanced in many ways. For every evil there was an opposing good to be found somewhere – a natural counter, remedy, or antidote, thoughtfully provided by God. In the case of lycanthropy, there was wolfsbane, or even moly (see p. 54). Wolfsbane's reputation is evenly split between poison and cure; the latter seems more common as part of an alchemical formulation. Some claim that the fruit of *Rauwolfia serpentina*, a woody shrub native to Thailand and India, which has dozens of legitimate medical uses, can also cure lycanthropy and even suppress morphing talents.



Physical trauma. The poor man's exorcism; the idea is to break the spell or drive out the lycanthropic spirit by damaging the body of the victim until the magic can no longer reside in it. This can range from simple beatings through more complicated tortures up to and including coating the victim with a boiling mixture of molten tar, sulfur, and various poisonous herbs (which overlaps with the alchemical cure) to simply killing the victim outright in order to save his soul. (By similar logic, suicide also breaks the curse according to some traditions. One must be careful with this "cure," though – other equally sincere traditions claim that suicide *guarantees* returning as a werewolf.)

One particular version of this method that has strong support in folklore is amputation. A number of folk tales cite it, and it was pivotal in at least one "historical" case of lycanthropy, that of Raimbaud de Pinetum, the infamous "Werewolf of Auvergne." In order to free himself of his lycanthropy, Raimbaud had a woodcutter chop off one of his paws – "For they say that amputation of a limb frees such men from their calamitous condition."

Note that not just *any* damage has the desired effect, but only that inflicted for the sole purpose of ending the victim's lycanthropy. This method possesses the dubious virtue that it can be performed by unskilled labor using tools and materials immediately available at any farm or blacksmith's shop, which no doubt contributed to its popularity.

Self-control. The lycanthrope must restrain himself from attacking humans for some period of time, usually nine years. This is best suited for weres who retain some of their mind and/or personality while in their alternate form, while at the same time suffering from reduced impulse control or compulsions to do violence.

Blood. Another method requires the highly dangerous task of extracting three drops of blood from the lycanthrope while he is in animal form. Boiling a king's tooth in werewolf blood and molten silver is also reputed to be an effective cure, but how this mixture is to be employed is not specified; it may be hoped that it is not intended to be swallowed.

Cinematic cures. Movies and TV have added their own inventions to the mix over the years. Universal Studios' first werewolf movie, 1935's *The Werewolf of London*, has its were, Dr. Wilfred Glendon, dependent upon *Marifasa lumina lupina* (a rare Indian/Tibetan flower that only blooms during the full moon) to suppress his transformation. Unfortunately, it works only for one night at a time. The gothic soap opera *Dark Shadows* had the "moon poppy," which when eaten while in were-form would end the affliction forever. It also had gypsy spells capable (at great cost) of curing lycanthropy.

Bloodline cures. In stories where lycanthropy can be transmitted via a bite, a cure usually involves the specific creature that infected the sufferer. The most dangerous of these options involve hunting down and killing the "parent" beast; some cures require eating its heart as well. A somewhat more disgusting but less life-threatening cure specifies

mixing the saliva of the were with water from an English moor, but whether the combination is to be drunk or applied to the wound is not clear. One thing is certain – this cure must be mixed and applied before the first dawn after the attack, or it is ineffective!

Utterly random. According to several Germanic tales, throwing a hat at a werewolf can cure him. Other stories say hitting him on the forehead with a key does the trick. Similarly, the afflicted person could strike his own forehead three times with a knife.

Moly

*Black was its root, but milky-white the blossom that it bore.
The Immortals call it "moly" – to dig it where it springs
Is hard for a mortal man; but the Gods can do all things.
– Homer, The Odyssey*

Given to Odysseus by Hermes to protect him from Circe's magic, moly is better known as "sorcerer's garlic," although the variety of wild garlic known by that name today bears little resemblance to the black-rooted, white-flowered herb of myth. In addition to being a medicinal plant, sovereign against "blights, mildews, and damps" according to one source, it is best known for its ability to thwart charms and enchantments. As a member of the garlic and onion family, it has a pungent odor, which is somewhat unpleasant, and its leaves taste quite bad. The flavor of moly root is not described in ancient texts, but it is probably not unlike cultivated garlic.

GURPS Magic Items 1 describes both an alchemical elixir called "Moly" and an amulet of the same name (p. MI113 and pp. MI116-117, respectively). The effects given in their entries, though, are inconsistent with descriptions given in the *Odyssey* and other texts, so the following alternative is offered.

A sprig of moly can be used, just as Odysseus did, as a shield against transformation spells. (When employed in this manner, treat it as a Ward of Power 25.) It can also be used to dispel any magic that changes its subject's shape – a single leaf, intact, placed in the mouth and held there acts as a Remove Curse (of Power 25) against Alter Visage, Alter Body, or any Shapeshift spell. It forces weres and morphs back into their base forms (at Power 25), taking 1d seconds to do so. Furthermore, an alchemist or herbalist can use moly to brew a foul-tasting elixir that can suppress the Change in an inherent or inherited were for 1d months and cure an acquired infectious were-state outright. This elixir (available only in potion form) is compounded of a sprig of moly plus other ingredients costing a minimum of \$1,000; it requires an alchemist who is familiar with the Circe elixir as well as shapeshifting and/or shapechangers and who possesses a skill level of at least 18. It takes five weeks to brew.

Moly's virtue lasts only as long as it is fresh; once it wilts (usually within a day or two), it loses its power. It cannot be preserved in any way that maintains its magical power except for its potion form, which remains efficacious for six months after brewing.

White-flowered moly is rare and difficult to harvest without destroying its inherent magic. Roll against Occultism-6, Thaumatology-5, Alchemy-4, or Herbalist-3 to do so. A TL5+ Physician with Naturalist-20 or better is considered the equivalent of an Herbalist (p. B56) and can roll against Physician-3. Fresh sprigs sell for \$2,500 each – more in areas plagued by were-creatures or hostile magic.



Vulnerabilities

It is usual in both legend and cinema for werewolves and other shapechangers to be invulnerable to all forms of damage – save for silver. But a curable were who is immune to all other forces must be vulnerable to the means or methods of his cure! While this is far from universal in legends and stories across the globe, it does raise the question of the frequencies of appearance for various countermeasures, so that Vulnerabilities (p. CI106) can be properly priced at character creation?

Silver. The traditional weakness of werewolves is available at TL1. Although it is a precious metal, it is easily acquired in almost every culture that has metalworking. (TL0 societies often have access to native silver, but seldom shape it into weapons.) It is not, however, omnipresent. Silver is an *Occasional* substance, worth -10 points per level as a Vulnerability.

Holy or blessed objects. In myth, this almost always refers to items consecrated to the dominant religion in the region. In such a case it's likely that, as in medieval Europe, almost every town and village has at least one priest and sanctuary of that religion serving its people. Assuming that no complications (disbelief in weres, legal strictures, and so on) cloud the issue, getting or making consecrated items is relatively easy, making them *Common*, worth -15 points per level.

Alchemical compounds. Any mixture of ingredients intended to be applied to the were, whether or not it is actually prepared by a real, magically gifted alchemist, falls under this heading. These recipes can vary wildly from legend to legend; the rarest item in the ingredient list sets the availability level of the mixture itself. In folklore and fiction, alchemical counteragents are usually *Rare*, worth -5 points per level.

Other. For everything else, this rule of thumb may be helpful:

If you can't walk down the street without running into it, it's *Common*.

If you can walk into a stranger's house or a mall and be pretty sure you'll find it, it's *Occasional*.

If you can only find it by going to a nearby specialty store, or if it costs a lot of money, it's *Rare*.

If you can only get it by mail order from a distant dealer, or it costs vast amounts of money, it's *Very Rare*.

Knowing Your Own

Opposition that knows what it's facing may develop some explicit method of identification that can't or won't be copied by any kind of shapechanger. This is possible in many worlds, regardless of background or technology. For example, it's possible in virtually any TL6+ setting to give vulnerable personnel regular doses of stable but uncommon isotopes (carbon-13 and nitrogen-15 would be a good bet). Upon their return from field missions, personnel would be quarantined until the isotope ratio could be confirmed by whatever means was at hand, be it mass spectrometry or a multiscanner. Someone *without* the isotopes, or with the isotopes in the wrong quantities, would be examined far more carefully – or maybe even summarily executed.

Magic can provide similar benefits. Use *Ensorcel* from p. G39 to imbue possible targets with a minor spell (possibly a custom one developed for the purpose), using an unlikely but simple spell-break provision to make the process as cheap as possible. Using *Mage Sight* or *Identify Magic*, scan personnel on a regular basis, and examine anyone who has been in the field immediately upon his return. Anyone who is found to be lacking his ensorcelment is a possible morph.

Sufficiently motivated players or GMs can no doubt come up with even more effective methods, regardless of the setting.



PREJUDICE AND PRIDE: LIONS OF THE PURE

In the blessed name of Mevek, may He watch ever over us, amen.

The invaders called themselves Glinizi. They fell upon us in the 13th year of the reign of our lamented King Ta'an, bearing the sticks of fire against which no mortal man could stand. From the sea did they come, in swarms like locusts from out their great ships, and they overran all the lowlands. They enslaved our people and called it "liberation"; they seized Nilesh Mithana, the capital, and set themselves up as rulers over all the people of Chanarkesh.

As part of their tyranny, the Glinizi forbade the worship of Mevek (blessed be His name!). When the king and the priests protested, the Glinizi murdered them, desecrating the altar of Mevek with their blood. When the people rose up in protest, the Glinizi slaughtered them in the streets.

Knowing they could not stand against the Glinizi and their sticks of fire, One Hundred of the faithful of Mevek (blessed be His name!) escaped to the Vangkesh Hills. There they made supplication unto Mevek and prayed for a way to deliver our land and our people from the invaders. And Mevek (blessed be His name!) heard their prayers and answered them . . .

A peaceful subtropical nation. An occupying army with a technology beyond that of the natives. And a vengeful god who emphasizes personal initiative and responsibility. Three ingredients whose combination has had unexpected results – for the invaders.

This is a brief concept for a campaign incorporating shapechangers as a major element. It demonstrates how a were-creature element can be added to a campaign in progress, in this case a historical or otherwise nonmagical low-tech setting (although it can also be used as the basis for a stand-alone game).

Chanarkesh

Located in a fertile subtropical zone, Chanarkesh is a land of lush farmlands, moist rain forests, and wooded, rocky hills. The innumerable family farms dotting the well-watered lowlands provide bountiful crops, while the upland forests produce a wide variety of woods for carving and building. Add to this the fine stonework Chanarkeshi craftsmen have learned over centuries of building elaborate temples, and you have the three primary exports of this small but rich coastal nation, whose seagoing tradition includes both merchants and fisherman.

The Chanarkeshi produce fishermen, farmers, traders, and scholars in equal proportion; they live under a clan system capped by the combined power of the king and the priests of Mevek, the lion-god whom they have worshiped since time

immemorial. Mevek is distant but benevolent, paternally encouraging both individual achievement and loyalty to clan and nation. It has been hundreds of years since Mevek took a direct hand in the affairs of Chanarkesh, but this does not discourage his followers. Instead, they point to it proudly as evidence that they have followed his commandments – Mevek only intervenes when the people have turned from him, or if utter catastrophe looms.

About Mevek

The lion-headed god of the Chanarkeshi, Mevek claims Chanarkesh as his sphere of influence. He is said to know all things that happen in the land and all things that may affect it. He does not often choose to interfere in mortal matters, though, for in addition to basic moral laws (called the Structures of Right Behavior), his teachings emphasize what have become known as the Five Virtues: Wisdom, Strength, Truthful Insight, Self-Sufficiency, and Loyalty to Clan and Nation. He has made it clear in the past that he does not want weak, fawning children for worshipers, but strong, independent adults, worthy of being partners to a god.



In the three or so centuries since the last known physical manifestation of Mevek, his church has collected and standardized the stories and teachings of their god. In addition to the Strictures of Right Behavior and the Five Virtues, Orthodox Mevekism teaches the following as articles of faith: that Mevek is supreme over all other deities (the Law of Primacy); that the role one is born to in the world may not be improved (the Law of Caste); that any challenge to the social and political order is an affront to Mevek, who made it so (the Law of Earthly Perfection); and that the only proper mediator between mortal man and Mevek is the priesthood (the Law of Intercession). Only heretics would suggest that Orthodox Mevekism's additional teachings are intended to help maintain the church's control over Chanarkesh.

The Chanarkeshi Caste System

Characters in Chanarkesh society are born into castes, which are ranked in status and are grouped into the following levels:

Level	Description
8	Priestly caste
7	Royal caste: King of Chanarkesh and family, nobles
6	Warrior caste: soldiers and officers
5	Greater civil servant caste: judges, bureaucrats, officials, diplomats, regional governors, special agents of the church and the king
4	Professional caste: scholars, doctors
3	Lesser civil servant caste: local "mayors" and overlords, couriers, petty bureaucrats
2	Learned worker caste: scribes, craftsmen
1	Merchant caste: merchants, traders, dealers in goods
0	Peasant caste: farmers, laborers, and so on
-1	Criminals, indentured servants
-2	Untouchables: gravediggers, embalmers, garbage carriers, and other ritually unclean persons

Inside the Chanarkeshi

While they are a learned and peaceful people, the Chanarkeshi are also stagnant. This may be partially by design – Mevek certainly favors stability and predictability, despite his aspect of a wild animal. However, what works for Mevek doesn't necessarily work as well for Chanarkesh – the land is steeped in, and choking from, highly respected tradition and an increasingly hidebound caste system. Chanarkeshi bards love to tell the tales of famous heroes who climbed the social ladder from dirt farmer to king, but anyone trying to emulate them today is more likely to be imprisoned for breaking his caste than honored for the effort.

This is particularly encouraged by the priesthood of Mevek, who enjoy a comfortable (and all but hereditary) position at the top of the social ladder. Not surprisingly, they are hostile to the very idea of the Jayagat Tendrab (p. 59). Commoners approaching Mevek without their intercession, indeed!

The truth is that, despite its prosperity and comfort (or perhaps because of it), Chanarkesh was headed for social collapse until the Glinizi invaded. The civilization is stagnant

Adapting the Setting

This campaign seed was inspired by (but should not be construed to *represent*) some aspects of the Anglo-Sikh Wars of the 1850s-1860s. As such, the intended flavor of this setting is British Colonial India circa the middle of the 19th century (leavened by a kind of hybrid Thai/Cambodian aesthetic).

Even so, no details here are specific to that place and time; this campaign seed can be adapted to any game set somewhere between TL2 and TL5. The primary ingredients needed for it are a distant, aggressive imperial nation, a tropical land colonized or conquered by that nation, a suitable wilderness zone, and an appropriate religion. The military forces fielded by the empire should be technologically advanced (at least +1 TL) compared to the native population, making them apparently invincible.

As written, this setting can be dropped into almost any standard fantasy game, as well as more historical settings. All that is necessary is changing the names and perhaps some of the politics, and the nature of the Glinizi "firesticks." It can serve as an interesting twist in a "real world" game; it can also work in a game world with active magic, especially if the GM leaves misleading clues about the nature of the natives' ability to change. If the world background is ostensibly nonmagical with distant and uninvolved (or nonexistent) deities, all the better.

With a little research and effort, the GM can even adapt this material back into its inspiration, turning a more conventional British India campaign into something out of Rudyard Kipling's darker nightmares.

Protagonists and Antagonists

The setting is written so that either side (or both!) can be played as the "good guys," depending on the needs of the game. In fact, it works best if neither the Chanarkeshi weres nor the Glinizi invaders are portrayed as outright evil, but rather as responding as best they can to a complicated situation. While it is possible to reduce either side to a predatory stereotype, no small amount of the flavor of this setting will be lost.

and petrifying, with entirely too much focus on past glories and self-congratulatory festivals. A growing underclass (one is always allowed to move to a *lower* caste) is finding itself more and more marginalized even as it shoulders more and more of the country's day-to-day support.

If Chanarkesh is to survive, it needs to be shaken up *badly* – and the Glinizi just may be the thing to do it, if they don't destroy the country first.

Geography

Chanarkesh is a roughly trapezoidal peninsula extending southwest out of the main body of the continent of which it is a part. Its western coast is the trapezoid's longest side at just over 300 miles. The southern coast stretches almost due west for 200 miles until it intersects the main continent. Wrapping around the other two "sides" is a long chain of steep, rocky hills spotted with light forest, known to the Chanarkeshi as the Vangkesh Hills, which mark a border with two of Chanarkesh's neighbors and are in fact the foothills of an impressive mountain range somewhat further inland. A number of passes run through them, linking Chanarkesh with its inland neighbors.

The Vangkesh Hills are inhospitable and, while arable, not worth the effort of farming with so much moist, fertile land to the south. A number of rivers flow through the hills from the mountains beyond, but they do so with great force through deep chasms cut into the bedrock, making them all but unusable for agriculture. There are several Chanarkeshi settlements in the hills – they are home to a dozen or more quarries and hundreds of mines – but nothing to match the towns and cities in the lowlands.

At the base of the hills, most of the rivers spread out, delta-style, into broad, wet zones – all but swamps, really – threaded with creeks and streams. Rooted deep into this moist land and getting the most benefit from the water is the band of lush, semitropical rainforest from which the Chanarkeshi harvest the exotic woods employed by their craftsmen.

Once out of the rainforest, the rivers settle down again into single great streams, broad and shallow and easily tapped for irrigation. These are the fertile lowlands, home to most of the Chanarkeshi. They are also home to thousands of square miles of farms, dotted with villages and towns, and threaded with worked stone roads that have served the land for centuries. Here are found the great cities of Chanarkesh, which can be seen for miles around in the broad, flat plains.

Through the center of Chanarkesh runs the River Asari-az, the greatest river in the land, sometimes reaching five miles in width. After dropping precipitously over the Davisad Falls at the center of the Vangkesh Hills to the north, the Asari-az meanders gently southward along the center line of the nation, spreading finally into a river delta at the southernmost tip of the land, where the city of Sanjit Kumahal was built to be a trade gateway between seagoing traders and Chanarkeshi merchants. The Asari-az holds special meaning to the Chanarkeshi; it is said that it is the lifeblood of the land, and that he who controls the Asari-az controls the nation. This is why Nilesch Mithana, the capital city, was built at the exact midpoint between the Davisad Falls and the sea, to symbolize its position at the heart of Chanarkesh.

Today, the Glinizi control all the major cities on the Asari-az and have actually renamed Sanjit Kumahal as Port Dilaz. A Glinizi presence can be found in every other coastal city, but Port Dilaz is the port of entry for all Glinizi coming to Chanarkesh and can be considered *their* capital for the land.

The Glinizi

Although Chanarkesh has lived in relative peace with its neighbors – themselves equally prosperous and peaceful – for centuries, this was not to last. The peaceful land was thrust into war when invaders came from over the sea.

The exact origin of the Glinizi is a mystery to the Chanarkeshi; “far away over the sea” is all anyone has learned. They came in great ships unlike any the Chanarkeshi or their neighbors build; they came with weapons of fire and steel against which none could stand. They came to steal the land of Chanarkesh.



Within three months of their first appearance on the beaches of Chanarkesh, the Glinizi had penetrated deep into the interior. Overwhelming all opposition with ease, they marched on the capital city of Nilesch Mithana, and after a two-day siege, captured it, the king, and the highest levels of the priesthood of Mevek.

Since then, they have all but conquered the land, although they neither call it that, nor (to be honest) see it that way. The Glinizi – most of them, at least – sincerely believe that they are there to oversee Chanarkesh on behalf of the natives, for their own good. At the same time they have systematically plundered the country, shipping resources back to their own homeland on a vast scale. While Chanarkesh has not yet been rendered a pit of abject poverty, many Chanarkeshi think it's only a matter of time. And when the Chanarkeshi have objected, they have been brutally suppressed – the death toll from one such “pacification” reached into the thousands.

Inside the Glinizi

A young and vital empire based on another continent some two months' sail away, the Glinizi have been in an expansionist phase for the last two centuries. With their prosperous economy, (relatively) advanced technology, and vast conquests, they have developed something of a cultural/racial superiority complex and see themselves as far above the "primitive" peoples of the lands they have expanded into.

Unfortunately for the Glinizi, about 20 years ago they encountered another, older empire – the Pueranlo. Located on the opposite side of the Glinizi lands from Chanarkesh, the Pueranlo were slightly more advanced in technology and viewed the Glinizi as another future province to acquire. Since the beginning of active hostilities between the two empires five years ago, the Glinizi have been desperately seeking supplies of raw materials and manpower not already claimed by the Pueranlo in order to bolster their war effort. The conflict has not been going well for the Glinizi, and they are starting to panic. This panic is in part responsible for some of the atrocities the Glinizi have committed when putting down potential rebellions.

Glinizi Religion

The Glinizi are polytheists, worshiping a pantheon of eight deities who embody core aspects of their society: Ason (Medicine), Asaldar (Law), Danavon (Agriculture), Elait (Art), Jaram (Craft), Miridee (Family), Naimaldar (War), and Vandev (Trade). Each god has a bright aspect and a dark one, which do not correspond to good and evil but rather to an odd dichotomy of reward and obligation. In addition, the gods are "assisted" by legions of ancestral spirits, who receive devoted, if generic, worship from their descendants.

Theoretically, the Glinizi assimilate the gods of conquered peoples into their religion by identifying them as "faces" of the existing Glinizi gods. However, many deities – such as Mevek – do not fit well into this rigidly defined system, and their worship often receives vigorous suppression by Glinizi overlords.

The Creation of the Jayagat Tendrab

To accomplish their task of stripping the country bare as quickly as possible, the Glinizi have taken to impressing young Chanarkeshi men into forced servitude. This practice is slavery in all but name; no one knows any man taken by the Glinizi who has been freed, although many know of one or more who have dropped dead from the labor.

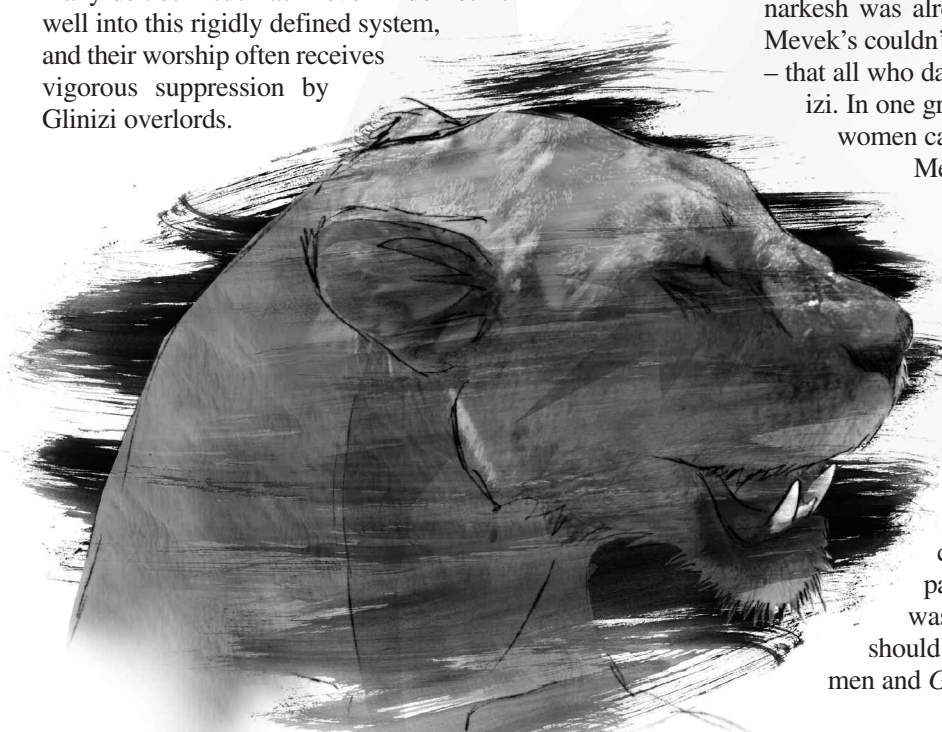
It is not surprising then that many young men, not the least of which were the educated and the low-level military officers, chose to flee to the hills. The Glinizi have little concern for that region; they do not need the stone, and the mines produce none of the metals they need. A small Glinizi force based in Dilak Divatri, at the base of the Davisad Falls, "pacifies" the hills, but is in truth far too small to police the whole of the chain.

Thus the hills have become home to a unique resistance movement. As young educated men – those who might have been called "radicals" by their elder compatriots in the temples and schools – made their way there, they met one another and formed something of a fellowship. In their common opposition to the Glinizi, their hope for their land's eventual liberation, and their radical views on religion (and other social issues), they found unity and purpose – and a leader: Jevon Afari, the third son of a cadet branch of a lesser clan of the aristocracy, a compelling speaker, and a natural commander of men.

It was at Afari's suggestion that they made the experiment. According to the elder priests it was heresy – the priesthood was man's intermediary with Mevek, and only a priest could address Mevek! For someone uninitiated and thus impure to dare address the god was inviting his wrath not only upon the offender, but upon all of Chanarkesh. But Afari and his companions reasoned, somewhat impiously, that Chanarkesh was already suffering the Glinizi's wrath, and that Mevek's couldn't be much worse. So Afari issued the request – that all who dared, petition Mevek for aid against the Glinizi. In one great night of prayer and fasting, 100 men and women called upon Mevek and begged for his help.

Mevek answered.

Taking the physical form of a massive lion-headed man, Mevek appeared before the Hundred and praised them for their courage and their devotion to their land. He acknowledged the threat the Glinizi posed to his people, and he granted them a gift – the ability to fight in his image. Mevek bade them swear oaths that bound them to him in purity, and promised that as long as they kept those vows, his power was theirs. Finally, he commanded them that as a sign of the compact that they had made with their god, each was to take a new name, and part of that name should be the word *Maimat* (meaning "Lion") for men and *Gilan* (meaning "Lioness") for women.



Each of the Hundred so swore, and Jevon Afari became the first to take his new name, calling himself “Asudhri Dhavik Maimat” – “New Lion of the Dawn.” And as each swore and took his name, the power of Mevek filled them, and each became a being that partook of both lion and man. Mevek then foretold how others would join their cause and instructed the Hundred in how to purify and prepare newcomers to gain the power as well. With a final benediction, the god then departed.

The Hundred then rejoiced, and declared themselves to be the *Jayagat Tendrab* – the Company of the Pure.

It is under that name that they have come to strike fear in the hearts of the Glinizi. Against the invaders of their land, they fight a guerrilla war, invisible until the moment they strike. Their numbers grew quickly as word of Mevek’s intercession spread among the people, and now there are at least a thousand Maimat and Gilan striking at the Glinizi, either alone or at the head of bands of brave folk who chose to follow them.

There would be more Jayagat, save for an unexpected enemy – the surviving priests of Mevek. Accustomed to – and profiting from – their monopoly on mediating between mortals and Mevek, the church is openly hostile to any who dare challenge its position and power. They brand accounts of Mevek’s appearance to the Hundred as lies and heresy and the Maimat and Gilan as blasphemous forgeries born of dark sorcery. Not every priest shares this view, but those who don’t are few and far between, and most of them dare not challenge the church’s pronouncements – publicly.

This conflict with the established church is a bigger problem than it seems – for some ineffable reason, Mevek left his warrior avatars vulnerable to weapons consecrated by his priests!

Jayagat

230 points

Advantages: Ally Group (six to 20 Chanarkeshi, 75 points each, 9 or less) [20]; Shapeshifting (Maimat/Gilan; Cure/Cursebreak: Violate Disciplines of Faith, must cooperate, temporary, -20%; External Trigger: Worshiper of Mevek in danger, one way, -5%) [274].

Disadvantages: Disciplines of Faith (Jayagat, see box, below) [-10]; Enemy (Glinizi, 6 or less) [-15]; Enemy (Priesthood of Mevek, 6 or less) [-15]; Fanaticism [-15]; Social Stigma (Minority group) [-10].

Skills: Theology (Mevekite, Reformed) at IQ-3/IQ+3 [1].

The Vows of the Jayagat

🐾 Serve Mevek with all one’s heart and embody the Strictures of Right Behavior and the Five Virtues.

🐾 Defend the people of Chanarkesh from all that would harm them.

🐾 Never use the Maimat (lion-form) for personal gain or for any purpose offensive in the eyes of Mevek.

🐾 Purify one’s self in a ritual bath at least once a week.

🐾 Abstain from alcohol.

The Vows of the Jayagat constitute a -10-point Discipline of Faith.



Maimat/Gilan Form 350 points

Attributes: ST +14 (Natural, -40%) [87]; DX +3 [30]; HT +5 [60].

Advantages: Alertness +8 [40]; Claws [15]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Fur [4]; Night Vision [10]; Reputation +3 (As Divine warrior, to Chanarkeshi) [7]; Vampiric Invulnerability [150].

Disadvantages: Attentive [-1]; Bloodlust [-10]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; Reputation -3 (As vicious supernatural monster, -to Glinizi) [-7]; Vulnerability 1 (Items consecrated to Mevek) (Common) [-15].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Feline mannerisms. [-1]
Skills: Brawling at DX [1].

The Maimat or Gilan form of a Jayagat warrior takes the form of a huge man or woman with a lion's head. (Calculate height based on the ST of the human form, not the Enhanced ST, and increase it by 20%, with a minimum of 7'. Calculate weight as 280 lbs., plus 10 lbs. per inch over 7'.) The hands and feet are heavily clawed, and the body is covered with tawny fur; a tufted lion's tail completes the picture. The shape of a lion's mouth is not conducive to speech; intelligible speech is possible, but the sound is often quite frightening.

A Jayagat who breaks any of his five vows must sincerely repent *and* achieve one or more worthy acts to regain his shapeshifting powers; the quest for such redemption can be a source of plots. A Jayagat has complete control over his changes *unless* he witnesses a worshiper of Mevek in danger, in which case the power of Mevek forces him to change in order to fulfill the second term of his vows. (To qualify as a worshiper, an individual must be a believer who attends services at least semiregularly and makes a sincere effort to live his life according to the Strictures and the Virtues.)

The willingness of a Jayagat warrior to put himself in danger to protect his fellow Chanarkeshi does not go unnoticed by his countrymen; it is not uncommon for a small band of eager "helpers" to spontaneously emerge from nearby crowds whenever a Jayagat appears. This is represented as an Ally Group in the Jayagat package, but the group that forms is always ad hoc and is almost never composed of the same members twice in a row.

Player Characters

PCs can be from either side of the Chanarkeshi conflict. Glinizi troops range from 75-point infantry to 150-point officers. Ordinary Chanarkeshi guerrillas range from 50 to 125 points. A Jayagat warrior is always a minimum of 250 points, and a member of the Hundred 275 points or more. If for any reason Pueranlo troops appear, treat them as Glinizi troops with access to more advanced equipment. (The Glinizi are at the lower end of their shared TL, while the Pueranlo are very close to advancing into the next level.)

Tech Levels

For the purposes of this campaign seed, the Chanarkeshi are considered the base TL. Glinizi and Pueranlo characters

must take one level of the High Technology advantage at 20 points.

Ultimate Outcome


Despite the fact that the Jayagat are tailored for warfare, there is a possible result that does not involve the wholesale slaughter of one side by the other. Under the right conditions, and with the right people in the right places, the Glinizi-Chanarkeshi conflict could turn into a partnership rather than a conqueror-conquered relationship. If this happens, both sides win – Chanarkesh is reinvigorated and stagnation/collapse is avoided, the Glinizi get not only resources but a cadre of unstoppable warriors to help with the effort against the Pueranlo, and Mevek gets a far larger and more vital population of worshipers. On the other hand, perhaps Mevek doesn't care at all about the Glinizi, except as a tool that he can use to shake his people out of their cultural rut.

Or – the ultimate heresy – Mevek doesn't really exist. His priesthood's only power is temporal, and they will fight tooth and nail to keep their hold on it. Mevek's appearance to The Hundred was a mass hallucination (either spontaneous or orchestrated by Jevon Afari). And the shapeshifting power of the Jayagat Tendrab is psionic in origin, activated and given a common form by the collective unconscious (or the collective hysteria!) of the Chanarkeshi radicals.



CHAPTER 4

. . . OF ALL SHAPES AND SIZES .



Liodan nodded blandly as she apologized and wrenched her cart free from the other shopper's, but within she was a quivering mass of nerves. It was here. She could sense it. It was watching her, waiting for her to make a mistake. The realization was driving her to distraction, and her control was fraying rapidly. She should have waited until Roger had returned to go to the store. His presence would have masked hers; she would have been safe. But her hunger had grown beyond her ability to ignore it.

Stifling her mounting agitation, Liodan waited patiently through the express checkout and then wheeled her purchase out to the van. With a studied casualness that belied the panic coursing through her veins, she carefully transferred the bags from the cart to the back of the vehicle, and then climbed in after them. She shut the doors with a solid thud.

Inside, in the dark, she relaxed; the unassuming facade of the blonde suburban soccer mom melted away to reveal her true form. As she ripped open a bag of potato chips, Liodan gave silent thanks for the van's heavily tinted windows. It couldn't see her here.

In this chapter are several sample races and creatures built around the Morph advantage. Where appropriate, notes

on crossover and multigenre uses are provided, expanding the range of settings in which they can be used.

DOPPELGÄNGER

They call themselves the Tsir'lech, but to those few humans who know of their existence, they are known by the names they acquired in myth and legend: Shapestealer. Skin-walker. Fetch.

Doppelgänger.

They haunt human society, living among us but not of us. Some are timid, living in terror of discovery by humans – or by something else they fear so greatly that they never speak its name. Others are hunters, stalking the humans whose form they mimic and devouring their life force at the moment of death. Never betraying themselves, they are a culture hidden deep beneath the surface of our own.

Hider Doppelgänger 15 points

Attributes: HT -1 [-10].

Advantages: Cultural Adaptability [25]; Morph (Cosmetic); Cannot use Change Control, -5% [48].

Disadvantages: Broad-Minded [-1]; Compulsive Behavior (Hiding) [-15]; Combat Paralysis [-15]; Edgy [-5]; Secret: Doppelgänger [-20].

Skills: Acting at IQ+4 [6];* Stealth at DX [2].

* +1 from Cultural Adaptability.

Hunter Doppelgänger 60 points

Attributes: ST +1 [10]; IQ +2 [20]; HT -1 [-10].

Advantages: Claws (Switchable) [15]; Cultural Adaptability [25]; Morph (Cosmetic); Cannot use Change Control, -5% [48].

Disadvantages: Broad-Minded [-1]; Careful [-1]; Compulsive Behavior (Hiding) [-15]; Dependency: (Human Death, Weekly) [-15]; Loner [-5]; Secret: Doppelgänger [-20].

Skills: Acting at IQ+2 [4];* Brawling at DX [1]; Shadowing at IQ [2]; Stealth at DX [2].

* +1 from Cultural Adaptability.

In their rarely seen “natural” form, doppelgängers are humanoids similar in size and build to human beings, except that their skins are uniformly gray and hairless, with almost no variation between individuals. Their eyes are large and seem to be a muddy hue from a distance; at close range, though, it is clear that they are surprisingly beautiful, with irises composed of every color of the rainbow scattered in glittering swirls.

Their internal structure is sufficiently close to human so that most doctors won't realize that a disguised doppelgänger is a different species unless they administer an extraordinarily thorough examination. Any variety of surgery, X-rays, MRI, or other medical scanning reveals small but telling differences, although most doctors won't realize what they are seeing at first.

Psychology

Doppelgängers are completely geared, mentally and physically, toward camouflage and concealment. Although technically they hide “in plain sight” thanks to their morph abilities, mere physical disguise is not enough. They demonstrate a remarkable ability to adapt to any human society in which they find themselves. (Possibly *too* remarkable; anywhere they are actively hunted by the people among whom they hide, such as in the world of *GURPS Black Ops*, such ease of transition between cultures is often used as a flag to indicate – not always accurately – those who might be other than they seem.)

Unlike their extraterrestrial counterparts, the Xenomorphs (see p. A126), doppelgängers don't actually deceive themselves into believing that they are the human beings they pretend to be. They are, however, consummate actors. Furthermore, they rarely attempt to impersonate specific individuals (although they can do so, when necessary). Instead, they become entirely new people. Although this task has grown more and more difficult as government (and corporate) records have become increasingly comprehensive and detailed, the doppelgängers have coped. It is believed that they have made a policy of insinuating themselves into jobs where they can falsify the records needed to establish identities.

As part of their disguise, doppelgängers take part in almost all aspects of human society. They hold jobs, they take hobbies, and they socialize to a limited extent. They try to amass sufficient wealth and/or power to ensure their own safety and comfort. They even date, court, and marry – usually humans and not members of their own species – become parents, and raise children. (Those children have to be adopted if the doppelgänger has taken on a male role.)

Beyond this point, though, the psychologies of the two varieties of doppelgänger diverge.



Hider doppelgängers are concerned with preserving their own safety and secrecy. They are more likely to throw themselves into relationships and activities that provide them with “protective coloration” while staying away from anything that could draw attention specifically to them. Because of cultural and social forces, they have historically taken female roles of middle class or above unless no other choices were open to them. Up until the last few decades this has given them a reason to be relatively reclusive while still appearing a “proper” part of society as a whole. It also allowed them to reproduce unquestioned.

Central to the Hiders' psychology is the need to remain hidden. This appears to be a genetically encoded imperative, as even doppelgängers raised by humans feel compelled to disguise themselves and blend in once they understand their abilities. In some individuals, this need is frequently magnified and accompanied by full-blown paranoia. In other cases, the compulsion can become an uncontrollable reflex.

Those who do not have a "steady" role, such as a human's spouse, often leap from identity to identity every few years. These Hiders more than any others make use of the informal network of co-racialists insinuated into record-keeping jobs.

Exactly *why* they feel compelled to hide is unclear. It's certainly not to avoid contact with their "cousins," the so-called "Hunter" doppelgängers (see below); the Hunters apparently cannot feed off of other doppelgängers and do not seem to have any real antipathy towards the Hiders. Nor does humanity really have any (known) history of persecuting them, even in the secret records to which Argus and The Company have access in the *GURPS Black Ops* world. What little has been learned from the Hiders themselves is tantalizing but sketchy: *Something* pursues them, and sometimes catches them. Just what, though, Argus has yet to learn.

(This unknown pursuer of the Hiders is left to the GM – and any Hider players – to define. It may be a racial Delusion, or it may be real. If real, however, it is powerful and itself hidden from both human and doppelgänger sight.)

Hunter doppelgängers are predators, plain and simple. Although for the most part they subsist on a diet similar to that of humans and Hiders, they must frequently supplement it with what can only be described as the death energies of human (or humanoid) beings (excluding other doppelgängers). Feeding in this manner leaves a corpse with psychic "marks" not unlike those found on a victim of a Soul-dog (pp. BO102-104) or similar creature, leading some to suspect that the Hunters are actually eating souls.

They prefer to kill their prey themselves, but this is not a requirement – Hunters have been found working in emergency rooms and as paramedics. If they cannot make use of such opportunities, modern

Hunters prefer to kill with weapons, especially in urban areas; however, it is believed that in more primitive times they used their retractable claws and then disguised their kills as victims of violent animal attacks.

They are less inclined to be paranoid, although they are equally compulsive about hiding themselves. They typically know at least one and frequently several melee weapon skills, despite the fact that they can easily kill with their claws. They often have a wide variety of Thief/Spy skills in addition to their racial Shadowing and Stealth. Most try to vary their kills to avoid easy detection, but in recent times some have taken pride in being serial killers, to the point of having Trademarks and other possibly self-destructive behaviors.

Hunter doppelgängers appear to have no preferences for their apparent sex or social class.

Ecology

Doppelgänger physical structure is very close to the human norm. Their basic diet, regardless of subspecies, appears to be, if not identical to, at least not incompatible with that of humans. They seem to need (or prefer) the same environmental conditions as well, which suggests that if they are not related to us, then they and humanity evolved under much the same conditions.

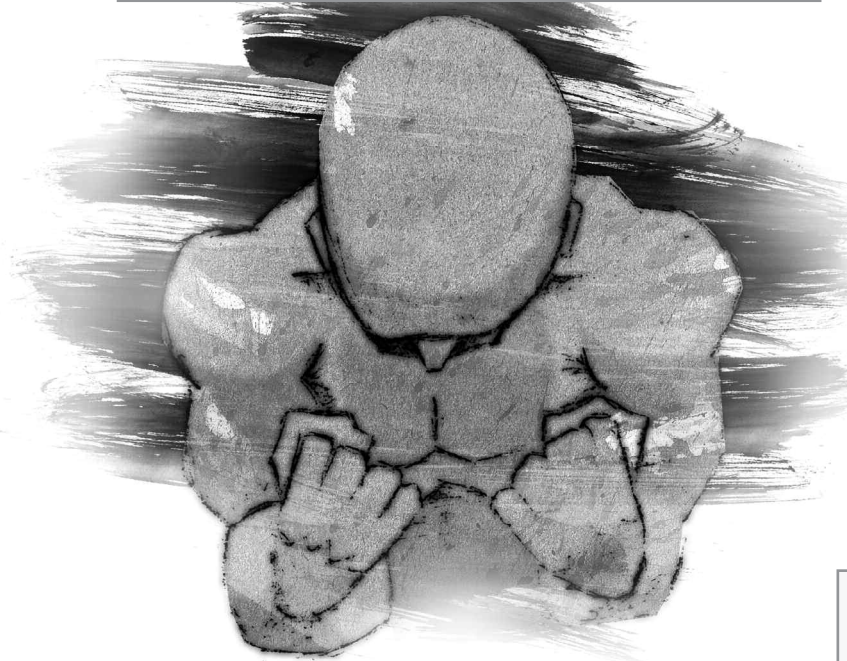
There are more differences than similarities, though. In particular, doppelgängers are all parthenogenetic females. They do not need to exchange genetic material in order to reproduce, although they do so as a matter of course when encountering other doppelgängers in an appropriately private setting. The "mating" process of the species is distinctly unlike that of humans and is disturbing to witness. (A Fright Check is required for non-doppelgängers who stumble upon one in progress.) Hiders and Hunters can mate, but the resulting offspring are of either one variety or the other; they do not hybridize.

Gestation is nine months, like that of humans, and all children are parthenogenetic females. Single births are the rule; twins and other multiple births are almost unheard of. Still, a doppelgänger can display remarkable fecundity, and large broods are not unknown. (In fact, families with three or more daughters and no sons are another indicator the Company uses to detect a possible doppelgänger.)



Doppelgänger Names

Although they clearly have their own language, doppelgängers almost never take names in it. Those born into roles bear the names given them at birth for human society; those who jump roles always do so into new human identities, and again take human names.



A doppelgänger's children are always born female, in a form matching that which the mother is holding at the time of birth. (Few doppelgänger children are actually born in the race's "natural" form.) They remain "locked" in that shape until puberty, usually ignorant of their true nature. Only when their morph abilities unlock does the mother inform and instruct them; if the mother has died before then, it is not unheard of for the young morphs to continue through their lives ignorant of both their own nature and doppelgänger society.

Culture

As far as can be determined, doppelgängers have no "native" culture of their own. (Whether it dwindled away in the face of their proclivities to hide, or it was abandoned, or it never existed at all is a point of contention among those few academics who are aware of them and debate such issues.) Instead, they adopt the culture of whatever species or individual they are imitating.

As mentioned above, they do maintain an informal network among themselves. This is more for the aid of doppelgängers who need documentation to support a new identity than for any kind of cultural continuity. If they have any coherent body of history or myth among themselves, it is unknown to Argus and other observers. Likewise, most pay at least lip service to human religions; if they have a religion of their own, it is even better hidden than they are. They retain some fragments of their original language – including their racial name – but they rarely use it, and the Company's Science Division only knows a dozen words in the tongue.

Politics

Doppelgängers mimic human politics along with everything else. If they have internal factions beyond the hunters and the hiders, they have not been discovered.

In the Campaign

Doppelgängers as described here are natives of the world of *GURPS Black Ops*. Argus learned of their existence only 10 years ago, at which time it set a dedicated Science team to study them thoroughly. The information given in this description, plus a binder full of confusing medical data, is the sum total of Argus' information on the race.

Although some ops lump them in with vampires and so-called "werewolves," Argus officially considers them a separate category of creature. Hunter doppelgängers are priority targets when they are discovered – which, unfortunately for the Hunters, is more frequently than they believe. Psi-ops with Psychometry or Sense Aura can, if they have seen a Hunter victim before or have been shown what to look for, determine if a dead body has had its soul eaten by a Hunter (and not, say, a Soul Dog) with a simple touch and a skill roll.

Other Settings

Doppelgängers fall easily into the "creature" slot in any campaign. Hiders are good in the role of the "monster that isn't," being (usually) shy and inoffensive. Hunters are good for real "monsters," especially in campaigns where they would be unexpected. Either variety could spawn an exceptional representative suitable as a Patron or Enemy, as well, depending on the party.

GURPS Horror: The monster masquerading as human is a classic horror trope. Hunter doppelgängers work best for the traditional implementation, leaving Hiders completely out of the picture to simplify the good-evil polarization. Then again, the GM may choose to use a Hider as a red herring in a complex plot – clearly a nonhuman "monster," but a timid one innocent of any wrongdoing.

GURPS Atomic Horror: Two words: Pod People. Add the "Copies Personality" enhancement (p. 27) to their Morph for an effect closer to any number of classic B-movies.

GURPS Fantasy: Classic fantasy roleplaying games have long included creatures that could mimic human and humanoid forms. Both Hunter and Hider doppelgängers could be dropped into a *GURPS Fantasy* campaign unaltered to provide the same kind of experience and challenge.

GURPS Illuminati: As noted elsewhere, the doppelgängers can be a powerful conspiracy, especially if the other power blocs in the Illuminated world are unaware of them.

GURPS Old West: Hunter doppelgängers can be the malevolent skinchangers of American Indian myth, such as the skinwalkers of Navajo tales. These creatures could take the form of *anything* – up to and including teepees and wigwams. Stories are told of warriors who left their possessions in what they thought were their own tents, only to find the tent missing upon their return, and all their goods stolen by the shapeshifter who had deceived them. While inimical to man, they are not homicidal – except to protect their secret existence. Remove their dependency on human death. Upgrade their Morph to Full, with the "Retains Intelligence," "Unliving Forms," and "Improvised Forms" enhancements. Add Kleptomaniac to disadvantages. Add the racial quirk "Will kill to protect their secret." Finally, they are carnivores.

Hiders are a different story – informal Argus policy is to observe but not to bother them. There are certain concerns that Hunters and Hiders may be the same species in two different stages of life, but Argus is more worried about what the Hiders are afraid of. If it's something more than just humanity or one of the various other species of which Argus is already aware, if it's something new and nasty, Argus wants to know about it – as much about it as possible, as soon as possible.

As with other shapeshifters, the Science Division is intensely interested in the mechanisms by which doppelgängers of either stripe perform their changes. However, unlike the “werewolves,” the secret of whose shapeshifting still eludes them, Science thinks they have something of an idea how doppelgängers do it. Of course, they need more research, and more doppelgängers, to test and refine their theories.

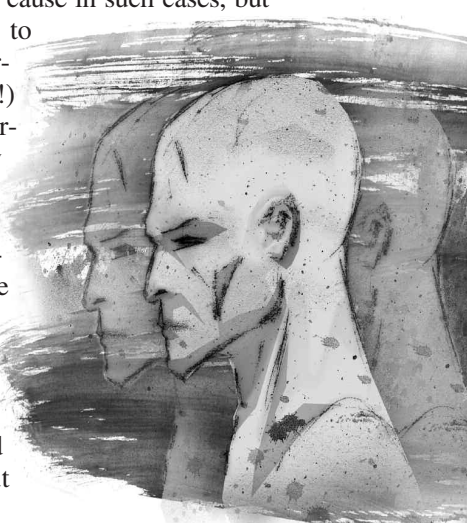
Characters

As NPCs, doppelgängers can be *anyone* – even a character the PCs have known for years. And any “ordinary” NPC encounter can operate on two different levels with a doppelgänger hidden within the character.

Players wishing to design a doppelgänger PC have several options. The simplest is to play a doppelgänger who is ignorant of her heritage. Early death of the doppelgänger parent is usually the cause in such cases, but the GM may want to develop more interesting (or sinister!) reasons. Such a character may or may not be aware of her morph abilities. The Partial Amnesia disadvantage would be useful for this kind of character; she's not literally amnesiac, just unaware of certain facts and implications about her life.

A particularly sneaky GM may turn this around – and make a PC who has taken Partial Amnesia a doppelgänger without the player knowing at all. Similarly, a character with a Secret Advantage (see p. CI16) may be a doppelgänger of either variety.

Another option is to conspire with the GM. Doppelgängers should not be introduced into a campaign without some overarching reason – as they are almost an entire conspiracy in and of themselves, they should serve some long-term plot goal, especially in an otherwise mundane campaign. A doppelgänger character designed in conjunction with the GM can operate on both levels – as a PC, and as part of the vast Doppelgänger Conspiracy. Carefully handled and subtly played, the doppelgänger character can aid or hinder his companions as needed, and can even impersonate (or actually be!) some of the NPCs they encounter.



Sample Character

Sgt. Patricia MacNichol

150 Points

Age 27; 5'7"; 120 lbs.; usual form: intense-seeming Anglo woman with auburn hair and hazel eyes, slender and tightly strung.

Patricia MacNichol is a decorated 10-year veteran in the police force of a major city sometime during the early years of the 21st century. Dedicated and concerned, she is a model police officer who has resisted all attempts to promote or transfer her off the street.

She is also a Hunter doppelgänger who feeds off the dying victims of urban violence.

Unlike most of her fellow Hunters, MacNichol sees the humans among whom she lives as more than just cattle. Still, she is realistic about her own needs. She reconciles the two by serving as a street-level police officer, protecting the masses while still coming into contact with enough dying humans to feed on as needed without having to kill.

While this earns her the occasional accusation of “scavenger” and “carrion eater” from the other Hunters she has encountered, it allows her to sleep at night. If forced by circumstances to hunt, she targets violent criminals exclusively.

Her identity is solidly anchored and, as far as she is concerned, permanent. However, she has no qualms about using her shapeshifting abilities to further her investigations – she is, in effect, the ultimate undercover officer, even if her superiors don't know it.

MacNichol is a 150-point character designed for any kind of contemporary, near future, or recent past campaign and is suitable for use as a PC. As an NPC, she can serve as an Ally or a Contact or even a Patron; if the PCs are on the other side of the law, she can be a formidable Enemy.



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

Speed 5.5; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 8 (Brawling or Judo).

Advantages: Comfortable [10]; Fit [5]; Hunter Doppelgänger [60]; Legal Enforcement Powers [5]; Patron (Police department, 9 or less) [10]; Police Rank 2 [10].

Disadvantages: Cannot Harm Innocents [-10]; Duty (To police department, 12 or less) [-10]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Selfish [-5]; Workaholic [-5].

Quirks: Turns down desk jobs and promotions that would take her off the street; Prefers to feed off the mortally wounded rather than hunt her own prey; Resents suggestions by other doppelgängers that she is a “carrion eater”; Honestly cares about the people in her precinct; Prefers to work night shifts. [-5]

Skills: Acting-15 [0]; Administration-12 [1];* Area Knowledge (City)-15 [4];* Area Knowledge (Precinct)-16 [6];* Brawling-12 [0]; Computer Operation/TL8-13 [2]; Criminology/TL8-15 [8]; Detect Lies-12 [4]; Driving-12 [2]; Forensics/TL8-13 [6]; Guns (Pistol)/TL8-15 [2];** Intimidation-12 [1];* Judo-12 [4]; Law-13 [6]; Shadowing-12 [0]; Shortsword-13 [4]; Stealth-12 [0]; Streetwise-14 [6]; Tonfa-13 [8].

* Includes +1 from Cultural Adaptability.

** Includes +2 from IQ 12.

Maneuvers: Arm Lock (Judo)-14 [1].

Languages: English (native)-13 [0]*.

* Includes +1 from Cultural Adaptability.

THE ENYYN

Improvise. Adapt. Overcome.

– *Sergeant Tom Highway (Clint Eastwood), in Heartbreak Ridge*

Evolution, when presented with a difficulty that it must overcome, can take two routes: specialization or generalization. Specialization leaves a species uniquely suited to overcome the problem at hand. But generalization leaves a species suited to overcome *anything*.

The Enyyn are the absolute embodiment of that principle.

Their homeworld is Go'h'elaan – a cold 2-G rockball a bit larger than Earth, with a methane/nitrogen atmosphere. It orbits a binary star whose whipsawing gravitational fields leave the planet a seething cradle of tide-spawned volcanic activity. The blend of radiation from the mutually orbiting red giant and white dwarf make the planet's entire atmosphere glow with a permanent, world-wide aurora borealis. Sharp upthrust outcroppings of igneous rock constantly battered by violent storms form much of the landscape. Shallow ocean basins with vast tide plains, filled with ammonia seas, make up the rest of the surface. The plants are difficult to distinguish from the rocks, and the animals are difficult to distinguish, period.

It is stark, beautiful, and deadly. And it is home to a race of peaceful philosophers.

Enyyna

750 points

Attributes: DX +2 [20]; IQ +3 [30]; HT +4 [45].

Advantages: Damage Resistance +50 [150]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Extra Flexibility [10]; Extra Hit Points +4 [20]; Hard to Kill +2 [10]; Immortality [140]; Injury Tolerance (No Brain, No Neck, No Vitals) [15]; Morph (Full, up to 500 points; Genetic Match +50%; Improvised Forms +100%; Retains Intelligence +0%; Unliving Forms +50%; Cannot Change Total Mass -50%) [250]; Invulnerability (Radiation) [75]; Reputation +2 (As philosophers and deep thinkers, galaxy-wide) [10]; Temperature Tolerance 5 [5]; 360-Degree Vision [25]; Unfazeable [15]; Universal Digestion [15].

Disadvantages: Attentive [-1]; Charitable [-15]; Chummy [-5]; Staid [-1]; Invertebrate [-20]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; Pacifism (Total nonviolence) [-30]; Reduced Move (Running) 3 [-15]; Undiscriminating [-1].

Quirk: Find most other planetary environments dull. [-1]

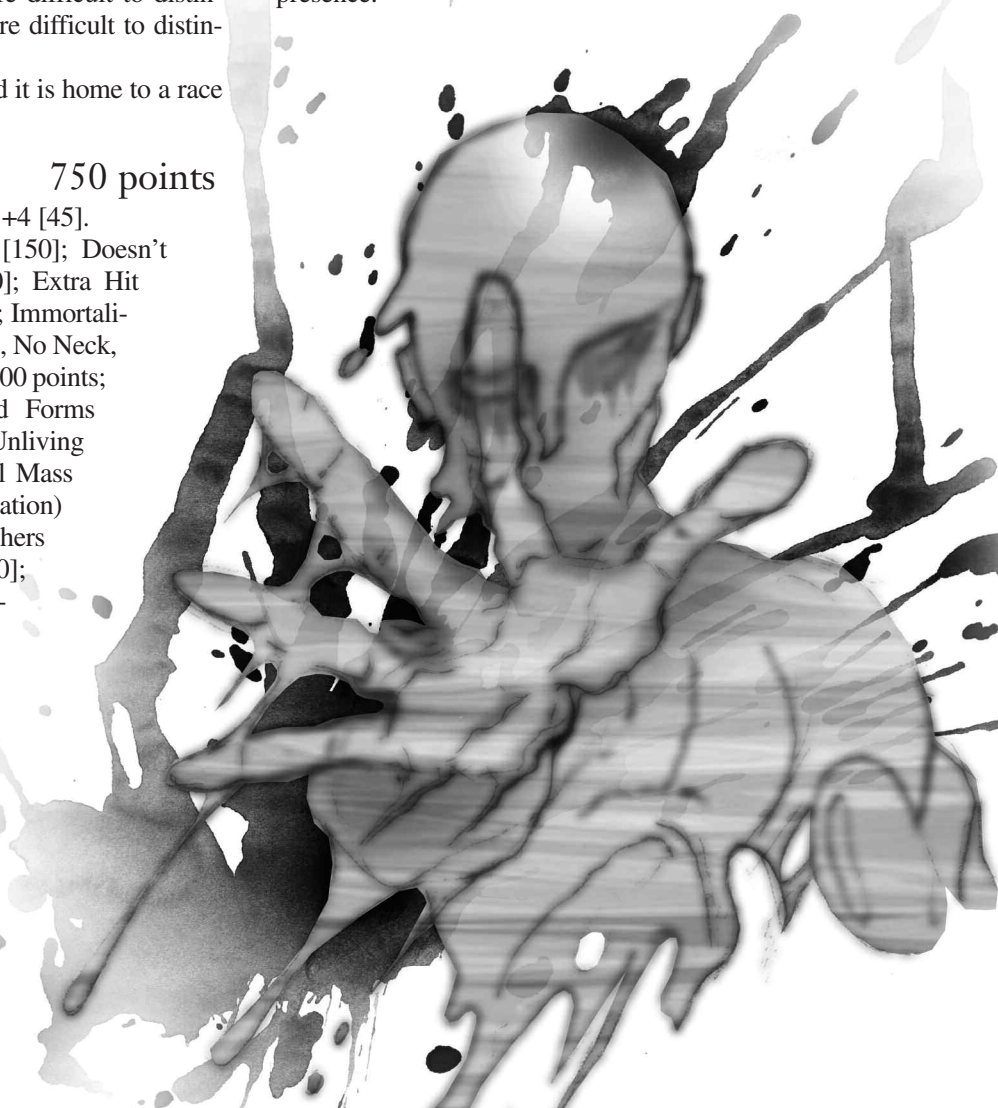
Skills: +2 to Philosophy (Any) [3]; +1 to Soft Science subgrid [6].

Customization Notes: Enyyn "sports" replace the racial Pacifism with Megalomania [-10] and Fanaticism (Self) [-15], for a racial cost of 755 points.

When completely relaxed, the Enyyn (singular Enyyna) resemble yard-wide hemispheres of brightly colored jelly in which blobs and strands of contrasting colors and textures are embedded. However, they are almost never completely relaxed. Even in the depths of the most profound meditation, an Enyyna's form is constantly shifting and flowing, responding unconsciously to environmental changes and stresses; unfortunately, the resulting ripples in appearance and form are disturbing and in fact somewhat nauseating to most other races (effectively a Monstrous Appearance). They weigh an average of 160 pounds.

An Enyyna has a diameter of 3.5 inches for every point of ST (minimum diameter 2 feet) and weighs 4.5 pounds for every inch of diameter.

Enyyn who dwell among offworlders tend to pick an offworlder shape that they wear by default in their neighbors' presence.



Psychology

Born and raised in an environment given to extreme shifts from hour to hour – and unaffected by most of it – the Enynn are relaxed almost to the point of anesthesia. If it's not an immediate threat, it's not worth worrying about. If it *is* an immediate threat, deal with it as quickly as possible and then get back to something more important. Almost nothing bothers an Enynna short of a planetary catastrophe or an apparently unsolvable conundrum. Their basic biology rendering them at ease in the most dangerous of environments, the Enynn expend almost all their effort in intellectual pursuits.

For all their mental and physical adaptability, though, the Enynn are not completely immune to insanity. The race produces extremely rare psychotic “sports” – some believe them to be throwbacks to a more violent stage of their evolution – who are incapable of cooperating with other Enynn and often seek to gain power over their fellows. Enynn psychiatric professionals successfully treat most. The few remaining are not only incurable, but usually the most extreme cases. Forbidden by their own racial ethics to kill such dangerous individuals even in the face of their mounting violence and hostility, the Enynn usually exile them – with sufficient warning to Galactic civilization – and allow other races to punish or try to cure or rehabilitate the outcast as appropriate. Exiled Enynn have a -5 point Social Stigma.

Social Stigma (Exiled) -5

You have been expelled from your homeland/world and are forbidden to return there. The penalties for an attempt may range from simple deportation all the way up to a death sentence, depending on the laws and ethics of your home. You receive a -3 reaction from officials and other powerful people from your home, if you are recognized, and a +1 reaction from fellow exiles (if any).

Ecology

Like the rest of their ecosystem, the Enynn are nominally carbon-based, although in this (as in just about everything else) they have been known to be surprisingly flexible. Their actual evolutionary precursors are uncertain; they share significant characteristics with both the coelenteroid and molluscoid lifeforms found in the seas of Go'h'elaan, but are

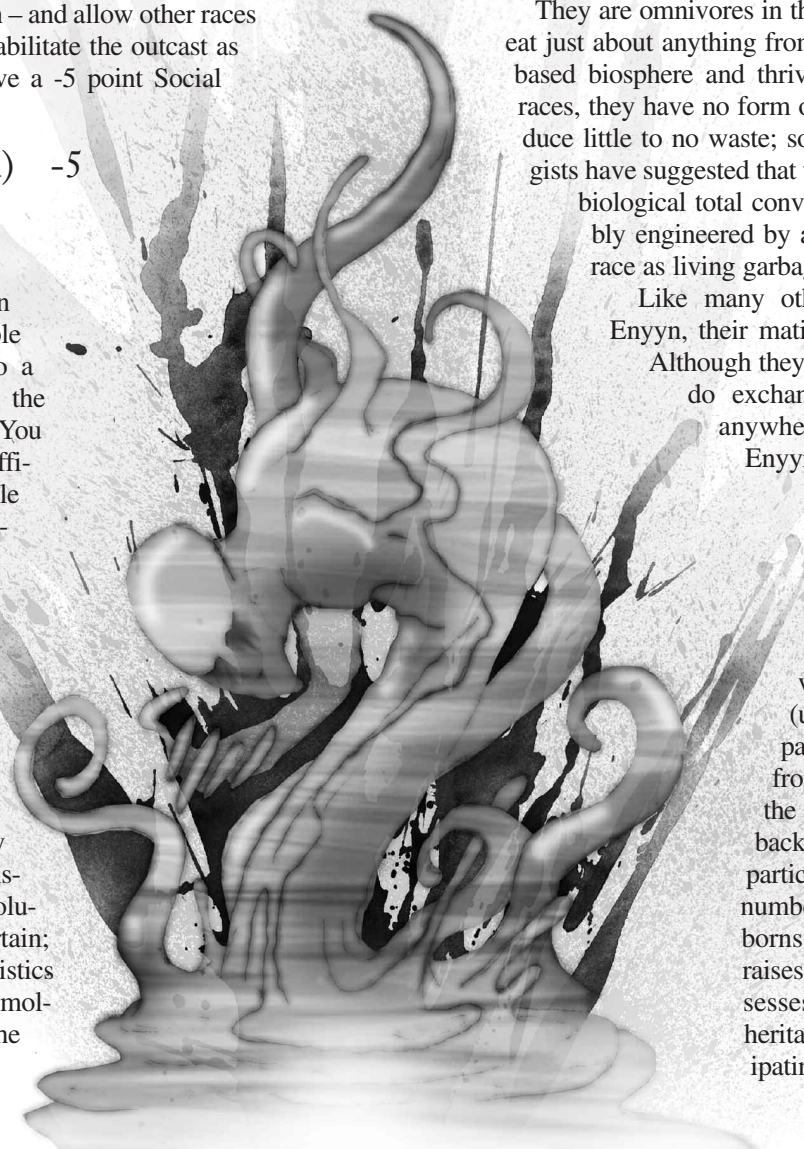
almost exclusively land-bound. On the other hand, no less than one-fourth of their body mass is undifferentiated protoplasm, which makes them similar in structure to their world's analogues of amoebas. All of an Enynna's physical functions, from digestion to cognition, are handled throughout its entire body on a distributed basis with no function permanently fixed in any one location or organ, making the comparison to an amoeba even more apt.

Even more remarkable than their unique structure is the degree of control they have over it. At will, Enynn can change color and texture, extrude limbs of remarkable dexterity and strength or incredible delicacy and fineness, create sensory organs, and even turn into any variety of creature, real or imaginary. When imitating a specific race, they are frighteningly accurate and cannot always be told from the genuine article; with sufficient knowledge they can even form proper (if not necessarily functional) internal organs and bodily fluids as needed. Their sole limitations in this regard are that their total body mass is invariable and they are not genetically compatible with true members of the species in question. (Persistent Galactic legends tell of Enynn who *could* interbreed with other races. These have never been confirmed.)

They are omnivores in the truest sense, able to eat just about anything from any kind of carbon-based biosphere and thrive on it. Unlike most races, they have no form of respiration and produce little to no waste; some fringe xenobiologists have suggested that the Enynn are actually biological total conversion reactors, possibly engineered by a long-gone Precursor race as living garbage disposals.

Like many other things about the Enynn, their mating habits are unique.

Although they are monosexual, they do exchange genetic material; anywhere from two to six Enynn can join in an act of mating. Mating partners flow together to form a single mass of protoplasm, which then consumes almost its own weight in foodstuffs (usually brought by the participants). Anywhere from 24 to 72 hours later, the conjoined Enynn split back apart into the original participants plus an equal number of half-sized “newborns.” Each parent then raises one child, who possesses a random genetic heritage from all the participating parents.



Mating and offspring are rare, though. Xenobiologists note that nothing organic seems to prevent them from reproducing as often as possible. However, the Enyyn try to keep their population as close to a steady state as they can while still maintaining positive growth; it is not uncommon for individuals to go centuries or even millennia between offspring. When asked about their abstinence, Enyyn simply note that carefully managing one's resources and living space is the only ethical choice as well as simple common sense. At the moment, the race is believed to number close to a million individuals on their homeworld, and approximately 10,000 more off-planet.

Perhaps as a side effect of the drastic environmental stresses the race lives through, no less than one Enyyna in 20 is psionically active. The vast majority of Enyyna psis possess telepathy or ESP or both; a smaller number are telekinetic. Occasional individuals may manifest the other psionic gifts, but they are considered almost freakishly unusual.

Culture

Unlike some other immortal races such as the Engai (pp. A108-111), the Enyyn have not retreated to hedonism in order to cope with their endless existence. Instead, they have turned to a life of focused intellectual investigation. Primarily this is approached through the study of philosophy. In what approaches a racial obsession, each Enyyna chooses one branch or category of philosophy to pursue during the course of its life. This may be as general or as specialized as the Enyyna cares to make it. Alternately, individuals may also pursue any of the "soft" sciences. By the time of their first contact with other races, the Enyyn had developed a sophisticated ethical system, which had become the accepted foundation not only for all their dealings with each other, but for their relations with Galactic civilization.

First contact proved to be intellectually profitable for the Enyyn, as they absorbed the myriad philosophies, ideologies, theologies, and other organized systems of thought available in the galaxy and began to explore them. After a disastrous first attempt to offer their conclusions back to one of their off-world sources, though, the Enyyn no longer volunteer the fruits of their thoughts. However, they willingly and enthusiastically entertain questions brought to them.

Enyyna society appears to run, for the most part, on a system of ethical anarchy and enlightened self-interest. Some have likened it to the various communistic and socialistic systems proposed at one time or another by members of every civilization, with certain notable differences. One, it appears to have evolved organically as an outgrowth of the Enyyn's ethical pursuits rather than having been imposed; two, the Enyyn don't have anything approaching an economy as most races know it; and three, it works. It appears also to serve a further purpose in detecting the rare antisocial "sport" simply by making his maximally selfish behavior extremely obvious after a reasonably short time (relative to the Enyyna lifespan, that is).

Outside of enough psi-tech to build a world-web (to repel both invaders and returning revenge-driven exiles; see pp. P61-62), the Enyyn have shown no real interest in importing

off-world technology. Most of it – even most military field-grade equipment – is simply too fragile to survive the conditions on Go'h'elaan; native devices are both sturdier and rarely obvious, looking like opaque crystals or pieces of the landscape. Enyyn technologists do acquire and study individual devices produced by other races in order to reverse-engineer them, recreating them using local materials and methods.

Additionally, archaeologists have discovered the remains of an earlier technological Enyyn civilization on Go'h'elaan, dating to no less than 350,000 years ago. Many experts believe that this civilization collapsed at approximately the same time the Enyyn immortality gene complex manifested in the species. (The Enyyn themselves have been uncharacteristically reticent on the subject of these remains.) Occasional caches of ancient Enyyn tech – as durable and long-lived as its makers, and ranging anywhere from TL9 to TL12 – are discovered every few decades.

Politics

The Enyyn have no national or planetary politics. The Enyyn have no appreciable political system. This being said, they tend to be cordial to almost all species, partly because their ethics requires it, and partly because their ability to adapt and survive allows them to view even the most dangerous races with sanguine equanimity. However, the Enyyn are not guileless naifs, exploited by the galaxy at large. They *understand* politics possibly better than any other race – after all, they've been studying the subject, in both native and off-world varieties, with typical Enyyna single-mindedness for millennia.

As a result, the Enyyn frequently find themselves in the roles of advisers and consultants. More often than not this requires that the supplicant actually go to Go'h'elaan and find the right Enyyna to ask – usually an adventure in itself. However, a growing number of Enyyn can be found in universities and capitals across the galaxy, acting as researchers, arbiters, and teachers. Since they make little distinction between races, alliances, and political factions, they frequently raise the ire of nationalist and/or chauvinist groups.

Enyyna Names

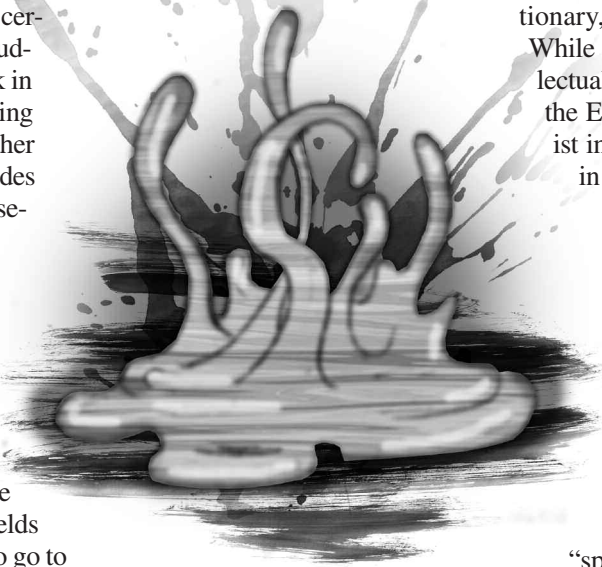
The Enyyna language is a complex combination of sounds and quickly varying skin colorations and as such is not easily spoken or transcribed by offworlders (M/VH for non-Enyyn without the ability to change skin colors at will, with a maximum skill of 12; M/H otherwise). As a result, the names which Enyyn use among offworlders are either abbreviated "nicknames" which employ only those sounds easily vocalized by other races, or "use names" adopted from the languages of other species. "Native" Enyyna names are formed from one- to three-syllable personal identifiers (Narzhal, Vog, Ketelek) and the rough equivalent of patronymics. The latter always begin with the particle "av" and combine the first syllables from the names of all the parents; given the species' mating habits, this produces a surname anywhere from two to six syllables long (av'Oronad, av'Kegaz, av'Paquatamacol).

Among themselves, true Enyyna names are long, complex, and uniquely identifying – they are never repeated among members of subsequent generations.

The Enynn are aware of the Markann's (pp. A72-75) cloaked presence amid Galactic civilization. They have had their own encounters with this hidden race of mad scientists in the distant past, encounters that usually left the Markann involved enraged and frustrated. The Enynn are particularly well suited not only to survive the Markann's brand of destructive testing, but then to turn into pieces of innocuous lab equipment and escape behind their backs, all the while studying *them*. After several centuries of futile effort, the Markann could no longer tolerate the very concept of a race they could not break. They erased their own knowledge of the Enynn and declared Enynna space off-limits under pain of death. Of late, certain Enynn have noticed patterns in their studies that suggest their old nemeses are at work in the galaxy at large, but have not done anything about it yet – they've only just begun to gather the data, after all, and it will take a few decades of evaluation before they can produce any useful conclusions to share with other races.

In the Campaign

Where any kind of "soft" science is concerned, especially matters of philosophy or ethics, the Enynn are the people to see. They are sages, consultants, archivists, and theoreticians. Enynn adventurers are rare but not unheard of; they frequently have fields of interest that by their nature require them to go to



the subject matter rather than vice versa. For obvious reasons, the Survey Service, the Patrol, many militaries, and a number of intelligence agencies actively seek to recruit Enynna members; however, if the job does not offer an intellectual challenge to match the obvious physical challenges for which they are desired, they decline. And no normal Enynna takes a front-line military role.

The rare Enynna psychotic can make a very good master villain. Their typical megalomania usually leads them into areas where they can gain power through the exercise of their personal abilities, be they physical or mental: white-collar criminal, revolutionary, anarchist, mercenary. While not as obsessed with intellectual fulfillment as his brothers, the Enynn sport is still a specialist in his chosen field, and often in many others. He is more than capable of planning hypercompetently for all contingencies. (The GM seeking a lighter touch may want to quantify a sport's madness by letting his intellect go all the way *through* competency to come out the other side.)

Whether he is a classic "spider in a vast web" or a solo operator, he will not be brought down easily and will always have a hidden exit through which to escape, literal or metaphorical. Unless he is an out-and-out revolutionary, he will usually be cloaked in respectability, often several layers deep; multiple IDs (and shapes) are common as well, to allow him to work at differing levels within his organization (if any). Some sports seek out pre-First Contact civilizations and seek to remake them in their own warped images.

Characters

Enynna characters are built on a minimum of 750 points, but 1,000 points or more would not be uncommon for particularly old Enynn, some of whom might be well over a quarter of a million years in age. Add psionics to the mix, and the point budget can rise even higher. This puts player character Enynn out of the range of any but the most high-powered of campaigns. NPC Enynn, on the other hand, are quite possible.

Even though they are immortal and adaptable, that doesn't mean Enynn can't be quirky and odd. An Enynna can be bad-tempered, prejudiced (if such prejudice doesn't conflict with his particular philosophical specialization), or even bizarrely deluded without being one of the psychotics his race exiles. However, the GM should remember that no matter what, Enynn are intellectual and logical, and any strangeness an Enynna exhibits should be supported by a chain of logical reasoning – however spurious! – drawn from his experiences and studies.

Other Settings

As designed, the Enynn are intended for use with *GURPS Space* settings, but they can easily be adapted (or imported untouched) to other milieus.

***GURPS Lensman*:** A race of pacifist philosophers would fit in quite well in the civilized sectors of this Universe. While obviously unsuitable for the Patrol because of their nonviolence, they can still serve in their usual roles of sage and adviser.

***GURPS Fantasy*:** The Enynn can be imported with or without explanation as the GM sees fit. Thaumatology is added to the fields they include in their ruminations, making them some of the greatest experts on magical theory in the world, although few (if any) of them are active mages. (An Enynna might develop a "spell list" by learning to copy the mana organs of a variety of plants and animals, in a setting where such natural magic was common.) Their psionic potential should probably be eliminated unless the game world mixes magic and psi.

***GURPS Atomic Horror*, *GURPS Black Ops*,** and similar settings: The Enynn make an excellent "good guy" race, able to work among humans without setting off their prejudices (unless their true form is discovered) and willing to share their expertise to help this primitive race in its fight against more powerful alien opponents. As pacifists they refuse to do any of the fighting themselves, leaving human characters in the forefront of any action, but they are more than capable of specializing in *military* philosophy and advising their allies on strategy and tactics. In a *GURPS Black Ops* game, Enynna PCs are easily possible, but they are never Ops themselves and may suffer some degree of mistrust or outright prejudice from all levels of The Company, despite their status as allies.

Sample Character

Narzhah av'Oronad, aka "Conqueror" 1,200 points

Age 2,270; 36" diameter; 158 lbs.; as "Richard Carey"/"Conqueror" he appears to be a robust middle-aged human male, 5'8", 158 lbs., with piercing blue eyes and black hair graying at the temples.

Narzhah av'Oronad is an Enyyn psychotic exiled from Go'h'elaan in the early 1700s, who has sworn to return and despoil the world of his birth. In his native timeline (an alternate version of the *GURPS International Super Teams* setting), he has completely reshaped Earth into his chosen tool of vengeance.

After spending several decades planning and studying in the civilized sectors of the galaxy, Narzhah struck out into unexplored space to find a primitive planet to turn into a machine of vengeance upon his homeworld. Dinalvar, the first such world he conquered, was accidentally destroyed by a runaway doomsday weapon test. After a narrow escape in his dilapidated starship, Narzhah made his way to Earth, where he crash-landed in 1896.

Over the next 100 years, using a human form, the identity of "Richard Carey," and scavenged equipment from his wrecked starship, Narzhah became a driving force in American industry and politics. With the advent of the first supers in the 1930s, he used his ship's computer to develop a serum that activated latent powers and bartered it at the start of the Second World War for a commission as a general in the U.S. Army. Leading the Allies' 10,000-man metahuman task force, he dramatically altered the course of World War II. When London and Washington were simultaneously destroyed by Nazi atomic bombs in 1943, he used the opportunity to orchestrate a takeover of both nations to form the British-American Hegemony.

From this merger of the British Empire and the United States, he slowly expanded his influence, absorbing nations either by military conquest (through which he gained the sobriquet by which he is now best known) or by voluntary annexation. By the end of the 1980s the increasingly repressive Hegemony, ruled by a metahuman elite and decidedly fascist in its politics, controlled over 80% of the globe – and Narzhah controlled it, with an iron hand.

Narzhah/Carey himself is an intriguing mix of contradictions. Ruthless and sociopathic when it comes to the destruction of the Enyyn, he honestly cares about the beings he rules (more as useful, intelligent *pets* than as real people). He's basically indifferent to material things, being content with the simple convenience of one level of Multimillionaire rather than the multiple levels his political power would allow him. Although he has drastically curtailed civil

liberties in the Hegemony and his regional lieutenants often have bloody and violent domestic policies, he tries to ensure that no one is hungry, homeless, or unhealthy. Not just because he plans to deploy almost every able-bodied human against Go'h'elaan in a massive invasion force – he seeks the best for his subjects and wants them to love him. (And many do.) He is still haunted by the billions of lives lost to the runaway hellbomb prototype that reduced the planet Dinalvar to slag.

ST 12 [20]; **DX** 14 [20]; **IQ** 15 [20]; **HT** 16/20 [20].

Speed 7.5; Move 7*.

Dodge 8; Parry 12 (Brawling).

* Human form Move. Move 4 in natural form.

Advantages: Charisma +3 [15]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Enyyn "Sport" (see text) [755]; Filthy Rich [50]; Multimillionaire [25]; Status 8 (Ruler of most of Earth) [30];* Strong Will +3 [12]; Telepathy 10 [50].

* Two Status levels free from Filthy Rich and Multimillionaire.

Disadvantages: Bloodlust [-10]; Extravagance [-10]; Glory Hound [-15]; Guilt Complex [-5]; Jealousy [-10]; Obsession (Revenge himself on the Enyyn for his exile) [-15]; Secret (He's an alien, not a mutated human) [-5]; Social Stigma (Exiled) [-5].

Quirks: Dotes on his wife and adopted daughter; Habitually wears the form of a human male of indeterminate middle European extraction; Responsive; Sincerely cares about the welfare of the people he rules; Still suffers nightmares about the world accidentally destroyed by his research programs. [-5]

Skills: Acting-18 [8]; Administration-17 [6]; Anthropology-15 [2];* Area Knowledge (Earth)-18 [6]; Area Knowledge (Galaxy)-14 [2]; Area Knowledge (Go'h'elaan)-17 [4]; Astrogation/TL11-15 [2]; Axe/Mace-15 [4]; Bard-21 [8];** Beam Weapons/TL8 (Blaster)-17 [2];† Beam Weapons/TL11 (Blaster)-17 [2];‡ Biochemistry/TL8-13 [2]; Brawling-17 [8]; Broadsword-15 [4]; Change Control-14 [2]; Chemistry/TL8-14 [2]; Computer Operation/TL8-16 [2]; Computer Operation/TL11-17 [4]; Detect Lies-18 [10]; Diplomacy-15 [4]; Emotion Sense-16 [6]; Fast-Draw (Pistol)-16 [4]; Free Fall/TL11-13 [1]; Genetics/TL8-15 [8]; Genetics/TL9-15 [8]; Guns (Pistol)/TL8-16 [1];‡ Guns (Rifle)/TL8-17 [2];‡ Guns (Machine Pistol)/TL8-18 [4];‡ Intimidation-18 [8]; Knife-15 [2]; Leadership-21 [8];** Mental Blow-17 [8]; Merchant-17 [6]; Mind

Shield-18 [10]; Philosophy (Nietzschean)-18 [6];‡ Piloting (Starship)/TL11-14 [2]; Politics-19 [10]; Psychology (Human)-14/20 [4];* Savoir-Faire-15 [0];§ Strategy (Air)-18 [10]; Strategy (Land)-18 [10]; Strategy (Naval)-18 [10]; Strategy (Space)-15 [4]; Swimming-14 [1]; Tactics-15 [4]; Telereceive-18 [10]; Telesend-18 [10]; Xenology/TL11-15 [4].

* Includes +1 from racial Soft Science bonus.

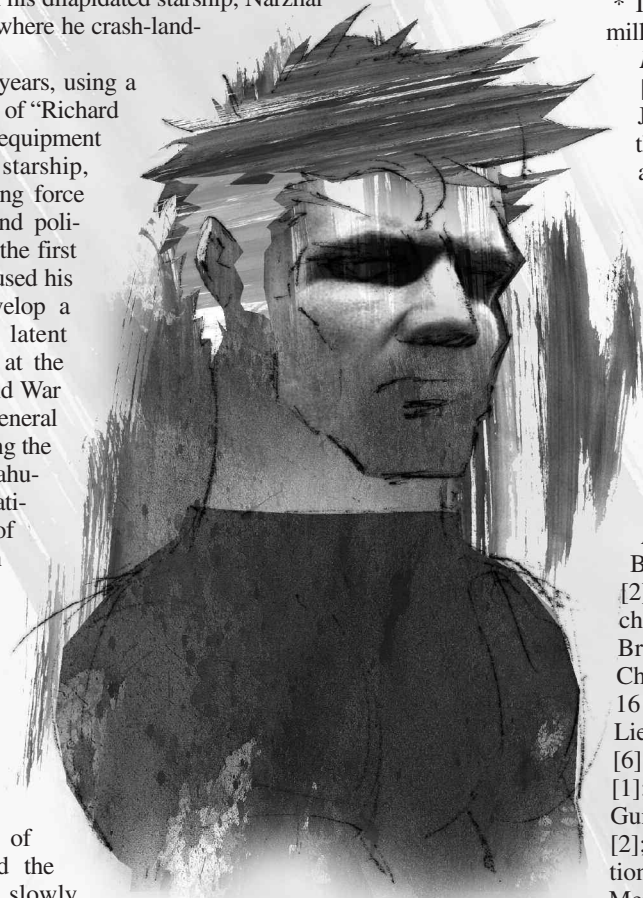
** Includes +3 from Charisma.

† Includes +2 from IQ 15.

‡ Includes +2 from racial Philosophy bonus.

§ Free from Status 8.

Languages: English-15 [2]; Enyyna (native)-15 [0]; German-14 [1].



THE HAWKSHAW BIOROID

Unit Sif-7 reporting.

Confirmed arrival at operation point 01h25m local time per mission plan. Observed guard cycle and revised mission parameters accordingly.

At 02h59m local time, one guard departed from established pattern for micturition in local foliage. Terminated guard and assumed his shape, then returned to patrol per his schedule. Now awaiting final "go."

Unit Sif-7 out.

In a TL12 world of corporate espionage and warfare, a biotech concern has developed the perfect tool with which to undermine the more mechanically inclined of its competitors. Blending the latest in custom engineering for unique talents with a secret process for force-growing clones, the Alesandese Group has produced its own private corps of assassins and spies: the Hawkshaw Class Infiltration Bioroids.

Hawkshaw Class Infiltration Bioroid 150 points

Attributes: ST +1 [10]; DX +2 [20]; IQ +1 [10]; HT +1 [10].

Advantages: Attractive [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Increased Speed +2 [50]; Morph (Cosmetic; Copies Personality +100%; Genetic Match +50%; Cannot Duplicate Clothing -5%; Cannot Reuse Forms -50%; Fatiguing Change -10%; Needs Sample -15%; Slow Change -10%) [80]; Night Vision [10]; Patron (The Alesandese Group; very powerful organization; supplies equipment; 9 or less) [30]; Silence 2 [10]; Single-Minded [5]; Unfazeable [15]; Zeroed [10].

Disadvantages: Callous [-6]; Careful [-1]; Dead Broke [-25]; Hidebound [-5]; Reprogrammable Duty [-25]; Self-Destruct [-20]; Short Lifespan 5 [-50]; Sterile [-3]; Uncongenial [-1]; Weak Will -1 [-8].

Skills: Acting at IQ+2 [10];* Stealth at DX+1 [4].

* Includes -2 from Callous.

Taboo Traits: Hawkshaw bioroids cannot have any trait that suggests excitability or extreme emotion of any kind, nor can they have any mental or physical disadvantage caused or influenced by a genetic factor (for example, Epilepsy or Manic-Depressive).

This is a base-model Hawkshaw, fresh out of the growth tank. Variations are possible, as with natural species, and all Hawkshaws receive extensive special ops-style training before they are deployed on their first missions (see box, below). It is extremely unlikely for anyone outside of the Alesandese Group to encounter a Hawkshaw that possesses nothing but its racial abilities. Special models may have better attributes and higher levels of Appearance and Silence, as well as any other traits their designers may deem necessary.

Hawkshaws are always attractive women, apparently human in appearance. They tend to be Amazonian in size, though – generate height as for a human male and add one inch, and then determine weight normally for a female.

Uniformly female, the Hawkshaw-class bioroids (named after the corporate security officer on whom their core genotype was originally based) are designed to be infiltrators, spies, and assassins. Their inherent gifts make them not only stealthy, but also capable of assuming the shape of anyone from whom they can acquire a tiny genetic sample. To the delight of their engineers, they have an ability to copy a target's personality that seems almost psychic at times. It wasn't in the design specs, and no one seems to know where it came from, but every Hawkshaw so far has had it, and no one at Alesandese is complaining.

Although their primary role has always been as agents to be deployed against rival corporations in covert operations, Hawkshaws have found other roles within Alesandese. No small number are employed as bodyguards for various executive officers, and a number serve in the corporate security department. The vast majority, however, remain part of the black program that spawned them.

There is no such thing as an average or unattractive Hawkshaw; they are designed to be pleasing to the eye, and many specialty models are stunningly gorgeous. This reflects more upon the aesthetics of the Alesandese Group's genetic engineers than any sexist tendencies in either the engineers or society at large, although some have admitted to being influenced by the stories of *femmes fatales* of the past, such as Mata Hari. All racial types, and variations thereon, are found among their numbers, although given their shapeshifting abilities, it's not certain that the appearance a Hawkshaw is

The Typical Hawkshaw Skill Set

The training a Hawkshaw bioroid undergoes after her decanting is brutal and extensive. The Alesandese Group employs some of the best teachers of military and espionage skills available in the world, and they drive the bioroids through an intense, sometimes deadly, one-year course of study that turns a fresh clone into a walking weapon. The following list of skills is the bare minimum a Hawkshaw can be expected to possess upon "graduating" to active agent status, and many are more skilled when they complete their training. It goes without saying that once they are active agents, they continue to improve and expand their skills.

Hawkshaw "Basic Training:" Acrobatics at DX [4]; Beam Weapons/TL12 (Laser) at DX+3 [4];* Camouflage at IQ+2 [4]; Computer Operation/TL12 at IQ+2 [4]; Demolition/TL12 at IQ+1 [4]; Garrote at DX+2 [4]; Guns/TL12 (Pistol) at DX+3 [4];** Guns/TL12 (Rifle) at DX+3 [4];** Holdout at IQ+1 [4]; Jumping at DX+1 [2]; Karate at DX+1 [8]; Knife at DX+1 [2]; Knife Throwing at DX+1 [2]; Lip Reading at IQ [2]; Pickpocket at DX [4]; Poisons at IQ [4]; Running at HT [4]; Savoir-Faire at IQ+2 [8];** Sex Appeal at HT+1 [8];** Shadowing at IQ+1 [4]; Survival (Urban) at IQ [2]; Swimming at DX+1 [2]; Tactics at IQ [8];** Traps/TL12 at IQ+1 [4].

* Includes +1 from IQ 10 or 11.

** Includes -2 to skill from Callous.

The "basic training" package is worth 100 points.

wearing is her own. The only exceptions to this endless selection are the “elite” models, who are clones of exceptionally successful predecessors. No variation is allowed in them; they are all identical to their distinguished “ancestors.”

The first Hawkshaws were decanted almost three decades ago; only the executives in charge of the black division where they are made know exactly how many have been deployed in the years since. There are usually 20 or 30 undergoing “basic training” at any given time, but the exact number currently active in the field is a secret classified at the highest corporate levels.

Psychology

Hawkshaw bioroids need either constant supervision or flexible long-term orders, but they are capable of considerable individual initiative – but only when they are ordered to demonstrate it, which is almost always as part of a mission. This limited independence lasts only as long as the Hawkshaw’s mission is considered incomplete. It continues even if a designated “master” is in her presence, unless that master terminates the mission, allowing her to operate at peak efficiency even in situations where other slave races would fall on their faces groveling at their masters’ feet. (Typical long-term orders might be, “Keep yourself in fighting trim through regular exercise and sparring, eat and sleep properly, and undertake new training whenever the opportunity is presented.”)

Hawkshaw Names

Hawkshaw bioroids are not so much named as designated. Basic Hawkshaws have inception numbers, made up of a two-letter prefix (the first indicates the production facility, the second the growth tank) hyphenated to a four-digit number indicating the year and month the bioroid was decanted (for example, GT-0212).

Hawkshaws who get the attention and favor of their trainers are given use-names and nicknames – usually (but not limited to) common female first names. If a particular Hawkshaw proves to be exceptional, she may be used as the “seed” for a new, “elite” production line, whose members then are identified with her use-name plus numbers indicating the order in which they were cloned: Alysse-12, Miranda-5.

When on a mission, a Hawkshaw uses whatever name is appropriate to the identity she has been assigned or has assumed with her morph powers.

While they have been known to be devoted to their masters and trainers, Hawkshaws have a reputation within the company as “Ice Maidens.” Although not actively hostile to one another or humans, Hawkshaws are not social beings and prefer to be alone if given a choice. They are not subject to much in the way of emotion, as that was considered a liability during field operations. They are, in fact, untroubled by almost all extremes of emotion and present a phlegmatic, unmoved face to the world unless the needs of a mission require otherwise. They have a tendency to focus on their tasks to the exclusion of anything else, and lack both a strong sense of self-identity and any real empathy for other beings. Only their obedience to the company prevents them from being active sociopaths.



Ecology

Although they appear to be human, and in fact share the same basic genetic structure, Hawkshaws and humans are less similar than humans and chimpanzees.

To make them more tractable, and to minimize long-term “disposal” problems, the Alesandese Group has built them with both a reprogrammable motivational structure and a drastically shortened lifespan that ends in a rapid breakdown of their systems. Even if their development were not accelerated using forced growth tanks, they would mature in a mere three years; their operating lifespan from the time they reach maturity is only eight years. After that, they die of old age . . . quickly.

They are not interfertile with humans – or any other known humanoid race – again, by design. Given their short operating lifespan, allowing them to carry children and give birth naturally (despite the saving in production costs) would be an unprofitable waste of time. Therefore, even though they are physically compatible with human males, they are sterile and completely lack anything in the way of a libido – although they are expert at simulating one should a mission call for it.

When not out on assignment, most of the current Hawkshaw population live in a comfortably appointed complex hidden beneath one of the larger buildings on the Alesandese headquarters campus. In addition to the “barracks,” this complex houses the production and growth facilities and the training areas. While the population fluctuates, with production runs, basic training, individual life cycles, and casualties on the outside, there are usually around 80-100 Hawkshaws present.

In the Campaign

The Hawkshaw Class Infiltration Bioroid was designed for use in a TL12 campaign with a strong cyberpunk flavor. As is usual for this kind of world, powerful corporations are battling, both in the marketplace and in the dark of night, for dominance. Mechanical and electronic technologies, whether from a single monolithic megacorporation or from a large number of struggling competitors, currently enjoy the lion’s share of the economy. And a single visionary biotech company is hoping to upset the status quo.

Hawkshaw bioroids are the Alesandese Group’s answer to the challenge. Alesandese deploys the Hawkshaws on missions ranging from simple espionage, through seduction and blackmail, to the sabotage of corporate assets and the assassination and/or replacement of inconvenient executives and government officials.

Unless the party is a team in the employ of Alesandese, they are most likely to encounter one or more Hawkshaws while the latter are deployed on a mission. Whether they meet as enemies or not depends on the goals of both sides – and whether the Hawkshaw thinks she can better accomplish her goals by masquerading as one of the party members.

A Hawkshaw could be anywhere. Anyone from a government official who recently changed his anti-biotech stance

to the security guard who’s in the wrong sector during his shift could be a Hawkshaw. She could be the cute college graduate who wants a drunken executive to help her get a job, or who offers to be his mistress – at least long enough to get him alone. If anything is certain about Hawkshaws, it’s that no one outside of Alesandese has any idea they exist, and (for the moment) they’re leaving other biotech firms alone.

Characters

A typical bioroid fresh out of “basic training” and deployed on her first mission would be a 250-point character. Assuming she spent the bare minimum on her “standard skills” (see box, p. 73), that would leave her player with a few points with which to customize the character – more, if she took some disadvantages above and beyond those in the racial package.

More experienced Hawkshaws could reach 275 or even possibly 300 points in their brief lifespans, making them either opponents to be feared or allies to be coveted.

Despite the fact that they are engineered, variations are still common among Hawkshaw bioroids. Remember that the racial package is just a template, a starting point, even though these beings are effectively mass-produced. Appearance, skill set, and even attributes and leveled advantages can vary from the racial norm.

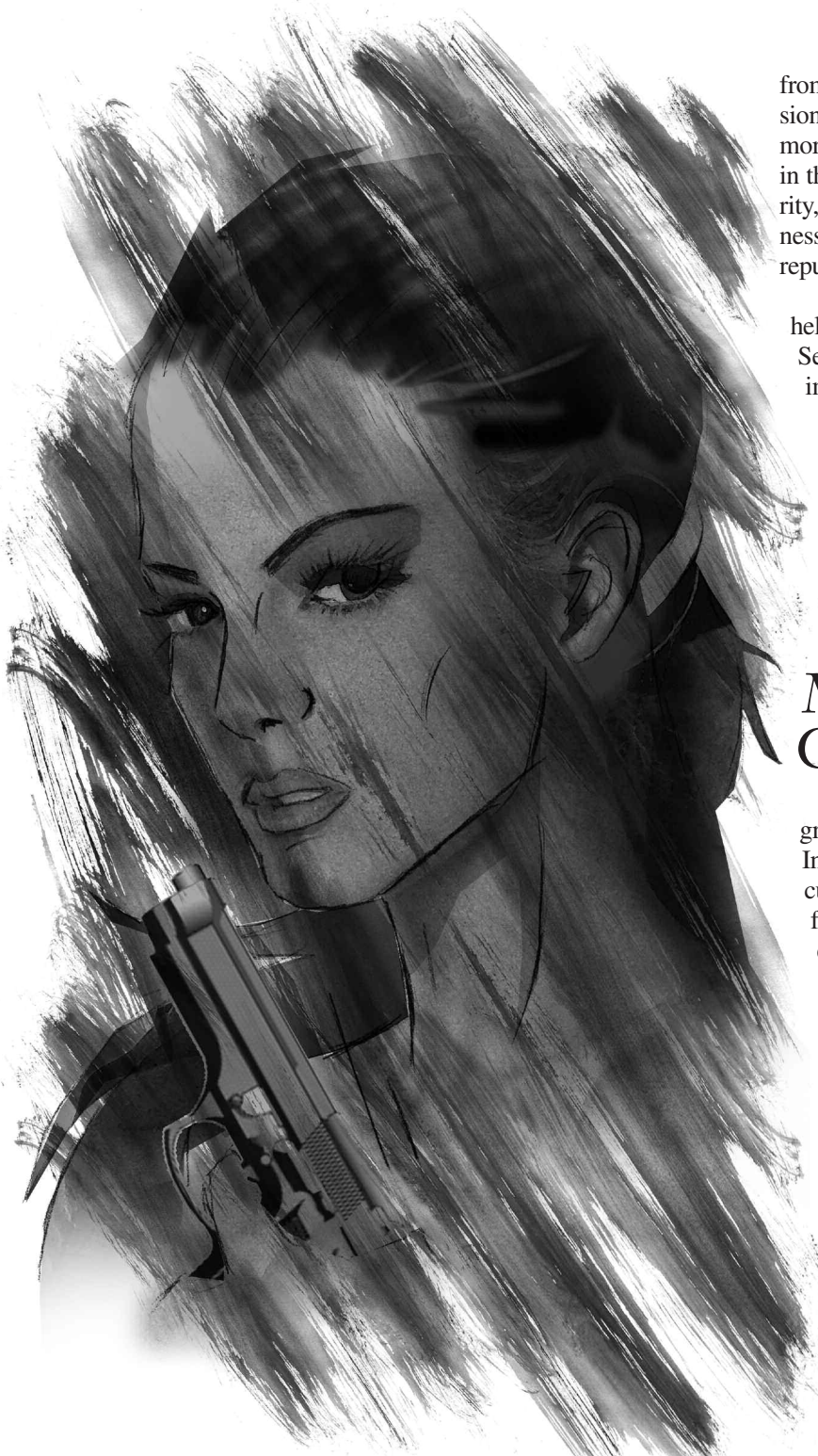
For a Hawkshaw PC, the GM should note that the frequency of appearance for the Alesandese Group Patron represents not any inherent difficulty in reaching the company, but the company’s ability (or *willingness*) to get help to a highly secret, ultimately deniable agent.

Other Settings

A lower tech level – something closer to the traditional cyberpunk world, perhaps – can be accommodated if the GM wishes by the expedient of noting that the Alesandese Group is an innovative biotech firm that is reputed to be *in advance* of the cutting edge as the rest of the industry sees it. Why this is so can be a campaign hook or an unsolved mystery.

If a cyberpunk or biopunk flavor is not preferred, the Hawkshaws could work in any posthuman/heavy bioengineering setting, such as *Transhuman Space*. They would also not be out of place in a world such as *GURPS Terradyne*. For a darker future of a different kind, they might be a new experiment by one of the Zoneminds of *GURPS Reign of Steel*. In *Transhuman Space*, Hawkshaw bioroids are produced via nanotechnology, rather than fast-growth cloning, but the result is the same.

The GM need not feel constrained to technological worlds. In Yrth, or the earth of *GURPS Technomancer*, Hawkshaws could be summoned beings, manifested spirits, or even truly groundbreaking golems. In a Lovecraft-style *GURPS Horror* game, they might be some kind of Elder Spawn, aiding a fine old New England firm for dark and disturbing reasons of their own. And finally, in *GURPS In Nomine*, they might actually be Lilim (possessing the Celestial Song of Form), responding to rituals cast by would-be corporate sorcerers and playing along with the gag until they’ve racked up enough favors to make it worth the effort.



Free Hawkshaws

The GM should consider the following option if he wants to encourage Hawkshaw PCs or create a truly challenging Hawkshaw enemy. Instead of being specifically engineered into the Hawkshaw genotype, their Reprogrammable Duty is conditioned behavior imposed on the bioroids' developing minds during the forced growth process (which explains their limited ability to switch it "on and off"). Although it is extremely difficult, that conditioning *can* be broken. In other words, any Hawkshaw with enough available character points can buy off the Reprogrammable Duty disadvantage outright.

Hawkshaws who break their conditioning usually escape from the company's service by faking their deaths on a mission and slipping into the population at large, relying on their morphing abilities to hide themselves. They usually find work in the fields that they know well, such as mercenary or security, although some have become criminals, others businesspersons, and at least one became an artist of no small repute.

Those who choose not to escape (some stay, trying to help others achieve independence) must take a -30-point Secret to cover their free will. (A "rogue" Hawkshaw is an immediate target for termination.)

In a campaign employing this option, the highest echelons of Alesandese are aware of the Hawkshaw deserters and are justifiably paranoid about them. Unless they buy off more of their disadvantages, they are effectively sociopaths – very dangerous sociopaths who might bear a grudge against the company. A group of Hawkshaws might even become a Patron for a team of adventurers.

Model Variations and Competitors' Knock-Offs

The Hawkshaw bioroid is a lifeform engineered and grown from scratch to serve as a corporate espionage agent. In addition to the "basic" model described in the main text, custom bioroids built to a mission's (or executive's) specifications are possible. The Alesandese Group's genetic engineers can add almost any trait that is not occult or supernatural in nature. Some "super" traits are also possible, as evidenced by the Hawkshaw's morph abilities, but the GM should take care to limit exactly what is available, lest the campaign turn into a supers game.

Some organizations may want to have agents like the Hawkshaws but do not have Alesandese's level of technology available to them. Companies like this may have had to settle for rebuilding existing human beings (either "recruited" or kidnapped outright), especially if they're in a relative hurry.

Modified humans are not usually as exceptional as an engineered lifeform unless the organization in question has access to such advanced means as a Metamorphosis Virus (see pp. BIO79-84). Attribute increases may be lower or fewer and the number of added advantages may be smaller. Most importantly, the Self-Destruct/Short Lifespan/Reprogrammable Duty combination is replaced by the less complicated but almost as effective tactic of implanting a cortex bomb and subjecting the new agent to a barrage of powerful psychological conditioning. One advantage re-engineered humans hold over a Hawkshaw or its equivalent is that they tend to be more personable and are able to function better on missions that require extensive social functions.

Above and beyond the differences in raw materials, individual agents can be customized for different mission profiles, especially if they are grown to order by an organization like the Alesandese Group.

Sample Character

Miranda-5

315 points

Age 5; 5'11"; 150 lbs.; black hair, gray eyes, porcelain complexion, sleekly muscled with a feline grace.

Miranda is the fourth clone spawned from the original Miranda, and like her forebear she is a skilled and deadly assassin. At five years old, Miranda has been serving Alesandese for four years and has just entered "middle age" for a Hawkshaw. In that time, she has racked up an impressive record of kills, including five politicians, three consumer activists, a half-dozen assorted executives, and the entire board of directors for a robotics firm whose products were becoming too organic in appearance and construction for the peace of mind of several of Alesandese's upper executives.

She is silent, deadly, and implacable when aimed at a target, displaying an inventiveness in her methods that is both playful and artistic without being in the least sadistic. She doesn't hesitate to stoop to cruder methods if they guarantee efficiency and comprehensive results, but if time and her orders allow, she chooses demises tailored for the individual targets. A case in point is the aforementioned board of directors, who all died within 48 hours of each other, of causes ranging from a simple automobile accident to misprepared blow-fish sushi. Her primary on-the-job quirk is a tendency to avoid taking on male shapes when she must use her morph abilities.

Outside of missions, she is quiet and thoughtful and as nonconformist as her programmed mentality allows, making her the "Goth" of the Hawkshaws – a trait that she shares with all her predecessors, ironically enough. She is attracted by objects that appeal to her (somewhat quirky) sense of beauty and aesthetics and has had to restrain herself on more than one occasion when this attraction manifested during a mission.

Of late, Miranda's individualism has been running up hard against the walls of her programming. In campaigns where this is a conditioned state and not a genetic one, Miranda has begun to wear away at her conditioning (in game terms, she has accumulated 20 or so character points toward buying off the disadvantage, above and beyond her character total). If she were to break it down completely, she just might vanish into the night after completing her next mission.

Miranda-5 is a 315-point character suitable for use in a TL12 *GURPS Cyberpunk* game (or its *GURPS Bio-tech* equivalent). GMs looking to expand on her hand-to-hand fighting ability should feel free to upgrade her Karate to a full roster of *GURPS Martial Arts* maneuvers and skills.

ST 11 [0]; **DX** 14 [20]; **IQ** 12 [10]; **HT** 11 [0].

Speed 6.25; Move 6.

Dodge 7; Parry 11 (Karate).

Advantages: Absolute Timing [5]; Alertness +2 [10]; Hawkshaw Racial Package [150]; Silence 5 [15];* Very Beautiful [20].**

* Includes Silence 2 from her racial package.

** Includes Attractive from her racial package.

Disadvantages: No Sense of Humor [-10]; Stubbornness [-5]; Vow (Always complete her mission or die trying) [-15].

Quirks: Doesn't like assuming male forms; Doesn't like the idea of being another "cookie cutter" clone product; Easily distracted by beauty and aesthetics; Nonconformist in her limited way; Quiet and thoughtful when not on a mission. [-5]

Skills: Acrobatics-14 [4]; Acting-14 [0]; Appreciate Beauty-11 [3];* Beam Weapons (Laser)/TL12-18 [4];** Camouflage -14 [4]; Climbing-15 [4]; Computer Operation/TL12-14 [4]; Demolition/TL12-13 [4]; Garrote-16 [4]; Guns (Pistol)/TL12-18 [4];† Guns (Rifle)/TL12-18 [4];** Holdout-13 [4]; Jumping-15 [2]; Karate-15 [8]; Knife-15 [2]; Knife Throwing-15 [2]; Lip Reading-13 [4]; Lockpicking/TL12-13 [4]; Mechanic/TL12-12 [2]; Pickpocket-14 [4]; Poisons-12 [4]; Running-11 [4]; Savoir-Faire-14 [8];† Sex Appeal-11 [6];† Shadowing-13 [4]; Stealth-15 [0]; Streetwise-12 [2]; Survival (Urban)-13 [4]; Swimming-15 [2]; Tactics-13 [10];† Traps/TL12-13 [4].

* Bought up from Savoir-Faire-5 default.

** Includes +2 from IQ 12.

† Includes -2 to skill from Callous.

Languages: English (native)-12 [0], Japanese-11 [1].



THE METAMORPHIC INVADER

I know I'm human. And if you were all these things, then you'd just attack me right now, so some of you are still human. This thing doesn't want to show itself, it wants to hide inside an imitation. It'll fight if it has to, but it's vulnerable out in the open. If it takes us over, then it has no more enemies, nobody left to kill it. And then it's won.

– MacReady (Kurt Russell), in *The Thing* (1982)

No one knows where they come from. No one knows how many of them there are.

And no one knows how many of us are actually *them*.

The scientists have a name for them, six syllables in Latin and four more in ancient Greek, that no one uses. Everyone else who knows about them simply calls them . . . the Invaders.

Metamorphic Invader 375 points

Attributes: ST +9 (Natural, -40%) [60]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Extra Hit Points +2 [10]; Fangs [10]; Hard to Kill +5 [25]; Injury Tolerance (No Brain, No Impaling Bonus, No Neck, No Vitals) [35]; Morph (Full, up to 35 points; Copies Personality, +100%; Genetic Match (Full), +100%; Horrifying Change 5, +50%; No Memorization Needed +50%; Needs Sample, -50%; Slow Change, -10%) [340]; Single-Minded [5]; Stretching 3 [60].

Disadvantages: Bad Sight (Nearsighted) [-25]; Bestial [-10]; Horrific [-30]; Invertebrate [-20]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Obsession (Hunt, kill, reproduce) [-15]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats sentients) [-15]; Reduced Move (Running) 2 [-10]; Slow Eater [-10]; Solipsist [-10]; Uncongenial. [-1]; Undiscriminating [-1]; Unusual Biochemistry [-5]; Vulnerability 4 (Alcohol) [-40].

Taboo Traits: Immune to the Riders (see pp. A119-21) [0].

Skills: Change Control at IQ+4 [12].

The metamorphic invaders exploded into the Galactic consciousness with what is now called the Palisade Massacre. Through means still unknown, one of these savage, sentient predators arrived on the rimward colony world of Palisade and began to hunt among the remote homesteads that dotted the planet's one settled continent. Its viciousness and single-mindedness quickly betrayed it; as settler after settler dropped off the planetary datanet, the colonial government grew suspicious and dispatched a platoon of mobile infantry to investigate.

Expecting to discover brigands or other human predators raiding the distant homesteads, the troops were initially shocked to discover that instead they were pursuing some variety of monster. It was not until the fortuitous moment when they came upon the creature as it fed upon its

latest victim that they had any clue what in truth they faced. Half the platoon perished in the subsequent battle, but the creature was defeated, killed in mid-transformation. The survivors bundled the grotesque body into their transport. Then, stunned and in traumatic shock, they returned to Bartlett, Palisade's capitol city.

What they didn't know was that much of the population in the region had been replaced by the creature's offspring.

Before an autopsy had even begun on the monstrous corpse, rumors had already spread through Palisade's remaining human population and, from there, off-world. Within a week, nearby worlds were demanding to know what had been found. The colonial government of Palisade stonewalled for a month, then shared what it had learned. Twenty-four hours later, the classified data packet had reached both the media and the interstellar Net.



The government report posed as many questions as it had answered. The creature had been in the process of changing not only its shape but also its DNA – gene scans of its various parts were wildly different from each other. Worse yet, it had very clearly been an intelligent being; not only had it fought the government troops with sly cunning and an eye toward tactics, but later investigation revealed that it had been moving from homestead to homestead under a variety of guises. A number of witnesses reported speaking with it, and none had sensed anything amiss about it. Finally, the hope that it was a one-of-a-kind bioengineered weapon or a sterile mutant was dashed by the revelation that the creature had been about to spawn.

Two weeks later, Palisade went silent.

A quarantine and blockade slammed down on the colony world. Robotic probes revealed the disturbing truth – there were no humans left on the planet, only horrific shapeshifting creatures like the one that had been killed. The suspicions about their intelligence proved correct when the creatures attempted to leave the planet using the few spacecraft still remaining at Bartlett's one starport. They were destroyed the moment they tried to leave the planet's atmosphere.

In the end, there was no choice. Palisade was sterilized.

Faced with the possibility of invading shapeshifters on their own worlds, governments based near the lost colony set up crash research programs to find ways to detect and disable the creatures, as well as combat teams intended to pursue and terminate them. To date no less than a dozen attempts by Invaders on as many planets have been detected and thwarted. Sometimes the cost in human lives has been high, but the fight is for the survival of the human race – sacrifices must be made.

In their natural form – which shaken witnesses have seen from time to time – the Metamorphic Invaders have been likened to “latex sacks filled with gelatin.” Roughly man-sized in height, they are horrific greenish-black ellipsoids whose upper ends are marked by two large eyes and an enormous fanged mouth. Individuals who see this much rarely live to report it, as the Invaders use that maw to attack, and to swallow prey whole. They normally take a shape with legs in order to move quickly; when in natural form they must move either inch-worm-style or by repeatedly stretching and contracting their bodies.

If the Invaders have a name for themselves – indeed, if they even have a native language – it is unknown.

Use half of a Metamorphic Invader's ST to determine its height, which is both the length of its body's long axis and the base height against which different-sized morphs are measured. Weight is 75 pounds more than for a human of equivalent “height.”

Psychology

Move. Kill. Feed. Reproduce.

The metamorphic invaders are to their remote cousins the Xenomorphs (p. A126) as smilodons are to house cats. Where the Xenomorph makes himself one with the community, the metamorphic invader seeks to make the community one with himself.

Although they appear to be as intelligent as humans, it is believed that their minds work in a dramatically different way. Attempts to communicate with them have all failed, even when the Invader was in a form demonstrated to be capable of intelligible speech and social interaction; they either maintain their roles or ignore their interrogators. They do not “break character” unless they lose the shape, either due to environmental pressures or because of excessive damage.

It appears from their behavior that they are solipists to the point of sociopathy – *no one* matters to an Invader other than himself; everyone and everything else, even other Invaders, exists solely as either tools or food, in that order. Groups of Invaders *can* cooperate when working for a common goal, and can do so even for extended periods, but in the final analysis each one is using the others, and intends to consume them. They have no parenting instinct, nor any consistent shared culture.

Even though they are such a cipher to investigators and researchers, some of their racial imperatives can be deduced from their behavior. First and foremost, they are predators – fearsome, cunning, and most of all *intelligent* predators. They study their prey extensively. They lay traps and plan ahead for contingencies, and they know when to abandon a hopeless cause. They can be subtle and inhumanly patient. They know what technology is and use it adeptly (as evidenced by their ability to pilot between systems), although what little of their own native technology has been found has proven impenetrable to researchers.

They are also *colonizers*. By virtue of their biology, they have a constantly expanding population. Wherever they have had the technology to do so, Invaders (individually or in groups) have continued to adjacent stars to seek out more fertile hunting grounds. Where they have not, Invaders have contrived to catch rides with unwary visitors, usually by impersonating one or more of them.

Whether it is something they are consciously aware of or not, it is clear that their ultimate goal is the conversion of all the organic matter they can reach into metamorphic invaders, resulting in a universe of constant cannibalistic struggle that must inevitably taper off into a dwindling death at the hands of the laws of thermodynamics.



Ecology

Metamorphic invaders are predators, capable of surviving on the flesh of nearly any carbon-based creature. They are cautious and cunning, preferring to hunt more like trap-door spiders than lions. They live about as long as humans, but because of their reproductive cycle, they spend almost all of their lives as active adults. Essentially a macroscale version of cellular division, the process self-triggers every six to eight weeks and rarely takes more than 24 hours. An Invader about to reproduce consumes its own weight in meat (creatures so consumed cannot be used as shape templates) and then finds a secluded lair. When the division process is complete, there are two competent (if somewhat smaller) adults where before there was one – metamorphic invaders waste no time on childhood. (Both offspring inherit the parent's memorized forms, as well.)

The exact source of their morphing abilities is unknown. What is known is that it is unpleasant to see – the Invaders' shape change is slow and disturbing. Those few witnesses who have dared to stay for the entire process have likened it to "wet, rotting meat sculpting itself, one paper-thin layer at a time."

A Living Doomsday Weapon

Because the combination of their physical powers and psychological attitudes seems unlikely to have evolved naturally (the very existence of an intelligent, cannibalistic, solipsistic race sends some xenobiologists and xenologists into fits), many experts believe that the Invaders were genetically engineered. The most commonly accepted theory is that they are a biological doomsday weapon that was either used or accidentally released and that turned out to be much better at long-term survival than its creators intended.

There is a great deal of evidence to support this view. First, for an ostensibly sentient race, they are driven by a number of hard-wired biological imperatives that prevent them from developing anything approaching a civilization. Among these is reproduction – unlike virtually all other sentient races, Invader reproduction is completely involuntary, extraordinarily rapid, and clearly geared toward producing more Invaders *fast*.

Second, they are (despite their large eyes) near-sighted, unable to see clearly anything farther away than 30 feet or so, effectively forcing them to focus on their next victim or their next task. Finally, while Invaders are carbon-based (and capable of consuming almost any carbon-based flesh), they react badly to alcohol, including methanol (wood alcohol) and isopropanol (rubbing alcohol) as well as ethanol; this may have been an attempt at a control mechanism in case the Invaders ran wild.

Another odd vulnerability is that other shapeshifters don't agree with them. If a Metamorphic Invader consumes a Xenomorph, Enyyn, or other shapechanger, the Invader almost immediately goes into spasms lasting 2d+10 minutes,

during which it loses control of its own Morph power and shifts randomly every 1d seconds.

On the Hunt

The Invaders are sufficiently individualistic so that it's impossible to provide a universal profile for their behavior. In general, though, they tend to infiltrate worlds rather than attack outright. They take targets of opportunity at first, killing and replacing them regardless of their roles in society. (Ironically, because of the Invaders' metabolic reaction to alcohol, the usual clichéd hunting grounds and victims – bars, parties, and their denizens, not to mention homeless drunks – are the safest.)

Once they have taken over an individual's life, they "harvest" all his connections. With every spawning, they take over another of the target's relatives, friends, or acquaintances, until his social and family circles have been completely converted. At this point, the original victim's shape is of no further use; the Invader abandons it in favor of a new victim, with a new social network to absorb.

Names

Like their pseudo-cousins the Xenomorphs (p. A126), the Invaders don't seem to take any personal names other than those of the individuals whose shapes they've adopted. Indeed, it's unknown if they have a language at all.

Metamorphic invaders aren't always so patient – they have been known to explode into spasms of utter violence, usually employing forms with greater mobility than their native one, enhanced with all the strength of their unusual biology.

Culture

The Invaders have no native culture; they are unable to cooperate long enough to create one, and appear to have no interest in doing so even if they could.

Politics

Metamorphic Invaders have no political relations with any other race in the galaxy. They don't even acknowledge other members of their own race as sentients, let alone other races. For all practical purposes, there is a permanent state of war between the Invaders and every other species in the Galaxy.

It is a highly classified secret, but Palisade is not the only planet taken over by the aliens. The Galactic Survey Service has discovered several other entire planets populated by nothing but metamorphic invaders, endlessly stalking and devouring each other. For the sake of galactic civilization, every such world has been sterilized, like Palisade.

In the Campaign

Invaders are best used as a "monster" race, in the tradition of any number of horror films. Like the Riders (see pp. A119-21), they can be subtle when infiltrating a population base; unlike the Riders, once they determine they have reached some critical threshold, they abandon subtlety and explode into an orgy of consumption and reproduction. Discovering a world just about to reach that threshold can make a terrifying adventure for a *GURPS Space* campaign, although players might prefer a discovery somewhat earlier in the infiltration, so that they have a chance to stop it.

Characters

Invader PCs are a bad idea, unless the GM actually *wants* all the other PCs to eventually become Invaders and fight among themselves to the death.

Variations

As described, the Invader is a creature not unlike the Thing from the 1982 John Carpenter movie, with a liberal

lacing of the Alien from the film of the same name. With alterations ranging from minor to major, though, it can take on a number of alternate roles.

One such alternative could be called “the Lernean Metamorph.” Not only do the Invaders reproduce as described in the main text, cutting damage just turns them into smaller versions of themselves! Whenever an Invader takes cutting damage, instead of suffering a wound the Invader becomes *two* Invaders – one with at many HT as the attack inflicted, the other with whatever HT remains. (Treat cutting damage equal to or greater than the Invader’s HT as HT/2 – effectively dividing the creature into two equal halves.)

Recalculate ST for each new Invader based on the distribution of HT. For example, a ST 20, HT 10 Invader has been cut into a HT 4 and a HT 6 Invader. The former would have a ST of $4/10 \times 20$, or 8; the other would have the balance, or 12.

This is an advantage related to Duplication (p. CI53), worth 100 points. Unlike Duplication, the smaller Invaders cannot recombine and recreate the original single Invader.

This option is not recommended in the unlikely event of metamorphic invader PCs.

Other Settings

The Invaders were designed for use in science fiction backgrounds ranging from *GURPS Atomic Horror* to *GURPS Space*, although they are probably better suited to a campaign with a serious tone rather than a light one. Other settings are possible:

GURPS Horror: Add a single Invader to an enclosed setting – a spaceship, a remote research station, a boat carrying an Antarctic expedition, or an isolated mountain cabin or campground cut off by heavy snow – and you have one of the classic horror set-ups. Keep the nature of the Invader secret (and recruit players as “secret NPCs” as their characters are eliminated and absorbed) to drive the tension to a fever pitch.

Make them a bit less rapacious and a bit more cunning, and they would fit right into a classic Lovecraftian campaign, either as an eldritch threat in their own right, or as the dedicated servants of some chaotic, shapeless Thing Man Was Not Meant To Know.

GURPS Voodoo and **GURPS Spirits:** Instead of a physical threat, the Invaders are a metaphysical one – a race of spirits (or a variety of In-Betweeners, in a *GURPS Voodoo* setting) who can only spawn on the physical plane. This wouldn’t be so bad if they didn’t have to eat someone to do it.

GURPS Fantasy: The Invaders are already an ideal “evil” race; give them a dark god or two to worship and a long-term agenda, and they become servitor creatures suitable for lurking in the dark corners of a sword-and-sorcery world. Or they could be a very special variety of demon.

GURPS Black Ops: Not just another alien race, the Invaders would be one of the Company’s top priorities, as they can do more damage faster than anything else known to Argus and the Ops. Company archives abound with horror stories of Invaders in action, from isolated individuals all the way up to an entire Nevada town that had to be nuked to halt an invasion poised to explode across the state

For an interesting alternative, blend **GURPS Black Ops** and **GURPS Space**. The Company is a branch of the galactic government, one of the biggest “black” projects ever undertaken. Their goal is the eradication of the Invaders wherever they are found and the suppression of all public knowledge of their existence. At TL9 and higher, Ops get even more fun toys to play with, but the enemy is proportionally more dangerous and difficult to find.

GURPS Supers: A four-color team might have its hands full stopping an invasion in progress, but a single Metamorphic Invader would make a better opponent for a gritty “street-level” campaign.



CHAPTER 5

I AM THE MOON'S INDENTURED SERVANT . . .



In this chapter are found sample weres and were-like creatures from a variety of genres. Once again, notes on crossover and multigenre uses are provided where appropriate.

The Shapeshifting ability (or the Involuntary Shapeshifting disadvantage) can fit into the character design process in more than one way, and different ways require different sets of templates. Every were has a racial template for its alternate form, often based on the template for a natural animal (see pp. 16-17). To paraphrase Shakespeare, “some have were-hood thrust upon them,” gaining Shapeshifting through a curse, superheroic origin, or other unique event; Shapeshifting or Involuntary Shapeshifting is written directly on their character sheets, like any other advantage or disadvantage. “Some are born weres,” gaining their abilities through inheritance or standardized design; they have racial templates that include the ability, and the

total point cost of the racial template in turn appears on the character sheet for the individual were. Finally, “some achieve were-hood,” through study, initiation, creation of an enchanted item or superscientific treatment, or similar methods; character templates describe groups of people who have gone through this process (as in *GURPS Wizards*, *GURPS Warriors*, or *GURPS Rogues*), and these templates are used as patterns for creating character sheets – the various advantages (including Shapeshifting), disadvantages, and skills are included on the character sheet item by item.

Of this chapter’s examples, the cinematic werewolf, the ethomorph, and the victim of a shapeshifting curse are unique individuals. The Benandanti, kitsune, and selkies and the F2-ATV all are born (or manufactured) with shapeshifting abilities and have racial templates that reflect this. The jaguar, eagle, and coyote warriors and the raven shamans are groups with special backgrounds reflected in occupational templates.

THE CINEMATIC “MONSTER” WEREWOLF

Jack: Now, I'm really sorry to be upsetting you, but I have to warn you.

David: Warn me?

Jack: We were attacked by a werewolf.

David: I'm not listening to this!

Jack: On the moors, we were attacked by a lycanthrope, a werewolf. I was murdered, an unnatural death, and now I walk the earth in limbo until the werewolf's curse is lifted.

David: Shut up!

Jack: The wolf's bloodline must be severed; the last remaining werewolf must be destroyed. It's you, David.

– *An American Werewolf in London*

As sympathetic as many recent portrayals have been, some weres are still monsters. This is one such. Inspired not so much by classic Universal horror films as by more recent movies such as *Wolfen* and *An American Werewolf in London*, this is the original Werewolf From Hell: 200-plus pounds of snarling death and infectious curse, three or more feet high at the shoulder and splattered with the blood of its innocent victims.

The template for the wolf-form is as follows:

Werewolf Form 310 points

Attributes: ST +4 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [27]; DX +2 [20]; IQ -2 [-15]; HT +5 [60].

Advantages: Acute Hearing +5 [10]; Acute Taste and Smell +5 [10]; Alertness +1 [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Danger Sense [15]; Dark Vision [25]; Discriminatory Smell (Works as Empathy within 2 hexes, +50%) [23]; Enhanced Dodge [15]; Enhanced Move (Running) 1/2 [5]; Fangs [10]; Four Legs [5]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Hyperactive [30]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Magic Resistance +5 [10]; Penetrating Call [5]; Recovery [10]; Regeneration (Regular) [25]; Silence 3 [15]; Talons [40]; Thick Fur [29]; Ultrahearing [5]; Vampiric Invulnerability (vulnerable to silver instead of fire) [150].

Disadvantages: Berserk [-15]; Bestial [-10]; Bloodlust [-10]; Chummy [-5]; Color Blindness [-10]; Compulsive Behavior (Spread terror and bloodshed) [-15]; Dread (Wolfsbane, 2-hex radius) [-6]; Frightens Animals [-5]; Gigantism [-10]; Gluttony [-5]; Horizontal [-10]; Innumerate [-5]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; Mute [-25]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats humans) [-15]; Overconfidence [-10]; Presentient [-20]; Sleepy (50%) [-10]; Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-15]; Staid [-1]; Vulnerability (Silver) 3 [-30].

Quirks: Prefers to focus on people and places known to its human form. [-1]

Skills: Brawling at DX [1]; Intimidation at IQ+3 [8]; Jumping at DX [1]; Running at HT [4]; Shadowing at IQ+2 [6]; Stealth at DX [2]; Tracking at IQ+4 [2].*

* Includes +4 from Discriminatory Smell.

Design Notes: The werewolf form is based on the wolf template (p. 17). Its form is that of a true wolf, not a bipedal wolfman. However, its size and strength are much greater, comparable to those of the dire wolf, an extinct form as large as a small pony. Its relatively high IQ reflects not a human mind (note the Bestial and Presentient disadvantages) but a more than animal cunning; its Alertness is reduced to compensate. Several advantages and disadvantages reflect the classic general invulnerability and specialized vulnerabilities of the werewolf.

Customization Notes: The version of the cinematic werewolf presented above has the Chummy disadvantage; like real wolves, he is a pack animal, running with others of his kind or with natural wolves. For a solitary top predator version, replace Chummy with Loner [-5].

Shapeshifting

This wolf form serves as the foundation for a Shapeshifting advantage (base cost 325 points). In keeping with movie traditions, this should be limited with a Cyclic Change on a Lunar schedule, for a -20% point cost modifier (but see the box on p. 31, if it's not being used in a campaign set on Earth). A temporary Cure/Cursebreak (p. 30) is commonly found in these weres. In many cases, the Genetic Trait limitation (p. 32) applies. Those without Genetic Trait normally have an Infectious Attack (-5 points, p. C197).

The Cinematic Werewolf is a good candidate for the Involuntary Shapeshifting disadvantage (p. 26). At the very least, it may have the Compulsive Behavior “Morally Opposed” or “Lifewrecker” (p. 24).

Requirements for the Base Form

If not an Involuntary Shapeshifter, a character who suffers from this were-form should usually take Split Personality at the -10-point level. The Non-Reciprocal Damage and Reciprocal Rest enhancements are particularly in-genre, but not mandatory. If the intended flavor is more “classic monster movie” than “modern monster movie,” do not use Non-Reciprocal Damage. A Secret is always appropriate.

The Classic Background

A good cinematic monster always needs a back story. The cinematic monster werewolf is the latest incarnation of a proud tradition stretching back hundreds of years. In many cultures, were-creatures are at best shy and harmless, and at worst no more bloodthirsty than any other natural predator. However, the medieval French developed a truly despicable variety of were. Vicious, willfully evil, and gleefully cannibalistic, the French *loup-garou* became the yardstick by which the Inquisition measured *all* the shapeshifter traditions it encountered around the world. (See p. 7.)

In its translation from folklore to film, the *loup-garou* became, if anything, even more monstrous. All but invulnerable and implacably murderous, it was usually imposed as a curse upon an otherwise good man. Invariably, he was forced to watch as it destroyed everyone and everything he loved, one moonlit night at a time.

Psychology

The monster werewolf usually has little in the way of psychology above and beyond a compulsion to inflict terror and death on everyone it encounters. It almost never shares any of its human self's better qualities. To the extent that it can think about itself at all, it sees itself as the top of the food chain, a rightful predator upon humanity. A werewolf who is an inflicted curse, especially when he possesses the "Lifewrecker" Compulsive Behavior (p. 24), sees the base form, his friends, and his loved ones as toys to destroy for the werewolf's pleasure.

Ecology

The cinematic werewolf doesn't truly have an ecological role in the world. As an unnatural beast, it is imposed upon the existing order without properly being part of it.

Certain abilities can reveal this to the observer.

Awareness does so automatically, as does an Occultism or Weird Magic roll. An open-minded Naturalist might

detect something "wrong" about a cinematic werewolf on a roll at -4.

That being said, it is first and foremost a predator of awesome power and appetite, a formidable killing machine, and it regards almost every living creature as potential prey. Even if not driven by its bloodthirstiness and antipathy toward life, it would be dangerous to encounter; as it is, the creature is absolutely deadly. Furthermore, these weres *do* need to eat, as their massive bodies consume far more energy than their human bodies are able to provide, and their hunger drives them just as much as their inimical intent.

Being a creature of magical origins, the cinematic werewolf does not reproduce in the usual way and has no mating drive. The varieties that possess an infectious bite do not normally seek victims for the purpose of spreading the infection; this is usually a side effect of an unsuccessful attack (i.e., one in which the victim escaped).

In the Campaign

The cinematic werewolf is best suited for use as a "monster" to be countered and ultimately defeated. Although hunting down and killing such a creature is certainly one option, the plot need not be so literal. Discovering that the beast's alter ego is a clueless innocent may transform the goal from a "bug-hunt" to a mad search for the ingredients necessary to cure (or at the very least suppress) the change. Or perhaps an academic has become convinced that the monster is actually a "living fossil," a dire wolf inexplicably surviving into the modern age, and has hired the party to recover it *alive*.

While a cinematic werewolf is likely to be a "one-off" opponent in most games, one whose human side is in complete accord with the bestial nature of his were-form could make a good recurring villain for a *GURPS Horror*, *GURPS Atomic Horror*, or weird modern or even a *GURPS Black Ops* campaign.

Characters

A were-form this terrifying should not be inflicted upon a PC as a curse unless the other characters are very tough, or the were-form manifests very seldom (once a month or less). Even so, the resulting game might not be to the liking of most players. The unfortunate soul who suffers from this were-form almost never is in control of it. The character simply blacks out and wakes up the next morning in a cave or a cellar, soaked in someone else's blood.

However, one possibility may be for the GM to conspire with a player to bring in a PC afflicted with this were-form *unknown to the other players*. This works best if the "ringer" is or has been in the game for some time before the werewolf's advent. A single adventure or an entire campaign could then flow from the undue attention the party members find focused upon themselves in the wake of the were-form's depredations in their vicinity. Only as their own investigations bear fruit do they realize that evidence points to one of their own number.

Sample Character

David Henry Heresford 100 points

Age 32; 5'7"; 145 lbs.; blonde and blue-eyed British man whose slightly roadworn appearance belies his cultured speech and behavior.

Much to David Henry Heresford's despair, one of his distant ancestors was a Saxon thief, an honorless rogue whose oathbreaking and lies offended a powerful Druid. The Druid, not one to waste an opportunity, cursed the thief and his descendants to become ravening wolf-beasts whenever their truthless nature came to the fore, and then had him returned, drugged into unconsciousness, to the village of invaders from which he came. There, he hoped, one of the Saxons' own would be their undoing.

Centuries later, the thief's descendants had apparently either died out or learned their lesson – until the latest (and only) scion of the clan, David Heresford, became a solicitor in 1925. Still, he was a reasonably honest man, and it took several years of legal duties before he found himself tempted to take liberties with the truth – and awoke the ancient curse buried in his genes.

At the next full moon, the beast emerged and ran rampant through London, ending its spree by slaying his fiancée, Amelia. Since then David has been on the run from Scotland Yard, which wants him for her murder (they believe the marks of the beast's attack on her were cleverly faked). For the last two years, he has roamed the length and breadth of England, evading the police and searching for a permanent cure to his "condition." In discovering the misdeeds of his distant, unnamed ancestor, he has also found a temporary respite: performing a ritual of contrition at a Celtic holy spot on the solstice or equinox suppresses the beast – but only until he utters his next lie or false oath. Unfortunately, given the fugitive life he lives, that's never far away, and the surviving holy places are few and far between.

David's were-form possesses the Compulsive Behavior: Lifewrecker disadvantage in addition to the others in its template and delights in utterly destroying anything in which David has invested any affection. To minimize its depredations, he tries not to form any ties with people or places and takes care to be in the open countryside at the full moon.

David's Secret is given such a low value because even if it were revealed, few people would actually believe that he's a werewolf. If

exposed, it expands into a -15-point Severe Delusion (not that David is delusional, but that's how he will be perceived by most people) and a -1 Reputation as a lunatic.

David is designed for a 1920s-1930s-era *GURPS Horror* campaign that focuses more on individual terrors than Lovecraftian Things From Beyond. With some stretching of the setting, he could be usable in a *GURPS Cliffhangers* game, and almost no changes are needed to relocate him to any other post-medieval European setting. It would take some alteration to fit him into a game set in any later period, but it is possible – he is almost the prototypical *X-Files* monster-of-the-week, for example.

ST 12 [20]; **DX** 11 [10]; **IQ** 13 [30]; **HT** 12 [20].

Speed 5.75; Move 7.

Dodge 5; Parry 7 (Boxing).

Advantages: Comfortable [10]; Pious [5]; Status 1 [5].

Disadvantages: Enemy (Scotland Yard; 6 or less) [-10]; Guilt Complex [-5]; Involuntary Shapeshifting (Cinematic "monster" werewolf; appears at full moon; Cure/Cursebreak: must perform an act of contrition at a Celtic holy site on a quarter day, temporary, relapse triggered by lying or oath-breaking: -15%) [-9]; Secret (He's a werewolf) [-10]; Split Personality [-15].

Quirks: Cultured and polite in his speech; Determined to prove himself innocent of his fiancée's murder; Developing a loathing for all things Celtic; Tries hard not to be an oath-breaker; Twitchy and nervous. [-5]

Skills: Acting-14 [4]; Administration-13 [2]; Area Knowledge (England)-14 [2]; Bicycling-12 [2]; Boxing-12 [4]; Climbing-12 [4]; Detect Lies-12 [2]; Escape-8 [1/2]; Fast-Talk-14 [4]; Guns (Pistol)/TL6-14 [2];* Lifting-10 [1]; Law-15 [8]; Hidden Lore (Celtic curses)-13 [2]; Performance/Ritual-13 [2]; Riding (Horse)-11 [2]; Running-10 [1]; Savoir-Faire-14 [1];** Stealth-12 [4]; Streetwise-12 [1]; Survival (Woodlands)-13 [2]; Swimming-12 [2].

* Includes +2 from IQ 13.

** Savoir-Faire-13 free from Status 1.

Languages: English (native)-13 [0]; French-11 [1/2]; Latin-11 [1/2]; Welsh-11 [1/2].

ETHOMORPH

Now the hand of Henry Jekyll (as you have often remarked) was professional in shape and size: it was large, firm, white, and comely. But the hand which I now saw, clearly enough, in the yellow light of a mid-London morning, lying half shut on the bed-clothes, was lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair. It was the hand of Edward Hyde.

I must have stared upon it for near half a minute, sunk as I was in the mere stupidity of wonder, before terror woke up in my breast as sudden and startling as the crash of cymbals; and bounding from my bed, I rushed to the mirror. At the sight that met my eyes, my blood was changed into something exquisitely thin and icy. Yes, I had gone to bed Henry Jekyll, I had awakened Edward Hyde.

– Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

For those who believe the ancient idea that the form without reflects the spirit within, the Ethomorph is the defining example: one individual, who oscillates between two shapes with opposing personalities and appearances. One form, usually unattractive or even deformed, embodies the darker emotions and desires; the other, handsome and noble, houses a nearly saintly virtue.

A uniquely Victorian variety of shapechanger, the ethomorph is usually a shifter who has relegated all his perceived "negative," "immoral," or "unhealthy" mental traits into a separate physical form, which often possesses its own mind and personality. This process can be either accidental or intentional (the work of an evil genius seeking allies or servants of a like mind).

The mechanisms by which such physical and mental polarization is accomplished can vary widely. For some, it is a result of meditation and careful self-control; for others, an application of magic; yet others make their way through a scientific path, either with a drug such as atavismine (see p. STM92 or sidebar, p. 50) or by more exotic means. In almost all cases, the manifestation of the banished emotions and motivations as their own “person” is an unforeseen side effect of the process. Most ethomorphs originally intended to suppress or expel traits they found inconvenient or offensive, only to find them fighting back in a most distressingly physical manner.

An ethomorph is created with Split Personality, expressed not only in mind and behavior but in physical form. The Split Personality becomes a trigger for Shapeshifting or Involuntary Shapeshifting. In contrast to the usual rules for shapeshifting, all the distinctive traits of the alternate are included in its “racial template,” including its skills and quirks; and for balance, the base form’s skills and quirks form part of its “racial template.” Each form is an outward manifestation of the personality that wears it.

The -10-point level of Split Personality represents an individual still capable of enjoying both forms as vessels for his single identity, no matter how variant their personalities. The -15-point level indicates that each form is its own person. In all cases, though, the alternate form is aware of the base form, although its opinion of him is rarely high. Apply the Cannot Use Change Control limitation (p. 29) to the -10-point level. Ethomorphism is a strictly binary form of shapeshifting – neither form normally wants anything to do with the other. In addition, almost all ethomorphs have the Unstable limitation (-25%). Depending on the character concept, this may or may not take the form of the *War of Wills* option (see p. 35).

Characters who start with the -10-point level of the disadvantage inevitably escalate to the -15-point version. The GM should determine when this occurs, based on the frequency with which the character changes and how different the two forms are. The additional level of Split Personality, when it finally manifests, is treated as a disadvantage acquired in play and does not provide any additional character points. The -15-point level becomes a trigger for Involuntary Shapeshifting, as it did for Henry Jekyll.

Ethomorphs are usually limited to the base form and one alternate form, which embody either moral/ethical extreme. However, it is possible (though rare) for an ethomorph to possess alternate forms and personalities for *both* extremes – angel and devil both, with the base personality/form caught between them.

Body . . .

The physical change an ethomorph undergoes is far from extensive, although it can be dramatic. The base species does not change, although in extreme cases it can seem that way. The ethomorph appears to become a different person, usually

with no resemblance to his base form. The appearance of this “other person” corresponds to the ethical extreme that it embodies. A form born of negative traits is usually unattractive – deformed, bestial, and often unhealthy in appearance; its opposite number is attractive, clean-limbed, and charismatic. Both extremes often fascinate in the opposite sex, no matter what their appearance. Bright ethomorphs may bear a resemblance to their other selves, enough to be thought relatives. Darklings tend to become too bestial to seem similar to their base forms – their snarling, animalistic visages often drive all thought of comparison from the minds of their viewers.

It is rare, but not impossible, for an ethomorph to swap sexes. A dark ethomorph may take the appearance of the base form’s ideal member of the opposite sex. Despite their often extreme beauty, these dark were-forms have a sinister and threatening air and are no less debauched and evil than their less attractive cousins.

The alter ego is usually more powerful, physically, than the base form; in extreme cases it can demonstrate inhuman strength. It also tends to be remarkably resilient, enduring both physical attacks and the debilitating effects of its vices. For a dark ethomorph, this is usually explained as a result of atavistic resemblance to some great beast; for a bright ethomorph, its proximity to an angelic ideal is usually credited.

As shown in many recent movies, such physical factors as body mass, height, and sex need not remain constant between forms. Pre-existing physical traits from the base form, such as damaged limbs and missing eyes, are usually maintained. Their effect is exaggerated to match the form.

Traits that rely upon or modify personal identity – Reputations, Social Status, and Social Stigmas – are unavailable to the ethomorph’s alternate self. In cases where the base form is aware of the alter ego, arrangements may be made for its use of the base form’s assets. In such cases, both forms must share the same level of wealth or poverty. But beyond that, the ethomorph is unable to benefit – or suffer – from the base form’s social and financial presence.

. . . and Soul

The personality shifts are even more dramatic than the physical changes. In a dark ethomorph, positive traits are either buried or inverted. This can turn an average man into a debauched libertine, an extorting miser, or even a vicious serial killer, based on his moral and ethical beliefs and on the unadmitted secrets of his soul. When not simply enjoying its excesses, a dark ethomorph often takes on the role of its base form’s tempter or destroyer.

At the other end of the spectrum, the bright ethomorph embodies the lost or hidden nobility of a fallen man. Depending on the attitude of its culture to the redemption or rehabilitation of criminals and debased individuals, a bright ethomorph may despise and ignore his base form or do its best to improve his lot. Some individuals may discover their lives, reputations, and bank books improving for no apparent reason. The were-form will not ignore itself entirely, but it will do no more for its own benefit than is proper.



In short, the more good you are, the more evil your ethomorphic alternate is, and vice versa.

When designing an ethomorphic alternate form, ignore the usual point limits on disadvantages. An ethomorph is about extremes and twisted reflections, after all, and it frequently is impossible to depict a character's "Mr. Hyde" within the normal limit of -40 points. Behavioral quirks may be retained to provide acquaintances with a disturbing sense of familiarity, or may be exaggerated or removed entirely.

Add Brawling at DX [1] and Sex Appeal at HT [2], if the base form did not already have them, along with any other skills that may augment the were-form's favorite modes of debauchery.

Characters

Player characters suffering from ethomorphism are affordable at 100 points and even below, as long as the alternate form does not far outstrip the base form in power. The primary differences between the two sides of an ethomorph are matters of personality and appearance; few ethomorphs manifest an alter ego that is hugely more powerful than they are. As long as the GM can justify the ability to change between forms within the campaign's genre, an ethomorph PC can probably be built to fit.

An ethomorph need not be created from scratch, though – under the right conditions, the GM may be able to turn an existing PC into an ethomorph. It requires collaboration with the player in question, but if the character is already working toward a moral or ethical improvement in himself, the relegation of his darker drives to their own personality within a time-shared body can provide an excellent set of plot hooks – as well as drive the other players crazy.

If the genre allows, this may be the best way to plant a traitor in the midst of a tightly knit party. It requires

cooperation on the part of the player, but as long as he can keep his transformation out of sight of the other characters, it can work. Even better would be leaving the base form ignorant of his new condition for as long as possible.

Variations

The exaggerated personality traits that ethomorphic were-forms embody are usually the result of a more-or-less normal person – someone in the middle third or so of the moral-ethical bell curve – undergoing whatever triggering process the GM has defined for the campaign. The results might be somewhat different if an unabashedly diabolic or extremely saintly person were to experience the same process. A particularly debauched individual might manifest a were-form whose moral values were barely above average. Similarly, a nearly angelic individual might manifest a "dark" side that could manage being naughty every once in a while, but no more. In either case, though, the were-form might well be a severe embarrassment or even a fatal liability.

Other Settings

The obvious inspiration for ethomorphism is *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson, a relentlessly Victorian work in its extremely polarized view of both morality and society. However, the ethomorph need not be permanently relegated to such a strict milieu.

GURPS Atomic Horror, GURPS Lensman, GURPS Steampunk and similar: A little Weird Science is all you need for a well-meaning scientist to accidentally time-share his body with a maniac, regardless of the native Tech Level.

GURPS Black Ops: An unusual variety of "werewolf" which Argus may be more inclined to capture and study than the other kinds of shapeshifter it has encountered in the past.

GURPS Horror, weird modern, and similar games: An ethomorph would work as both villain and/or plot device – especially if the base form is someone the party trusts.

And finally, the ultimate possibility: the **GURPS Goblins** version of Mr. Hyde – a celibate, teetotaling Bible-thumper whose straitlaced morality and handsome features horrify all those who come in contact with him, even as he fascinates them with his inarguable charisma. Or maybe he's *worse* than any *ten* other goblins combined . . .



Sample Character

James William Dennison 125 Points

Age 31; 5'10"; 155 lbs.; American with ash-blond hair and haunted blue eyes.

James William Dennison was a seeker of enlightenment. From the end of World War I to the middle of the 1920s, this well-to-do American spent much of his considerable inheritance roaming the world. Seeking out guru after master after mysterious teacher, he studied with every one in a desperate attempt to find peace for his tortured soul. Driving him was guilt over his participation in the Great War – a war in which he served with wild and bloodthirsty abandon. With the end of the war came shame at the dark side he had unleashed in his nation's service and a vow to expunge from his soul the gleeful delight he had taken in killing and rapine – a delight that still tempted him to destroy his obstacles (human or otherwise) whenever he felt frustrated or angry.

After more than a decade of searching and studying, his efforts seemed to bear fruit; the teachings of a lama in the far reaches of Tibet seemed to bring him inner peace. Overjoyed and believing himself expunged of his dark urges, he returned to his native Chicago, leaving his instruction under the lama incomplete.

This was his undoing, though. Lacking its final step, the regimen of meditation and herbal potions he learned did not eliminate his darker impulses – it merely *displaced* them to the far reaches of his subconscious mind, where they festered and sought release . . . and revenge. Less than a year after his triumphant return to Chicago high society, Dennison began suffering from blackouts, ranging from hours to sometimes days in length. Soon, he began to suffer from nightmares that would wake him, screaming, in the middle of the night.

Not long after that, at the height of the Roaring Twenties, Chicago began to experience a series of unexplained murders, each more vicious and savage than the one before it. As the populace started to slide into a state of disbelieving terror and the newspapers blared the details of each new killing, even the city's notorious gangsters offered to help the police find the fiend responsible for the deaths.

And James Dennison has begun to fear that it is he.

The Hun is Dennison's ethomorphic alter ego. Cast in the image of some of the worst of the German soldiers that Dennison faced in France, it embodies all of his rage and bloodlust. By turns snarling and charming, it seethes and lusts and slinks through the night world of Roaring 20s Chicago looking for victims to feed its murderous psychosexual desires. With all of Dennison's military skills plus a few more of its own at its disposal, it stalks men and women alike, killing each new victim in a unique, grisly fashion. It prefers women, often charming them into following it to a secluded location, but will not hesitate to kill a man if the need is strong. Whenever possible, it leaves a trademark behind at each killing: symbols from a code used by Dennison in his childhood. It's careful to leave nothing that by itself is a coherent message, but it knows that Dennison is beginning to suspect something is amiss, and is delighting in his growing horror, which it reinforces with horrific nightmares that it inflicts upon him.

James William Dennison/*The Hun* is designed for use in *GURPS Cliffhangers*. With fairly minor modifications (for instance, changing WWI to Vietnam), he can be inserted into just about any 20th-century setting.

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

Speed 5.50; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 8 (Boxing).

Advantages: Contact (Business, broker, Merchant-15, somewhat reliable, 9 or less) [2]; Fashion Sense [5]; Handsome [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Independent Income [5]; Reputation +2 (As war hero and world traveler, in Chicago high society) [3]; Status 2 [5];* Wealthy [20].

*One level of Status free from wealth.

Disadvantages: Honesty [-10]; Involuntary Shapeshifting (Occasional: failure to resist Split Personality) [-10]; Nightmares [-5]; Split Personality [-15].

Quirks: Chauvinistic; Congenial; Gallant with the ladies; Shamed and disgusted by his behavior in World War I; Subliminal air of sadness and fear around him. [-5]

Skills: Area Knowledge (Chicago)-13 [2]; Armoury (Rifles and Handguns)/TL6-13 [4]; Boxing-12 [2]; Carousing-10 [2]; Chess (Hobby)-14 [2]; Driving (Automobile)/TL6-11 [1]; First Aid/TL6-12 [1]; Gambling-12 [2]; Gesture-11 [1/2]; Guns (Pistol)/TL6-14 [1];* Guns (Rifle)/TL6-14 [1];* Hiking-10 [2]; Leadership-11 [1]; Meditation-14 [16]; Motorcycle/TL6-11 [1/2]; Riding (Horse)-10 [1/2]; Savoir-Faire-12 [0];** Spear-13 [4]; Survival (Woodlands)-12 [2]; Survival (Plains)-12 [2]; Swimming-11 [1/2]; Tactics-11 [2].

* +1 from IQ 12.

** Free from Status 2.

Languages: Chinese (Mandarin)-11 [1]; English (native)-12 [0]; French-11 [1]; Hindi-10 [1/2]; Japanese-10 [1/2]; Russian-10 [1/2]; Thai-10 [1/2]; Tibetan-12 [2].

The Hun 125 points

5'9"; 180 lbs.; shaggy black hair, piercing brown eyes, bulky and muscular with heavy brows and bad teeth.

ST 16 [70]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12/16 [40].

Speed 6.00; Move 6.

Dodge 7; Parry 10 (Brawling).

Advantages: Charisma +2 [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Fearlessness +4 [8]; No Hangover [5]; Strong Will +2 [8].

Disadvantages: Bad Temper [-10]; Bloodlust [-10]; Bully [-10]; Callous [-6]; Frightens Animals [-5]; Gluttony [-5]; Lecherousness [-15]; Murder Addiction [-60]; Overconfidence [-10]; Sadism [-15]; Unattractive [-5].

Quirks: Affects a slow, painful limp; Chauvinistic; Speaks in a growling snarl except when trying to charm a victim; Trademark: private signals to Dennison; Vicious drunk. [-5]

Skills: Area Knowledge (Chicago)-11 [6];* Armoury (Rifles and Handguns)/TL6-11 [4]; Brawling-15 [8]; Carousing-12 [6];* Chess-11 (Hobby) [1]; Disguise-10 [2]; Driving (Automobile)/TL6-11 [1]; Fast-Talk-9 [4];* First Aid/TL6-10 [1]; Gambling-10 [6];* Gesture-9 [1/2]; Guns (Pistol)/TL6-13 [1];** Guns (Rifle)/TL6-13 [1];** Hiking-12 [2]; Intimidation-11 [4];* † Knife-14 [4]; Leadership-9 [0];* † Motorcycle/TL6-11 [1/2]; Sex Appeal-14 [10];* Shadowing-16 [14]; Spear-13 [4]; Stealth-14 [8]; Survival (Woodlands)-10 [2]; Survival (Plains)-10 [2]; Swimming-11 [1/2]; Tactics-9 [6].*

* Includes -2 from Callous.

** Includes +1 from IQ 10.

† Includes default from ST.

Languages: Chinese (Mandarin)-9 [1]; English (native)-10 [0]; French-9 [1]; German-8 [1/2]; Hindi-8 [1/2]; Japanese-8 [1/2]; Russian-8 [1/2]; Thai-8 [1/2]; Tibetan-10 [2].

SHAPESHIFTING CURSES

*Ohhhh! Not “Spring of Drowned Girl!” There is tragic legend, **very** tragic, of young girl who drown in spring one thousand five hundred year ago! Now whoever fall in that spring take body of young girl! You see what I mean?*

*– Rumiko Takahashi, *The Jusenkyo Guide*,
Ranma 1/2, Volume 1*

Fiction and folklore is rife with curses that force their victims to take new shapes. Often these curses are terrifying things, destroying lives and spreading devastation.

Some are not. Some seek not to punish their recipients, but to improve them, to educate them. By forcing them to see the world from a different viewpoint, the “curse” tries to expand their perceptions and conceptions of the world. With luck, the experience teaches the victim the lesson the curse intends. And when the lesson is learned, the curse vanishes, its reason for existing having been fulfilled.

Unfortunately for some people, they can’t tell the difference between a horrific curse and a magical object lesson.

The Curse of Myrrudhron

Many miles distant from the closest human settlement – although what that settlement may be changes from time to time – is a ruin, the remains of a great city. In the heart of this city is one thing there that does not seem to be shattered by war or beaten down by time – a great archway of dull gray stone. On its faces, written in many languages (and the one you speak is always one of them, no matter how improbable that may be), are the words, “Pass through me, the greater to be.” At the very top of the arch are runes that spell the word “Myrrudhron,” whose meaning has been lost in time.

It is a trap for the unwary. It does not lie, but like the faerie who spawned it and lost control of it, it does not tell the whole truth.

There are records of this place, which has no name now. But the magic of the arch reaches far, and the records never let themselves be seen except by the proud, the vainglorious, the ambitious; those for whom no greatness is ever great enough. *They* read of the gray stone arch of Myrrudhron, and they desire what it seems to promise. There is no magic here, save that found in self-delusion and overweening ambition. The magic comes later.

When these fools make the journey to the nameless place, they find it – and the arch – easily enough. No magic hinders their travel (and none would hinder them were they to turn around, even at the very foot of the arch).

No, the magic waits. And offers greatness.

No one ever asks if the magic’s definition of greatness is the same as his.

At least, not until *after* he walks through the arch.



Once Through, Twice Regretted . . .

Someone who is ambitious or overconfident enough to step through the arch of Myrrudhron receives a shapeshifting curse – one tailored to his particular set of mental disadvantages. The shape is a natural animal or (rarely) another person, cleverly selected to express his greatest hate or fear, or if he has none, the greatest weakness in his character. For example, if he is afraid of heights, he will turn into a bird. If he hates and fears the nomadic desert people who are his nation's greatest enemies, he will visibly turn into one of them. If he prides himself too greatly on his strength and his mercilessness, he will be given a weak form that is constantly at the mercy of others.

Innocents forced through the arch by overly suspicious superiors are not afflicted with a curse, nor is anyone else who does not explicitly wish for personal aggrandizement. The arch can also distinguish between its intended targets and those who seek honest self-improvement; the latter pass through unmolested, but with a strong sense that they should not look for magical shortcuts to their goals.

The Teaching Curse

If the transformation granted by the arch of Myrrudhron were entirely voluntary, there would be no reason to call it a curse. A pair of External Triggers (one for activation, one for deactivation; see box) controls the curse.

The activation trigger is simple: the touch of another person, regardless of any intervening layers of clothing, forces the victim to shift into his cursed form. To turn back, someone who sincerely cares about the victim must touch him flesh-to-flesh.

This latter may seem onerous, but the other person is not required to care for the subject's base form! Affection for the cursed form is sufficient to act as a trigger. (But woe to the one who abused his curse to become someone's pet!)



Instructional Curses

Not every were-curse is necessarily aimed at the ruin of a person's life and soul. Some are explicitly intended as instructional tools. Christian saints were known to inflict shapeshifting curses upon unrepentant heathens, for example, to encourage them along the proper path.

In such a case, the curse is usually less a punishment than a learning opportunity. The intent of the curse, although it may not be immediately obvious, is to force the victim to experience life at least part-time from a viewpoint he never would have otherwise, accelerating his personal growth with a series of curse-caused opportunities for enlightenment. To this end, the alternate form so gained is usually something that is on its face distasteful or bothersome to the victim. A burly soldier may find himself changed into a rabbit or other small animal, and someone who is vain might turn into a huge, ugly monster. The change doesn't have to be to a different species, either; a sexist male might turn into a female version of himself, or a racist into a race he despises. Whatever the form, it takes away something the victim depends too much upon, or about which he is far too proud. This does not mean that the alternate form is useless – a clever enough individual can certainly exploit it – just that its nature is tailored to address whatever flaw is possessed by the one on whom it has been inflicted.



that are all too easy for the victim to encounter. *Deactivation* triggers, on the other hand, should be somewhat harder to come by; they should always be at least one frequency class less common than the activation trigger.

Losing the Curse

Since the goal of the curse is instruction, it would be unfair for it to persist once the victim has learned the intended lesson. The curse therefore has a cure built into it – learn (or unlearn) the offending behavior, and the curse vanishes permanently. Unfortunately, that's not as easy to accomplish as it is to describe, and worse, the victim almost never knows what the cure is.

When inflicting a curse of this nature (or building it into a beginning character), the GM should note the specific lesson it intends to teach. Most of the time this can be expressed in terms of one or more mental disadvantages that the character must gain or lose. For instance, a character might need to gain a Sense of Duty or other "positive" mental disadvantage, or lose his Intolerance(s), or even give up something as minor as a quirk.

The GMs should require that any personality changes motivated by the curse be roleplayed as well as paid for in points. (Exchanging a "negative" mental disadvantage for a "positive" one in lieu of paying points – for example, trading Bloodlust for Pacifism – is perfectly acceptable, once again, as long as the change in attitude is played out.) Doing so properly is a long-term proposition; this is not an easy curse to break, regardless of the point value of the change.

Because breaking the curse takes a significant amount of time (and often costs character points to buy off disadvantages), it is considered a fairly difficult process; its base value as a limitation is -20% (this can be adjusted up or down for behavior that is very easy or very hard to change). Since the change requires the victim's active effort, the value is reduced by -10%, for a typical final limitation value of -10%.

The Lesson to Learn

The ultimate goal of the curse of Myrrudhron is to redeem those on the path of excessive pride. Its magic attracts those who not only are inclined to think highly of themselves, but want power because they think they deserve it. To this end, Myrrudhron curses them in a way that encourages them to learn humility, empathy, and above all, *humanity*. The ultimate purpose of its magic is to turn potential Hitlers and Alexanders into Mother Therasas and Gandhis. It is these persons whom it attracts to and tempts. Its intent is to reform them completely, but based on past performance, the curse is satisfied if they simply moderate their extreme behaviors.

The Myrrudhron Curse Form

Myrrudhron's curse is a standard were-form per p. 16, with the full, unfettered mind of the character in control. Animal templates should have IQ raised to the base form's level, and the Bestial, Innumerate, and Presentient disadvantages removed. Human templates should include all characteristics unique to them (for instance, if a young, healthy man turned into a crippled old woman, the template cost for the female form would include the Age and Lamé disadvantages).

The were-form cost of the template is then modified with the following limitations:

First, a pair of exclusive one-way triggers:

Activating the were-form: The touch of another person. Does not need to be flesh-to-flesh. A very common condition, exclusive (-55%), halved because it is one-way, for a final value of -28%.

Deactivating the were-form: Flesh-to-flesh contact by someone who sincerely cares about the subject. Theoretically, this is a common condition, also exclusive and halved. Final limitation value: -23%.

The total limitation value for the triggers is -51%.

In both cases, a "person" is any sentient being capable of a physical touch. As noted in the main text, the person who cares about the subject is not required to care about his base form; an affection for the were-form, whether acquired through deceit on the cursed person's part or not, is enough.

The curse of Myrrudhron also has a cure: buy off or replace any mental disadvantages connected to pride, vanity, megalomania and other self-centered traits. This varies in difficulty depending on the character who has received the curse, but in general it is a difficult task worth -20%; it can only be achieved with the cooperation of the victim, which reduces its value to -10%.

The final limitation value on the curse of Myrrudhron is -61%.



Sample Character

Sturmbannführer Werner Pfrommer 150 points

Age 27; 6'; 160 lbs.; Blond, blue-eyed; fit, clean-cut stereotypical "Aryan" with fencing scars on his face.

Werner Pfrommer was an up-and-coming young member of the Nazi military structure in World War II Germany. Before the war, he attended Heidelberg, where he was one of its famous bare-faced fencers, picking up a few distinctive facial scars in the process.

After his graduation, family connections in the Nazi party secured a commission for him in the Army. Although he had no great talent as a soldier, his fanatical devotion to the Party (and, again, his family connections) saw to it not only that Pfrommer rose through the ranks as the war progressed, but that he stayed away from any actual fighting. Early on, he ended up as the military commander of one of the many groups dispatched across occupied Europe to find mystic artifacts to feed the occult obsessions of the upper reaches of the Party. During this time he learned a little archaeology and a little of the mystic dogma that fueled these searches.

Now the equivalent of a major, Pfrommer commanded his team with a small-minded, inflexible adherence to regulations and Nazi dogma that did nothing to endear him to the often oddball collections of researchers and soldiers he commanded. He didn't care what they thought of him, as long as they showed results – which had been sadly lacking so far during his tenure.

It was Pfrommer himself, normally a lackluster researcher when he deigned to join the academic side of the effort at all, who discovered the first vague references to the Arch of Myrrudhron. He grew obsessed with the potential of this artifact and drove his team mercilessly to locate it. They did; which is how, in the winter of 1943, he found himself standing in the center of a ruined city that by all rights should never have been found in the northern wastes of the Scandinavian Peninsula.

Upon reading the German script that flowed across the stone archway, Pfrommer shouted, "For the glory of the Fatherland!" and plunged through it. His team, exhausted by the trek and less than inclined to protect their martinet of a commanding officer from himself, did not try to stop him.

Pfrommer emerged from the other side a chimpanzee in a German army uniform.

Only after his return to Germany and weeks of study by bemused scientists and occultists was it discovered that the touch of his mother restored him to human form; it took only minutes more to learn that *anyone's* touch turned him back.

Despite his (occasional) return to human form, Pfrommer is now an embarrassment to the Party – a Nazi who at any time might revert to a lower position on the evolutionary scale? Unthinkable! Only his family connections (and the obscure hopes of some researchers to duplicate the curse) saved him from a quiet execution. Under the guise of a "horizontal promotion," he was stripped of his command and assigned as a "liaison" to a research facility near the French border. There he stays, relentlessly loyal to the Party despite everything, undergoing frequent examinations and studies at the hands of his nominal staff.

In chimp form, Pfrommer loses about a foot of height, but none of his mass. Since his clothes are not absorbed in the change, they end up hanging loosely on his smaller body, sometimes entangling him.

Sturmbannführer Werner Pfrommer is designed for use in a "Weird War" version of the *GURPS WWII* setting. With some small changes, he can be used in most 19th or 20th century military settings.

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

Speed 5.25; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 8 (Fencing).

Advantages: Comfortable [10]; Cool [1]; Fit [5]; Military Rank 4 [20]; Shapeshifting (Chimpanzee, External Triggers (see p. 90), -49%; Cure/Cursebreak: buy off Callous, Fanaticism, and Intolerance disadvantages, -10%) [53]; Status 2 [5].*

* Status 1 free from Military Rank.

Disadvantages: Callous [-6]; Sense of Duty (Germany) [-10]; Fanaticism (Nazi Cause) [-15]; Intolerance [-10].

Quirks: Brusque and rude to nonmilitary personnel; Refuses to acknowledge his curse; Toadies shamelessly to superiors. [-3]

Skills: Administration-11 [6];* Archaeology-10 [2]; Area Knowledge (Europe)-11 [4];* Area Knowledge (Germany)-12 [6];* Brawling-12 [2]; Chess-13 [2] (Hobby skill); Fencing Sport-12 [4]; Guns/TL6 (Pistols)-13 [2];** Hiking-10 [2]; History: Esoteric-11 [4]; Interrogation-12 [4]; Intimidation-11 [6];* Knife-12 [2]; Occultism-12 [4]; Research-11 [2]; Savoir-Faire (Military)-11 [4];* Savoir-Faire-9 [0];* † Tactics-9 [4].*

* Includes -2 from Callous.

** Includes +1 from IQ 11.

† Free from Status 2.

Languages: German (Native)-11 [0].

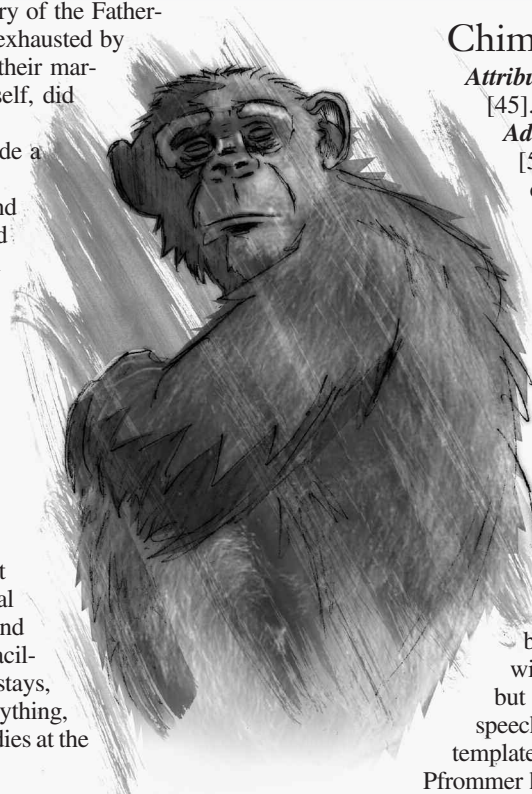
Chimpanzee Curse 115 points

Attributes: ST +6 [70]; DX +4 [45]; HT +4 [45].

Advantages: Alertness +1 [5]; Brachiator [5]; Extra Arms 2 (Short Arms; temporary disadvantage: "legless" when in use) [6]; Penetrating Call [5]; Super Climbing +2 [6].

Disadvantages: Cannot Swim [0]; Dead Broke [-25]; Distractible [-1]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Dull [-1]; Poor Grip [-5]; Semi-Upright [-5]; Short Arms [-10]; Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-15].

The chimpanzee curse template is based on the 44-point chimpanzee template found on p. BE108. In order to allow its victim full use of his mental faculties, it has no IQ penalty, and the Bestial, Innumerate, and Presentient disadvantages have been removed, while Mute has been replaced with Disturbing Voice – Pfrommer can speak, but his vocal organs aren't as well adapted to speech as those of his human form. The original template's Survival skill has been removed, since Pfrommer has no idea how to survive in the jungle!



BENANDANTI – THE WITCHHUNTER WEREWOLVES

Questioned: How does one enter this company of the benandanti?

He replied: All those who have been born with the caul belong to it, and when they reach the age of twenty they are summoned by means of a drum the same as soldiers, and they are obliged to respond.

– Testimony of Battista Moduco before the Inquisition, June 27, 1580



Born with a caul, born to answer a call, they were the *Benandanti* – the “Good Walkers.” Indistinguishable from their countrymen in the regions around the Baltic and Mediterranean seas, these undercover werewolves were protectors, not predators; on behalf of their friends, families, and neighbors they took on the forces of Hell – *strige* and *stregoni*, sorcerers, undead, and demons of all descriptions. Marked at birth by a caul – a fetal membrane enclosing their head – the Benandanti (singular Benandante) were called to battle the beings called variously *Malandanti* (the Evil Walkers), *strige* (witches), and *stregoni* (sorcerers): the forces of darkness who cursed harvests and poisoned seeds.

Benandante Soldier 75 points

This is the template for a physical-change Theiss/Friulian-style Benandante, based on testimony from the relevant Inquisition records (see p. 94). Benandanti enrolled in the legendary secret army have an External Trigger. In historic medieval campaigns set in the Baltic and Mediterranean regions, Benandanti are known in their local communities.

Advantages: Awareness [15]; Reputation +2 (Servant of God, to local villagers) [3]; Reputation +1 (Servant of God, to

inhabitants of territory where Benandanti are active, 10 or less) [1]; Unusual Background (Born with a caul) [10]; Shapeshifting (Benandante; External Trigger, Quarterly call to arms, only to were-form, occasional, not exclusive, -50%) [116].

Disadvantages: Enemy (Forces of Hell, 6 or less) [-20]; Enemy (Inquisition, 6 or less) [-15]; Extremely Hazardous Duty (Fight the Devil) [-20]; Sense of Duty (Humanity) [-15].

Benandante Wolfman Form 217 points

Attributes: ST +1 [10]; DX +4 [45]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Acute Hearing +4 [8]; Acute Taste and Smell +4 [8]; Alertness +2 [10]; Claws [15]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell (Works as Empathy within 2 hexes, +50%) [23]; Enhanced Dodge [15]; Enhanced Move 1/2 [5]; Fearlessness +1 [2]; Magic Resistance +2 [4]; Penetrating Call [5]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Strong Will +4 [16]; Thick Fur [29]; Ultrahearing [5].

Disadvantages: Bloodlust [-10]; Chummy [-5]; Color Blindness [-10]; Dull [-1]; Gluttony [-5]; Staid [-1].

Skills: Brawling at DX [1]; Running at HT [4]; Stealth at DX [2]; Whip at DX [2].

Benandanti usually have Allies or an Ally Group, as well. The GM may also require that Benandanti in later periods take a -20 point Secret.

Although the Benandanti of northeastern Italy’s province of Friuli are the best known of these obscure bands, similar groups existed all over Southern and Eastern Europe during the Middle Ages. The members of these groups believed that divine forces had called them to act as the guardians of their neighbors.

Thought to be the historical remnants of prehistoric shamanistic and/or fertility cults, these groups (predictably) varied from one another in the details of their beliefs and traditions. On one thing they all agreed: in order to accomplish their “mission,” they had been granted the power to turn into wolf-human hybrids. Using these forms, they engaged the servants of Hell in direct physical combat on a regular basis. Because of these fundamental similarities, scholars have tended to call all these groups “benandanti” after the Friuli tradition, although many bands had other names for themselves.

As they were firmly entrenched in their local cultures and folklore as forces for good, many bands of Benandanti saw no reason to hide. Their membership was an open secret, and they enjoyed the respect and gratitude of the people they protected. In Friuli and in other areas, they even coexisted peacefully with the Church, whose local representatives were (at least at first) more interested in learning about their beliefs than suppressing them.

The Inquisition, What a Show . . .

Inevitably, such enthusiastic deviation from medieval Catholic dogma attracted the notice of the Inquisition. For more than a century, agents of the Inquisition pursued, captured, and tried Benandanti from all over eastern and south-eastern Europe, accusing them of all manner of heresies and specifically of witchcraft. It is through their records, in fact, that much of the extant information on the Benandanti comes.

In these self-proclaimed werewolves, though, the Inquisition ultimately met its match. Put to the test and commanded to confess to witchcraft, Benandanti across Europe insisted that they *fought* witches, confusing their inquisitors and threatening to overturn the entire structure of medieval Catholic dogma. After a century of Inquisitorial effort, the Friuli Benandanti eventually admitted to being witches, but insisted (to the consternation of their Inquisitors) that they were *God's* witches. It is a testament to the Benandanti's devotion to their beliefs that the Inquisition never fully broke them. While individuals may have given in to torture, the Benandanti as a whole outlasted the Inquisition, which effectively gave up on them – both individually and collectively.

The Nature of the Beast

While there were almost as many variations on the Benandanti beliefs as there were bands, certain core elements remained more or less constant. Perhaps the most detailed and evocative account of the Benandanti beliefs comes from the Inquisitorial records of an 80-year-old man known only as “Theiss.” Theiss lived in the Livonian town of Jurgensburg, on the eastern side of the Baltic Sea. During 1692, in one of their last public efforts, the Inquisition put him on trial on charges of being a witch and a werewolf. Theiss didn't deny the accusations made of him; instead, he volunteered a detailed confession that threatened to demolish utterly the Inquisition's werewolf orthodoxy.

Theiss claimed that he and other Eastern European werewolves of both sexes gathered three times a year to do battle with the forces of the Devil. On the feast nights of Saint Lucia, Pentecost, and Saint John (the seasonal changes), they would storm the gates of Hell. There, armed with iron whips (a unique detail in werewolf lore), these self-styled “hounds of God” would do battle with the Devil and his army of sorcerers, witches, and assorted undead beings; most of these were inexplicably armed with broomsticks wrapped with horsetails. Theiss testified that an undead witch named Skeistan had actually broken his nose with one such weapon.

According to Theiss, this infernal army annually tried to filch freshly sprouted shoots of grain from the fields both in order to steal the crops for Hell and to inflict a famine upon the land. To restore the fertility of the fields, Theiss and other werewolves would form a legion of their own and mount a counterattack. If, however, the Benandanti were slow in their response, the witches would successfully bar the gates of Hell, and the crops, the livestock, and even the fishing catch would suffer. The “hounds of God” helped mankind by preventing the Devil and his forces from carrying off the bounty of the earth.

And his band was not alone in their efforts. Theiss emphasized that there were werewolves in Germany and Russia who also fought Satan and his witches. They were all part of a great (if somewhat anarchic) army that protected Earth and the common folk from the depredations of hellspawn.

Theiss' testimony astounded the inquisitors who heard his case; the degree to which it clashed with medieval Catholic orthodoxy regarding werewolves was beyond their experience. They tried to force Theiss to accept their paradigm, but the old man held up under their questioning. When asked what became of the souls of the werewolves, Theiss said they went to heaven. In the face of accusations to the contrary, he denied that he had ever signed a pact with the Devil. He also refused to see the parish priest who was sent to chastise him, saying that he was a better man than any priest.

Despite considerable pressure from the judges and interrogators, Theiss never recanted, and only yielded to their cosmology so far as to admit that Hell was underground instead of “at the end of the sea” as he had initially declared. At a complete loss as to what to do with someone who wouldn't play by their werewolf rules, the judges sentenced Theiss to a mere ten lashes for acts of idolatry and superstitious beliefs.

Other accused Baltic werewolves of the same period told much the same story as Theiss. Details varied – the number and schedule of “battle days” in a year (four, at the solstices and equinoxes, being more common than Theiss' three), different periods of activity (often centered upon the span between Christmas and Pentecost), the presence or absence of a “leader” figure who summoned them to battle, and so on.

The use of weapons was a point of wide variance – some bands used none, while the Friuli Benandanti in particular were said to employ iron whips like Theiss' group. The role of women was another; in some bands they fought alongside the men, while in others they were dreamwalkers, acting as both scouts and seers. The greatest deviation between groups of Benandanti, though, was in the very nature of the shifting gift. For some it was explicitly physical, in the medieval Catholic and later folkloric tradition. For others, though, it was purely spiritual – an astral phenomenon where battles were fought between ghostly forms on some metaphysical plane. An interpretation of the Benandanti that emphasizes these spirit-travel aspects and has no shapeshifting elements can be found on p. 7 of *GURPS Spirits*.

One detail was almost universal: the majority of active Benandanti, the forces who directly engaged the powers of Hell, were between the ages of 20 and 40. Those younger than 20 did not “hear the call,” although they were usually aware of their potential. And given both the nature of their mission and life expectancies in the Middle Ages, few lived to reach 40. Those that did probably served as advisors, noncombatant strategists, or perhaps even rear guards. Theiss was unusual in that he claimed still to be active even in his 80s.

For all their differences, there is still a remarkable unity of theme and description between these often widespread and certainly unconnected accounts. The ancient fertility rituals that spawned the Benandanti are clearly visible within the stories and traditions in which they feature. Later accounts make them out to be more buffoonish than heroic – roaming about

in rowdy bands, breaking into cellars to steal wine and beer – but no matter the period, the Baltic werewolf/Benandante is dramatically different from the malevolent, cannibalistic werewolf of Gallic legend that became the model for Western folklore and Hollywood alike.

Psychology

Unlike his counterparts farther west, the Baltic werewolf is more a pack predator than a solitary hunter. Devoted to the community in which he dwells, he is dedicated to the protection of humanity as a whole and immersed in a support group of similar beings with a set of long-standing traditions. A Benandante is usually a social being, well adjusted and comfortable with his dual nature, which he has known about since his birth. He has no reason to hide and is in fact a respected member of his community, well regarded by his neighbors whether he is the mayor or a dirt farmer.

Between his holy charge and his long membership in the group, the Benandante (at least during the medieval period and earlier) is almost always an ethical being, rarely if ever using his shifting abilities for personal advantage. Some Benandanti never shift except when called to do battle; others may make limited use of their abilities in more mundane situations. In any case, a sense of responsibility toward their neighbors tends to govern their behavior, in wolf form or not.



Ecology

Despite their special abilities, Benandanti are born from normal humans, and these come almost exclusively from eastern and southeastern European ethnic groups; northern Italy and the eastern reaches of Germany are as far west as the Benandanti ever ranged, and far more were based around the Baltic Sea. (In a modern or future setting, a Benandante can appear virtually *anywhere* – often without any idea what he is.)

The Benandante shifting talent is not a dominant trait and rarely if ever runs in families. It is far more likely to appear at random in any social and political station, marked at birth by the caul, making necessary the Benandanti's close relationship to the midwives and other healers of their communities.

Culture

The Benandanti consider themselves part of the culture in which they are born, and although they do form cohesive groups, they do not consider themselves separate from the other humans in their communities. They live ordinary lives among those without the gift, working hard, going to church, making friends, and choosing wives and husbands from among “normal” people. They maintain especially strong ties to the midwives and other folk-healers who may be called

upon to oversee births, in order to ensure that all with the gift are identified as soon as possible.

Any suggestion that they form their own Benandante-only communities would be met with puzzlement at best and derision at worst. They do not see themselves as a race apart, but simply as humans with a special gift that allows them to protect their neighbors.

They do maintain a body of detailed oral tradition about their natures and duties, though, and thoroughly transmit these traditions to new members. A young Benandante usually has other Benandanti from the local band as godparents, who see to his education at the proper time. He is usually made aware of his talent and fellows about the time he can talk.

All Benandanti are at least nominally Christian. While there are no Jewish Benandanti in the historical setting, in later, more cosmopolitan milieus intermarriage may produce Benandanti of almost any religious and ethnic background – particularly in those unaware of their heritage.

Politics

While any given Benandante may be as political as he cares to be about his local community, Benandanti groups as a whole are apolitical. They serve and protect the people against the forces of Hell; in comparison to that, human conflicts are petty squabbles unworthy of consideration. It would take a regime or individual of extraordinary evil (at least as bad as the *strige* and *stregoni*) to make the Benandanti even consider using their gifts against other humans.

In the Campaign

Benandanti are a natural addition to a *GURPS Russia* campaign and can be added to just about any other game set in medieval Europe. A strictly historical setting can make use of the Benandanti either as a deluded fertility-cult holdover or as a surprise “colony” of real magic. In either case, they are an open secret wherever they operate, supported by farmers (who benefit, theoretically, from their efforts), midwives (who identify the next generation as they are born), and (on occasion) sympathetic members of the clergy (who either are aware of the war they fight or are simply tolerant of what they see as harmless peasant traditions). The average peasant probably knows of them, but anyone higher socially than the local mayor or town priest is probably unaware of the Benandanti's existence – unless he has roots or connections at the lowest levels of society.

Depending on the player characters involved, the Benandanti can be Patron or pursued, friend or foe. Parties with strong connections to the Catholic Church (or the campaign equivalent) can find themselves tracking down the werewolves on behalf of the Inquisition. Whatever their role in the campaign, though, the Benandanti most likely remain hidden in plain sight, like a random-dot stereogram – invisible unless and until one looks for them in just the right way.

All Benandanti, All the Time

An innovative GM may choose to run an all-Benandanti campaign. Such a game could have much in common with “team espionage” games, as the PCs attempt to dodge agents of both the Inquisition and Hell while fulfilling their obligations to the farmers who rely upon their protection. While historically the Benandanti tended to be more or less permanently based in supportive communities, the classic “wandering do-gooders” campaign model could still be employed without fatally disrupting the core paradigm. In either case, the game can be tuned from meticulously realistic to mythic with ease, the primary concern being finding the right mix of goals and opposition for the party to face. At one end of the scale, the flavor can be rather like an odd medieval pulp/noir novel, as the possessors of hidden and strange power work for the good of Mankind amidst the shadows of a hostile world. At the other end, the game may become a high-fantasy crusade with mythic-level heroes demolishing the armies of Hell as all of Europe writhes under their grasp.

Other Settings

In addition to historical Earth (where they may or may not actually have shapechanging abilities), Benandanti are easily inserted into any medieval (or earlier) setting with an appropriate Good-Evil polarization in the local religions.

GURPS Fantasy: Yrth, for example, is a perfect candidate; the Banestorm simply swept up a pack of Benandanti along with all its other Earthly transportees. Whether the mysterious “commander” cited by some groups exists in or can reach Yrth is up to the GM’s intent and his interpretation of the Benandanti’s testimony. If the “commander” is a supernatural being, he may be able to oversee two groups in two different universes at once, or perhaps the Benandanti have died out in modern Earth and he has turned to their extraplanar descendants. Or perhaps another master has adopted the Yrth Benandanti.

The relationship between the Benandanti and the various Earth-born religions in Yrth remains the same – both Christian and Muslim orthodoxy revile them, and Jews treat them with suspicion. The attitude of the bizarre Shinto-Buddhist-Zen-Monty-Python hybrid religion of Sahud is less clear; in general, though, the Sahudese seem to regard the Benandanti (and other weres, as well) as *hengeyokai* (see p. 40), and thus a fact of life that is either ignored or placated as needed.

GURPS WWII: The Nazis were perhaps the greatest evil to arise in Europe in centuries. The Benandanti who survived to the 20th Century may well have said, “These *are* the forces of Hell,” and founded, joined, or simply aided the Resistance in every Nazi-dominated country where they dwelt. But powerful as they are, the Benandanti are not immune to bullets, so the fight is more balanced than it may seem at first. Add in the mysterious SS “Werewolf” troopers, and the struggle may be even harder. This kind of campaign can range from a “straight” WWII setting with the Benandanti as the only outré element, all the way to a “High Weirdness” WWII incorporating SS werewolves, Nazi sorcerers and even a quest for the Spear of Destiny.

Modern settings: In worlds such as those of *GURPS Black Ops*, *GURPS Cabal*, *GURPS Technomancer*, or *The X-Files*, the Benandanti can make unsuspected neutrals or even surprise allies, depending on the level and type of conflict the players encounter. The Company and its operatives would unfortunately suffer a certain level of prejudice against the Benandanti, leading to at best a tense state of détente between the two groups and at worst a war of extermination.



Benandanti in *GURPS In Nomine*

In the world of the War between Heaven and Hell, the Benandanti are the forgotten Soldiers of Uriel, established by the archangel shortly before the Purification Crusade as Earth's last defense against the creatures of myth. Knowing his attention would be turned elsewhere for a long time, Uriel arranged for membership in his mortal forces to be hereditary, and the groups themselves self-perpetuating and self-governing.

Partly as a sop to Jordi (who was already up in arms over his ethereal activities), Uriel patterned the organization of his Soldiers after wolf packs and gave them the secret Corporeal *Song of Wolf* (see box), which turns its singer into a man-beast fighting machine. He also provided them with the Corporeal Song of Dreams, with which they were intended to communicate with Uriel's "base camp" in the Marches.

Uriel's long-term plan was to hand command of the Benandanti over to Jordi outright in exchange for a reduction or cessation of Jordi's hostility toward the Archangel of Purity. But Uriel never got around to presenting his "peace offering" to Jordi and told no one else but his loyal lieutenants about the Benandanti, before he was recalled into the Higher Heavens.

And no one told the Benandanti that Uriel was gone. During the Middle Ages, the occasional Tsayadite would appear to dispatch orders to the Benandanti. In recent centuries, though, this has dwindled as the Tsayadim have grown more and more concerned with the Marches. But the Benandanti persevere, maintaining their traditions and loyalties. Meanwhile, their uncounted, ignorant descendants may be found not only in Europe, but scattered across the globe, simply awaiting the proper Song to awaken fully to their heritage. Not every person born to a Benandante bloodline has to potential to become a Soldier, but those that do are far more common than in the rest of humanity.

It is perhaps the ultimate irony that in his bid to create a final line of defense against the old creatures of myth, Uriel effectively created a *new* creature of myth.

Benandanti in *GURPS In Nomine* usually have a minimum of 150 points (and frequently more). They do *not* use the Shapeshifting template given on p. 93, but instead use the following alternate template:

Benandante 100 points

Attributes: ST +2 [20]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Awareness (Symphony) [15]; Essence Control 8 [23]; Power Investiture (Corporeal) 2 [20]; Unusual Background (Benandante) [10].

Disadvantages: Duty (Heaven, originally Uriel; 6 or less) [-2]; Enemy (Forces of Hell; 6 or less) [-20]; Sense of Duty (Humanity) [-15].

Quirks: Congenial [-1].

Skills: Whip at DX [2].

Songs: Corporeal Song of Wolf at IQ+5 (an effective level of IQ+2 on the Corporeal plane) [28].

The Unusual Background cost represents being born into a Benandante bloodline. (The requirement of a caul is mere folklore in this setting.) While the Iron Whip skill is automatically acquired upon "awakening" (it is encoded into the Benandante genes), an actual iron whip is not. Such whips are Corporeal or Ethereal artifacts forged by the few remaining Tsayadite crafters of such objects.

"Unawakened" Benandanti are unaware of or otherwise distanced from their heritage and have not learned the Song of Wolf, nor do they have the Duty to Heaven/Uriel or the Enemy. Their Awareness and Investiture often lead them into "mystical" occupations and hobbies, and they occasionally become Soldiers for other Archangels. (These Soldiers serve Jordi more often than any other Superior.) It is also possible for an unawakened Benandante to become a Soldier of Hell – in such a case, though, he permanently loses all ability to use the Song of Wolf.

An Aware Benandante can detect a potential or active Benandante Soldier with a simple IQ roll if he is within one hex.

The Song of Wolf is defined as follows:

Wolf (Corporeal) Regular

Uriel created this Song in the middle of the sixth century A.D. for the sole use of the Benandanti. The Song seems to be keyed specifically to some hereditary trait possessed by the Benandanti; those without this trait cannot successfully perform it. At present, only those Benandanti who still follow the old ways know and teach the Song; it is unknown to any Celestial except perhaps a select very few of the Tsayadim.

Briefly, the Song of Wolf turns its singer into a humanoid wolfman of fearsome countenance and impressive combat ability. It seems to combine Corporeal Form, Numinous Corpus Claws, Numinous Corpus Fangs, and a unique Numinous Corpus Ornamental that is responsible for the majority of the user's physical transformation. The singer sprouts fur and muscle, his head and face become notably canine, and his feet and legs become digitigrade, adding an apparent 6 to 10 inches to his height. The hands remain human in form, allowing tool (and weapon) use.

As might be expected, it costs a large amount of Essence, with a corresponding Disturbance in the Symphony. The "flavor" of the Song's Disturbance is unique, although few Celestials have ever encountered it, and fewer still know what it is.

Affiliation: Purity, Animals.

Base Cost to Perform: 5; 3 to maintain.

Duration: (Degree of success) × 10 minutes

Additional Disturbance: Degree of success, *after* the user returns to human form.

Characters

Benandanti characters work best in campaigns with a point total of at least 150 and preferably more. At the lower end, a basic Benandante is probably a typical medieval villager, other than for his gift – one or two attributes raised slightly, a small range of skills at good levels, including one profession at a somewhat higher level – competent, but not exceptional, even in were-form. Campaigns with higher point

budgets allow more flexibility and more impressive performance, but may tend to crowd non-Benandanti out of the picture, unless equally exotic options are available for other character types.

Remember, too, that Benandanti are undercover special agents for a force that transcends mortal authority. In almost all cases they are productive and outgoing members of whatever society into which the GM sees fit to insert them, often model citizens; whether their neighbors know of their role as supernatural protectors depends on the setting as well.

Whether publicly known or not, Benandanti in more modern or future settings tend toward professions in which they protect and serve others – police, military, medical (particularly paramedics and other emergency personnel), even security guards and private investigators. In less sophisticated game worlds, they are more likely to be farmers, blacksmiths, and other occupations that do not take them on the road; they prefer to stay in the communities where they grew up and where they know all their neighbors.

This assumes the Benandanti in question are aware of their heritage. If they are not, they can be in almost any trade and may not discover their ability to change until a time of great stress or during exposure to great evil. In a campaign with sufficient points and a compatible background, the Benandante shapeshifting talent would make an excellent Secret Advantage (p. CI16).

Variations

As noted elsewhere, some historical Benandanti described their transformations as spiritual, not physical. To represent this, add the *Projected Were-form* limitation (pp. 33-34) at the -25% level to the package described on p. 34.

Most bands that claimed a spiritual transformation also had sex-linked abilities for their members. While men were capable of the wolf form, women were dreamwalkers. In such a case, female Benandanti could be quantified either with Astral Projection or with the Path of Dreams from *GURPS Spirits*. Dreamwalkers who use Astral Projection may also possess True Astral were-forms (see box, p. 34).

Finally, modify or remove the Duty, Enemy, and External Trigger value as needed for campaigns that do not use a medieval European setting or some facsimile.

Sample Character

Carlo Ravelli

195 points

Age 29; 5'9"; 170 lbs.; a homely fellow with a ready grin, curly black hair, brown eyes and an olive complexion.

Carlo Ravelli is an accomplished blacksmith living in a small village in the north of Italy during the late 17th century. He is also a Benandante – a werewolf appointed by the forces of Heaven to protect the crops and lives of the peasants in his area from the depredations of the forces of Hell. In this alternate, secret-magic Earth, those forces are very real, and so is Carlo's ability to transform into a 6'6" wolf-human hybrid.

For nine years, Carlo has been a member of a small band of Benandanti based in his village. It formerly numbered eight, but in the last winter raid upon the gates of Hell, the band's last nominal leader was killed by one of the cursed *stregoni*.

Forced by circumstances to rally his band in the midst of the combat, Carlo has since found himself stuck with the job of leader by the general acclamation of his fellows. Even though he is unsure he wants the job, he has learned quickly and well, and none of the other Benandanti in the group has had any complaints about his performance. Of course, he rarely has to do *anything*, but that suits the others just fine.

Carlo has a slow and careful way with words that sometimes deceives strangers into thinking he's dull-witted – an opinion often reinforced by his willingness to give his last lira to a friend or neighbor in need. While not the most skilled of blacksmiths, he still turns out quality work in which he takes a quiet, private pleasure – including the iron whips used by his band. He is a widower, having lost his young wife to smallpox several years back. Despite his homeliness, several young ladies in the village would eagerly become his second wife, but he still mourns and shuns any suggestion he should remarry.



ST 14 [45]; **DX** 12 [20]; **IQ** 10 [0]; **HT** 13 [30].

Speed 6.25; Move 6.

Dodge 6; Parry 8 (Brawling).

Advantages: Animal Empathy [5]; Benandante [75]; Reputation +2 (As Benandante, to other Benandanti; 10 or less) [1].

Disadvantages: Cannot Harm Innocents [-10]; Compulsive Generosity [-5]; Unattractive [-5].

Quirks: Careful; Congenial; Prays before every meal; Quietly proud of his smithcraft; Speaks slowly and carefully. [-5]

Skills: Animal Handling-13 [2];* Area Knowledge (Home Village)-12 [4]; Area Knowledge (Local Countryside)-12 [4]; Axe/Mace-13 [4]; Blacksmith/TL4-14 [10]; Brawling-13 [2]; Hidden Lore (Benandanti)-12 [6]; Intimidation-11 [3];** Leadership-11 [3];** Lifting-11 [1/2]; Packing-13 [2];* Swimming-11 [1/2]; Teamster-13 [1];* Veterinary/TL4-13 [2].*

* Includes +4 from Animal Empathy.

** Bought up from ST-5 default of 9.

Languages: Italian (native)-10 [0].

Note: In his wolfman form, Ravelli is ST 15, DX 16, HT 15; he gains the skills of Brawling-16, Running-15, Stealth-16, and Whip-16. His innate Brawling skill takes the place of the skill he has learned in his human form.

KITSUNE

Kitsune is an animal supposed to be mysterious, fascinating, and mischievous. And he is believed to be very grateful for the kindness done to him, as seen in many tales, and is also affectionate as revealed in some dramas . . . He is endowed with the subtle art of metamorphosis, and he is able to bewitch men in the guise of a charming girl. An exceedingly interesting and entertaining beast Kitsune is.

– Kiyoshi Nozaki, **Kitsune: Japan's Fox of Mystery, Romance, and Humour**

Sometimes called the “goblin fox” and the fox-spirit, and known as “Hu-Ching” in China, the kitsune (the word is both singular and plural) is probably the best-known creature of Japanese myth in the Western world. Like the faerie of Europe, kitsune are powerful but amoral supernatural beings; Japanese mythology looks upon them with a confusing mixture of mild fear and outright affection.

The kitsune is a shapeshifter with three forms – fox, hybrid fox-human, and human – although in the last form there is always a detail that reveals its true nature. Mercurial and passionate, kitsune can range from mischievous practical jokers to incandescent beings of godlike power. Most are neutral, if not actually friendly, toward mankind, but some are darker and far more fearsome.

Kitsune 186 points

Attributes: ST -7 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [-36]; DX +4 [45]; IQ +2 [20]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Acute Hearing +2 [4]; Acute Taste and Smell +2 [4]; Attractive [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Decreased Life Support [10]; Discriminatory Smell (Works as Empathy within 2 hexes, +50%) [23]; Early Maturation 1 [5]; Enhanced Move (Running) 1/2 [5]; Extra Fatigue (Spellcasting only) +9 [18]; Four Legs [5]; Fur [4]; Magery 1 [15]; Mana Enhancer (One level, touch) [25]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Status 1 [5]; Ultrahearing [5]; Unaging [15]; Shapeshifting (Fox-headed humanoid; Absorptive Change to base form, Light Encumbrance, +10%) [32]; Shapeshifting (Human; Absorptive Change to base form, Light Encumbrance, +10%) [69].

Disadvantages: Bad Temper [-10]; Code of Honor (Always return a favor or a good deed, punish those who deserve it, always keep one's word and promises) [-10]; Horizontal [-10]; Lecherousness [-15]; Mute [-25]; Odious Racial Habit (Prankster) [-10]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Reduced HP -6 [-30]; Sleepy (50%) [-10].

Skills: Running at HT [4]; Savoir-Faire at IQ [0];* Stealth at DX [2].

* Free from Status 1.

Innate Spells: Complex Illusion at IQ [2]; Illusion Disguise at IQ [2]; Illusion Shell at IQ [2]; Know Illusion at IQ [2]; Simple Illusion at IQ [2]; Sound at IQ [2].

Kitsune Fox-Headed Humanoid Form 140 points

Attributes: DX +4 [45]; IQ +2 [20]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Acute Hearing +2 [4]; Acute Taste and Smell +2 [4]; Attractive [5]; Discriminatory Smell (Works as Empathy within 2 hexes, +50%) [23]; Extra Fatigue (Spellcasting only) +2 [4]; Fur [4]; Magery 1 [15]; Mana Enhancer (One level, touch) [25]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Status 1 [5]; Ultrahearing [5]; Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Bad Temper [-10]; Code of Honor (Always return a favor or a good deed, punish those who deserve it, always keep one's word and promises) [-10]; Lecherousness [-15]; Odious Racial Habit (Prankster) [-10]; Sleepy (50%) [-10]; Unnatural Feature (Fox's head) [-10];* Unnatural Feature (Fox's tail) [-5].

* A fox's head actually subsumes many Unnatural Features; for simply, it is treated as one double-value Unnatural Feature.

Quirks: Amoral. [-1]

Innate Spells: Complex Illusion at IQ [2]; Illusion Disguise at IQ [2]; Illusion Shell at IQ [2]; Know Illusion at IQ [2]; Simple Illusion at IQ [2]; Sound at IQ [2].

Kitsune Human Form 133 points

Attributes: DX +4 [45]; IQ +2 [20]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Acute Hearing +2 [4]; Acute Taste and Smell +2 [4]; Beautiful [15]; Extra Fatigue (Spellcasting only) +2 [4]; Magery 1 [15]; Mana Enhancer (One level, touch) [25]; Status 1 [5]; Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Bad Temper [-10]; Code of Honor (Always return a favor or a good deed, punish those who deserve it, always keep one's word and promises) [-10]; Lecherousness [-15]; Odious Racial Habit (Prankster) [-10]; Unnatural Feature (Fox's tail) [-5].

Quirks: Amoral. [-1]

Innate Spells: Complex Illusion at IQ [2]; Illusion Disguise at IQ [2]; Illusion Shell at IQ [2]; Know Illusion at IQ [2]; Simple Illusion at IQ [2]; Sound at IQ [2].

Design Notes: The kitsune racial package illustrates the complexities that can arise in the design of shapeshifters. The basic template for the fox form, without the Shapeshifting advantages, costs 85 points. The template for the human form costs 133 points, a difference of 48 points; taking this as the first alternate form gives a base cost of 63 points, raised to 69 points by the 10% enhancement. The template for the humanoid form costs 140 points, a difference of 55 points; taking this as the second alternate form gives a base cost of 29 points (55 points divided by 4, plus 15 points), raised to 32 points by the 10% enhancement. Adding the cost of these two advantages to the fox form template gives a total of 186 points.

Kitsune in their natural form have ST -7 and Extra Fatigue +9 for magic only; this gives them a racial average Fatigue of 12 for magic (see p. CI55). For simplicity, the human and humanoid forms have Extra Fatigue +2 and thus also have racial average Fatigue of 12 for magic.

This racial package defines the physical manifestation of a one-tailed kitsune. More powerful kitsune are built by adding additional tails (and the corresponding age) and increasing Status, Magery, skills, and spell selection. (Multiple tails do *not* get extra Unnatural Feature disadvantages!) Appearance also improves, and various protective and defensive advantages are acquired. Ultimately, their magical abilities expand to include almost everything involving illusion and creation, fire, and light.

The Unnatural Feature possessed by the human form always hints at the kitsune's true nature. Traditionally this is a fox-like tail, but others are possible, including pointed ears, eyes like those of a fox in color or reflectivity, unusual hair color (red with a white stripe), and so on. This feature should be selected at the time of character creation and will not change.

Odd dichotomies and paradoxes abound when kitsune are concerned. A kitsune is a fox – a *natural* fox. In fact, *all* foxes are actually kitsune. However, a kitsune is also a spirit, with a noncorporeal aspect. While its spirit nature is the source of its power, its natural state is fully physical. Kitsune are as corporeal as humans. The kitsune in the original myths range from low-powered tricksters to beings of nearly godlike puissance, depending on their age and nature.

Most kitsune are female or prefer female shapes. There are male kitsune (or at least kitsune who take male forms), but even they are effeminate.

Native-form kitsune are identical to ordinary foxes in appearance and size. Determine height and weight as normal for their human and humanoid forms.

Psychology

Perhaps the definitive characteristic of the kitsune psychology is the overall feminine nature of the race.

Even though the sexes are equally represented in their population, most male kitsune are noticeably effeminate and prefer to take female shapes and roles when interacting with mortals. Even males who assume male forms are still *bishonen* – vaguely feminine in both appearance and behavior.

Like many other supernatural creatures, kitsune are tricksters and pranksters. While it is a major component of their psychology, they are not necessarily compulsive about it; myth and legend describe kitsune who were tirelessly devoted to causes or friends, or who were willing to labor long, prankless hours for the good of their neighbors or villages. However, most kitsune have nothing resembling human morals and entertain themselves with practical jokes and elaborate deceptions upon unwary mortals.

Kitsune Magic

As embodied spirits, Kitsune are naturally creatures of magic. Because of this, they can buy additional levels of both Magery and Mana Enhancer (p. CI40) as they grow older.

By both basic nature and scholarship, they are all illusionists. Kitsune start with a basic grounding in the Illusion and Creation college, and most expand on that as they grow older; it is a rare kitsune who does not have full mastery of the college by her 200th year. Few bother to learn much magic beyond that, but it is possible (and likely in the case of the eldest and most-tailed) for a kitsune to be a gifted and versatile mage.

Their skill with illusions is legendary. According to some of the legends about them, even the most basic of kitsune illusions are not *just* illusions – they are actually *real* for their duration, being more transformations than seemings.

Above and beyond illusions, kitsune are known to favor the Fire College and the Light and Darkness College.

Resisting Magic

As if this weren't enough, kitsune are said to be resistant to magic used *on them* by others, as well. This simply may be the result of high attributes (and corresponding resistance rolls), but the GM may want to consider allowing kitsune to purchase Magic Resistance despite also possessing Magery. In such a case, the Magic Resistance doesn't affect their spellcasting and does not function against spells cast with the kitsune's True Name (see box, p. 102).

Testing and Tempting

This is not just random behavior, though. Like many other beings in myths around the globe, the kitsune test mortals and mete out rewards or punishments. The "help" they provide to an immoral or unethical person is usually to urge him along a path of self-destruction; there is no element of compulsion in these urgings, and if the target resists, there may be hope for him. Lesser flaws are aggravated and enhanced until they become visible to the target's friends and neighbors, at which point mortal mechanisms take over. In some cases, the kitsune takes a direct hand in punishing an individual, as in those tales where the kitsune "steals" the woman of an ignoble samurai.

To those they judge to be good or moral, kitsune are far kinder. They offer friendship and aid to good persons, helping them through adversity and difficulty. But since no mortal is perfect, a kitsune seeks to improve her friend by various means, usually offering a lesson in humility by way of pranks or revealing a hidden flaw in the person.

In all these tests, the kitsune judges by *her* ethics, not the human's. Although the kitsune ethical system is amoral and borderline alien to humans, it is not incompatible with most Eastern religions, and the results are generally not discordant. Still, where the views of kitsune and human diverge, there may well be a failure by each side to comprehend what the other thinks it's doing.

A Semi-Divine Viewpoint

Kitsune are considered lesser *kami* – divine spirits similar to the Western concept of the *genius loci*. Being such, they serve and help the people near whom they live, in exchange for prayers and gifts. They reserve their worst pranks and



tricks for oathbreakers, the impious, and unwary invaders of their domains. Also, as kami, they are bound by their nature and cannot cause serious or permanent harm to any human, as long as that human follows tradition and properly propitiates them.

Honor is one of the strongest bonds restricting the kitsune. In particular, promises have a special hold on them. If they make a promise or give their word on any matter, they *must* follow through, overturning heaven and earth in order to adhere not just to the word but to the spirit of the agreement. Furthermore, they expect the same behavior from those with whom they deal. A kitsune who breaks her word or fails to keep a promise, no matter how trivial, becomes virtually suicidal; someone who breaks a promise made to a kitsune gains an implacable enemy.

Emotional Roller Coasters

These excessive responses are not unusual; kitsune are vulnerable to other extremes of emotion, as well. They are notorious for their bad temper, flashing into anger at the slightest provocation. They hold grudges against those whom they consider enemies,

nursing them over years and often planning (and executing) extreme acts of revenge in retaliation for whatever slight first caused the bad blood. Along similar lines, regret or despair can kill a kitsune who gives herself over to it.

On the other hand, amoral as they are, kitsune are good and loyal friends to those who have earned their trust. They go through all manner of difficulties to aid someone whom they have befriended, without thought of recompense. Be aware, though, that it is a difficult task to gain the friendship of a kitsune.

Kitsune are very proud in one regard; they rarely ask for help, no matter how much they need it. Beyond that, they will not accept help from someone compelled or persuaded against his will to offer it. The offer must be sincere and truly what the one offering wishes to do.

Ecology

Kitsune are unusual (at least when compared to Western shifters) in that they have a proper niche in both the spiritual and the corporeal ecosystems. As foxes, they take the role of small predators. As spirits, they are charged with testing and rewarding (or punishing) mortals (see p. 100).



Fox-Spirit Possession

Potential kitsune who do not yet have corporeal bodies are known as “fox-spirits” and are almost as plentiful as physical kitsune. Fox-spirits can remain purely ethereal beings for as long as they like, and they have options other than incarnating into a fox body and becoming a kitsune. Some have been known to possess humans instead.

These spirits tend to be more malevolent than the kitsune, carelessly driving their mortal hosts mad with their alien outlooks and priorities. Fox-spirit possession is not always a state of complete control – the spirit may simply lurk in the back of the victim’s mind as it slowly comes apart, instead of seizing complete control of the body. In either case, though, a proper exorcism can drive the spirit out.

If the process of incarnating into a fox, gaining physical and magical power, and dying is indeed a vital subset of some unknown spiritual life-cycle, then the fox-spirits may well represent an immature, larval form of the kitsune.

Kitsune usually live from 900 to 1,000 years. This is purchased as the Unaging advantage (p. CI69), but kitsune do age and develop throughout their lifespans and lack the ability to select their apparent age (other than through their illusions). They mature at an early age compared to humans, but do not begin making aging rolls until they are 750 years old. However, kitsune do not cease to exist when their physical forms die; evidence suggests that incarnation into a fox-body is a necessary part of a larger life cycle that continues when the deceased kitsune-spirit advances into the celestial realms.

Culture

Kitsune possess a heavily organized, stratified society, which is mostly invisible to human eyes. Since most humans deal with one kitsune, or at most a small family, at any given time, this is to be expected.

There are nine levels of political and supernatural power within the kitsune social structure, based upon the age of the kitsune. These levels are equivalent to Status, with even the lowest kitsune possessing Status 1. (This is within kitsune society; knowledgeable humans of any Status act respectfully to *any* kitsune they meet.) Furthermore, a kitsune's status is immediately visible to all who see him – he possesses a number of tails equal to his Status. The very oldest kitsune are 1,000 years old and are called *Tenko*; they have 9 tails, and their fur has a golden rather than reddish hue. They are also devastatingly powerful – easily the equal of a demigod or godling.

Also, as kitsune gain in power and age, they also tend to polarize morally. Their outlook remains technically amoral, but their tendencies when making ethical choices diverge strongly. Nominally “good” kitsune retain their racial name and serve as messengers from Inari, the Japanese fox deity. “Evil” kitsune become *nogitsune*, their prankish nature expanded into cruelty and torment. Select appropriate advantages and disadvantages to reflect this differentiation.

Kitsune start their lives with one tail. Every hundred years of life, they usually gain an additional tail – and with it status and other benefits as noted in the box below.

Earning and Granting Tails

It is possible for a kitsune to gain a new tail as a reward or gift from another, more exalted kitsune. In such a case the newly tailed kitsune must dedicate his subsequently earned character points toward improving his various traits to match his new position in kitsune society.

The exact mechanism of granting a new tail is left up to the GM, but if a kitsune PC wants to reward a kitsune NPC in this manner, there's no reason not to let it happen simply by fiat. Of course, a kitsune cannot give *itself* a new tail. An especially strict GM may require that the gift come from among the giver's own tails – and may bring along with it any number of traits (and their character points).



Kitsune Names

While in Western mythology most nonhuman creatures drift namelessly through their appearances, individual kitsune are usually referred to by name in the tales where they appear. A kitsune's name is evocative of both its personality and the role it has chosen to play. It is also the legacy that it leaves to posterity, whether that posterity is mortals or other kitsune. Often slyly descriptive of the kitsune's preferred form or favorite prank, or indicative of its usual role in the community in which it lives, these names are not unlike those that humans would take.

GMs looking to name kitsune characters should remember that in Japanese (unlike English) names have meanings, usually descriptive and often poetic, which are obvious to those who speak the language. GMs seeking verisimilitude may want to consult a Japanese-English dictionary to find or construct appropriate names.

True Names

However, the name a kitsune gives to mortals is simply a *user-name*. Like many other supernatural creatures, they have secret true names, which, if discovered, can be used to bind, banish, or manipulate them. While it's possible to magically coerce a kitsune without its true name, it is difficult and potentially deadly – the stronger the kitsune, the more dangerous it is to make the attempt without the name handy.

Kitsune resist normally any spells cast upon them without the use of their true names. If a spell is cast using her true name, a kitsune has a penalty of -(10-number of tails) to any resistance rolls. If she successfully resists, or the spell fails to incapacitate her, the kitsune will be hostile to the caster and his companions (if she wasn't already) and will immediately counterattack to the best of her ability.

Other Settings

Kitsune can easily be transplanted into a number of other settings.

Urban fantasy/weird modern/GURPS Technomancer: Kitsune can be dropped into a modern setting with no changes whatsoever, and should be able to function just fine. Ancient ones unfamiliar with modern ways might need the Primitive disadvantage, but younger ones are almost certain to be fully versed in the ways of the 21st century. **GURPS Technomancer** kitsune are probably a variety of Seelie, although some witnesses say they claim otherwise. Either way, they continue as they always have – teasing and tempting their human neighbors.

Yrth: The Banestorm scooped up some kitsune along with everything else it dropped into Sahud. They are now a fact of life in that strange land despite their rarity and are placated eagerly. However, the Sahudese being who they are, they have bolstered the original simple respect with a baroque encrustation of irrelevant and incomprehensible rituals and ceremonies – and only the kitsune know for sure any more exactly what is really necessary and what is not. And when kitsune start showing up in Megalos . . .

GURPS Black Ops: The Company has records of kitsune encounters going back almost 50 years, and after several disastrous confrontations in the 1960s, the official policy became “hands off.” In recent years, several ops teams have found unexpected allies in kitsune (particularly near Chinatowns and Little Tokyos). And in an incident so highly classified that some senior commanders don’t know about it, a seven-tailed kitsune once appeared before Argus, where she requested (and received) an ops team to help her deal with an eight-tailed nogitsune that had allied itself with the Grays.

GURPS Illuminati University: The Metaphysics Department suspects that several kitsune live on the campus grounds, given the “punishments” that have been inflicted on some of the frat boys in recent months. But it’s hard to tell the difference between them and the import dates from other colleges. *Something’s* been eating the CIAgulls, though, and there’s a big chunk of woods that even the Archdean’s cats won’t enter.

Politics

Kitsune do not involve themselves with human governments or organizations larger than a family or clan. They prefer to interact with individual humans and rarely (if ever) categorize larger groups in any meaningful way. In this regard, they are effectively apolitical.

On the spiritual plane, things may well be different, but not much information is available. Kitsune are godlike spirits and garner a great deal of power and respect from both mortal and immortal alike, but beyond that, how they interact and deal with other *kami* is virtually unknown.

In the Campaign

Kitsune are designed for use in a **GURPS Japan** campaign, particularly one with a strong “mythic” flavor. This racial template would replace the **GURPS Bestiary**-style description given for kitsune in that book.

They can also be employed in other medieval fantasy games, either as is or suitably changed to fit the preferred campaign flavor. Kitsune could only be PCs in a heroic-level campaign, and even then might overpower it, but they can easily serve as Patrons, Enemies, and/or Allies at almost any power level.

Characters

Unless the campaign is one of supernatural creatures and mythic heroes, a kitsune PC is probably out of the question. A one-tailed kitsune should be built on no less than 250 points, and most are probably in the 400- to 500-point range, with the majority of those points invested in magical abilities and other advantages. Nine-tailed kitsune are all but gods, and may as well be, for all their playability. A good rule of thumb for the GM who absolutely *must* point-budget the more powerful kitsune would be to give them 200 points plus 250 points per tail.

Assuming a kitsune PC is possible, her role in the party is quite simple: trickster mage. Beyond that stereotype, kitsune are excellent spies and infiltrators, although they must often stifle their racial compulsions and habits in order to succeed. They also make good *femmes fatales*, especially if their Unnatural Feature is relatively minor or inconspicuous – or can be cloaked effectively with an illusion.

Variations

The kitsune package can be used almost as-is for the other definitive *hengeyokai*, the tanuki. A raccoon-like creature (actually a canine, a relative of dogs and wolves) in its animal form, the tanuki is not quite the trickster the kitsune is, but otherwise is much the same, at least on the game mechanics level.



Sample Character

Mitsuki Gizensha

700 Points

Age 217 (apparent age 20); 5'2"; 120 lbs.; A two-tailed kitsune who appears as a beautiful Japanese woman with chocolate-brown eyes and hair apparently dyed to resemble a fox's pelt.

Mitsuki Gizensha is a two-tailed kitsune living in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo district sometime in the late 1990s. Her human form is a familiar sight to her neighbors, with her fox-pelt hair, her revealing outfits, her late hours, and her ready smile. Many of the older residents know or suspect she's a kitsune, and some of the younger ones can tell there's something special about her. Everyone likes her and seems to know her by name, and she returns the favor as she wends her way through the neighborhood with a ready smile and wave for all. Imagine a Japanese version of Marlo Thomas as "That Girl," only with a punk hairdo. The family name she has taken means "a fox in a lamb's skin," which describes her perfectly.

Most of her neighbors – especially those who know kitsune and their ways – think she's a high-priced call girl, or maybe a nightclub entertainer. They're wrong. She's not only the resident kitsune, but the neighborhood's biggest landlord and its general protector. She actually owns many of the residential and commercial properties in the district and keeps the rents affordable as part of her duty to help the people there. She uses a variety of illusions and front companies to appear to be several different landlords, both male and female.

To the best of her knowledge, she is the only kitsune in all of Southern California. She originally came to Los Angeles in the 1930s to escape the growing militarization of her homeland. Once settled in, she established her "territory" and began protecting (and punishing) its inhabitants. She escaped the WWII internment of Japanese-Americans by masquerading as an Anglo woman, but then relocated to a small town near the camp in Owens Valley, California to help her people during their imprisonment. When they were finally released, she saw to it that they got their homes and businesses back.

In the years since, she has built a good-sized financial empire while treating the people in Little Tokyo with respect and dignity. Having few physical needs above the minimum required to maintain her masquerade, she reinvests most of her profits in the properties she owns, continuously improving them while still keeping the rents affordable. She also endows a number of scholarships for Japanese-American students.

On occasion she also takes the time to make Yakuza and other organized crime operations in Little Tokyo unprofitable. This is not because it's against the law, but because her people would ultimately suffer while the criminals got rich. She considers herself their enemy for that reason, although she does not usually pursue criminals beyond Little Tokyo.

Occasionally she disguises her fox form with the illusion of a stray dog and checks up on "her people" incognito. When she needs to shed her human guise and relax, Mitsuki spends her time roaming the Hollywood Hills as a fox. When for some reason the Hills are a bad idea, she amuses herself by hanging out in the fox displays at the L.A. Zoo. And when she needs to let off a little steam with some pranks and tricks, she goes clubbing in Hollywood and targets the hypocrites and unethical among the crowds.

Her human form's Unnatural Feature is fox-colored hair – brick red with a black streak and white tips. She used to keep it hidden

with an illusion, but not any more; in 1990s L.A., no one thinks it is at all unusual.

Mitsuki Gizensha is a 700-point character suitable for use as a patron or a very dangerous enemy in a campaign set in the late 20th century. With some minor changes, she could be found in many near-future or recent-past settings – anything from *GURPS WWII* to *GURPS Terradyne*. If the campaign is a generally nonmagical setting (as is the case here), her patronage is worth an extra 5 points.

ST 10/12 [0]; **DX** 14 [0]; **IQ** 15 [30]; **HT** 13 [10].

Speed 6.75; Move 6.

Dodge 6; Parry 8 (Karate).

Advantages: Alternate Identity (Five alternate identities: various landlords) [75]; Charisma +3 [15]; Contact (Police administrator, usually reliable, 12 or less) [12]; Contacts (Two street, connected, Streetwise-15, usually reliable, 12 or less) [8]; Eidetic Memory 1 [30]; Filthy Rich [50]; Intuition [15]; Kitsune [186]; Literacy [0]; Magery 3 [20];* Reputation +3 (As friendly, pretty girl who may be a (mostly) benevolent supernatural creature, to inhabitants of Los Angeles's Little Tokyo) [5]; Status 2 [0];** Very Beautiful [10].†

* Bought up from racial Magery 1.

** +1 Status from Filthy Rich; raised from racial Status 1.

† Bought up from racial Beautiful (in her other two forms, raised from racial Attractive to Beautiful).

Disadvantages: Sense of Duty (Residents of Little Tokyo) [-10]; Weirdness Magnet [-15].

Quirks: Always cheerful and perky; Does not tolerate organized crime in "her" neighborhood; Does not trust the U.S. government; Dresses provocatively in her Mitsuki identity; Calls almost everyone in Little Tokyo by name. [-5]

Skills:* Accounting-17 [4]; Acting-16 [2]; Administration-16 [2]; Appreciate Beauty-15 [4]; Architecture/TL7-15 [1]; Area Knowledge (Japan)-16 [1]; Area Knowledge (Little Tokyo)-19 [4]; Area Knowledge (Los Angeles)-17 [2]; Bartender-15 [1]; Body Language-15 [2]; Calligraphy-14 [2]; Carousing-14 [4]; Computer Operation/TL7-16 [1]; Cooking-16 [1]; Courtesan-16 [2]; Dancing-14 [2]; Detect Lies-17 [4]; Diplomacy-16 [3]; Driving (Automobile)/TL7-13 [1]; Economics-15 [2]; Erotic Art-13 [2]; Fast-Talk-18 [4]; Flower Arranging-16 [1]; Gambling-15 [1]; Hidden Lore (Spirit realm)-15 [1]; History-14 [1]; Illusion Art -17 [4]; Intimidation-17 [3]; Karate-12 [1]; Law-14 [2]; Lip Reading-17 [3]; Merchant-17 [3]; Motorcycle (Light)/TL7-14 [1]; Origami-16 [1]; Pickpocket-15 [8]; Poetry-16 [2]; Professional Skill (Landlord)-18 [4]; Professional Skill (Real Estate)-18 [4]; Running-13 [0];** Savoir-Faire-15 [0];† Sex Appeal-19 [7]; Shadowing-17 [3]; Singing-14 [2]; Stealth-16 [6];‡ Streetwise-18 [4]; Swimming-14 [1]; Thaumatology-17 [2];§ Theology (Shinto)-14/20 [2]; Tracking-17 [3].

* All mental skills benefit from Eidetic Memory 1: points invested count double.

** Instinctive skill in fox form; not available in human/humanoid forms.

† Free from Status 2.

‡ Raised from racial Stealth-14.

§ Includes +3 from Magery 3.



Continued on next page . . .

Sample Character

(Continued)

Spells:* Agonize-18 [2]; Analyze Magic-17; Apportation-17; Aura-18 [2]; Blur-17; Bravery-18 [2]; Charm-18 [2]; Choke-18 [2]; Clumsiness-18 [2]; Colors-18 [2]; Complex Illusion-18 [0]; Continual Light-17; Control Creation-18 [2]; Control Illusion-18 [2]; Copy-18 [2]; Create Animal-18 [2]; Create Earth-18 [2]; Create Object-17 [2]; Create Servant-18 [2]; Create Warrior-18 [2]; Create Water-18 [2]; Darkness-17; Daze-18 [2]; Detect Magic-18 [2]; Disorient-18 [2]; Dispel Creation-18 [2]; Dispel Illusion-18 [2]; Divination (Geomancy)-19 [4]; Drunkenness-18 [2]; Duplicate-18 [4]; Dye-18 [2]; Earth to Stone-18 [2]; Emotion Control-18 [2]; Enthral-18 [2]; Fear-18 [2]; Flash-17; Flight-17 [2]; Foolishness-18 [2]; Forgetfulness-18 [2]; Great Hallucination-17 [2]; Hallucination-18 [2]; Haste-18 [2]; Hinder-18 [2]; Identify Spell-18 [2]; Illusion Disguise-18 [0]; Illusion Shell-18 [0]; Independence-18 [2]; Initiative-18 [2]; Invisibility-18 [2]; Itch-18 [2]; Know Illusion-18 [0]; Light-18 [2]; Loyalty-18 [2]; Madness-18 [2]; Missile Shield-18 [2]; Pain-18 [2]; Perfect Illusion-18

[2]; Perfume-18 [2]; Phantom-17 [2]; Purify Water-18 [2]; Restore-18 [2]; Reverse Missiles-17; Seek Earth-18 [2]; Seek Water-18 [2]; Sense Emotion-18 [2]; Sense Foes-18 [2]; Sensitize-18 [2]; Shape Earth-18 [2]; Silence-17; Simple Illusion-18 [0]; Slow-18 [2]; Sound-18 [0]; Spasm-18 [2]; Strike Anosmic-18 [2]; Stun-18 [2]; Suggestion-18 [2]; Walk Through Earth-17; Wisdom-18 [2].

* All spells are +1 from Eidetic Memory 1 and +3 from Magery 3. All spells cost 1 point unless otherwise noted.

Languages:* English-16 [2]; Japanese (native)-17 [1]; Spanish-15 [1].

* All languages benefit from Eidetic Memory 1; points invested count double.

(The attributes, height, and weight given above are for Mitsuki's human female form, in which she spends most of her time. They also apply to her fox-woman form, which she has rarely used since moving to L.A. Her fox form is ST 3/11 DX 14 IQ 15 HT 12/6, about two feet long plus tails, and 20 pounds in weight.)

“MAVERICK” MULTIFORM BIODROID

*New for this season! The F2-ATV “Maverick” Biodroid is the go-anywhere, do-anything accessory of the year! Sleek styling and classic fur patterning combine with Bionitech’s patented Multi-Form™ technology to produce a delightful accessory-pet that is both sophisticated **and** rugged. Equally at home in the drawing room and on a mountain trail, the Maverick is the premiere biomorphic companion/vehicle on the market today!*

– Fall 2157 Bionitech (LLC) Advertising Flyer

In one distant future, technology advanced extraordinarily far in both the materials and biological sciences, until unexpected common ground was found between them. This surprising synergy revolutionized dozens of fields, not the least of which were robotics and transportation.

The Bionitech Corporation is the premiere commercial organization exploiting these discoveries; the introduction of its first “bio-droid” made the company an overnight success. It was the first manufacturer to successfully merge inorganic and organic technologies into a seamless, shapechanging whole.

Its most recent release is the high-end F2-ATV, called the “Maverick” by the marketing department – an off-road sport/utility vehicle that is also a handsome and charming pet suitable for almost any household. Described in the sales brochures as “attractively bimorphic,” the Maverick spends its “down time” in a form that is constructed from a combination of the most attractive features of both cats and ferrets. Low-maintenance and “conveniently

pre-housebroken,” the Maverick’s bioform is safe around children and furniture, is easy to train, and is extremely loyal and affectionate.

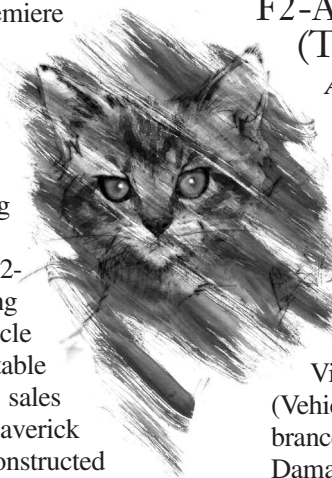
If that were all there were to the Maverick, though, it would be far from a top-of-the-line bioengineered product. What sets it apart from any number of other chimeric and cloned pets is its ability to turn into a full-featured off-road vehicle. The F2-ATV’s SUV form is a far cry from the 4x4s of the 20th century, though. Its smooth organic lines emphasize its flexible segmented chassis. Combine that with its four independent axles, eight wheels, and top-of-the-line gyrobalance system, and the F2-ATV is clearly a vehicle designed for the rough-and-tumble requirements of the true outdoorsman.

F2-ATV (“Maverick”)-Class Biodroid (TL10) 268 points

Attributes: ST -6 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [-30]; DX +4 [45]; IQ -3 [-30]; HT +3 [+30].

Advantages: Acute Hearing +4 [8]; Acute Taste/Smell +4 [8]; Alertness +5 [25]; Catfall [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Decreased Life Support [10]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; Double-Jointed [5]; Early Maturation 2 [10]; Enhanced Move 1/2 [5]; Fuzzy Sense (3-hex range, -20%) [8]; Fearlessness +5 [10]; Four Legs [5]; Night Vision [10]; Perfect Balance [15]; Shapeshifting

(Vehicle; Absorptive Change to base form, Light Encumbrance, +10%; Innocuous Change, +5%; Proportional Damage, +0%; Cannot Use Change Control, -5%; Exclusive External Trigger: Owner Request, -45%) [338]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Ultrahearing [5].



Disadvantages: Attentive [-1]; Dead Broke [-25]; Dull [-1]; Horizontal [-10]; Inconvenient Size (Small) [-15]; Innumerate [-10]; Mute [-25]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Nosy [-1]; Presentient [-20]; Reduced Hit Points -8 [-40]; Short Lifespan 6 [-60]; Sleepy (50% of the time) [-10]; Social Stigma (Valuable Property) [-10]; Staid [-1]; Sterile [-3].

Quirk: Extremely loyal to owner(s) [-1].

Skills: Jumping at DX [1]; Stealth at DX+2 [8].

Vehicle Form (TL10) 435 points

Attributes: ST +290 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [183]; DX +3 [30]; IQ -2 [-15]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Absolute Direction [5]; Basic Communicator [15]; Damage Resistance (Ablative, -15%) 3 [8]; Extra Hit Points (Vehicular Damage (see p. 42), -75%) +138 [173]; Flexibility [15]; Movement (Speed 38 empty/24 loaded; No legs, -50%) [18]; Passive Defense 2 [50]; Perfect Balance [15]; Radar (Imaging) 1 [50].

Disadvantages: Dead Broke [-25]; Inconvenient Size (Large) [-10]; No Manipulators [-50]; Slave Mentality [-40]; Social Stigma (Valuable Property) [-10].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Extremely loyal to owner(s) [-1]; Inertial navigation system (+8 to Navigation skill) [0]; Safety interlock (Cannot transform back to animal shape if passenger seats occupied) [0]; Spotlight (500' beam) [0].

Skills: Driving (Self) at DX+1 [4].

Design Notes: An F2-ATV's machine form is an eight-wheeled ground vehicle 17' long and weighing 1,323 lbs. empty. It has eight exposed passenger seats and 10 cubic feet of cargo space. Power for drivetrain and accessories comes from a 15-kW hydrogen fuel cell. A 5-gallon self-sealing tank provides fuel for 22 hours of operation. External surface area is 200 square feet for the body, 75 square feet for the wheels, total 275 square feet; structural elements are light and expensive. The surface is waterproofed, enabling the F2-ATV to float. A 0.33-lb. cyborg brain system is supported (in vehicular form) by a tiny sentient computer (Complexity 3) with a +3 DX reflex booster circuit. The model's list price is \$215,000.

Customization Notes: To create a free-willed Maverick, remove the Slave Mentality disadvantage; this raises the vehicle form cost to 475 points and the base cost of the Shapeshifting advantage to 560 points. In addition, remove the Exclusive aspect of the External Trigger limitation; the net limitation is now -20%, so Shapeshifting costs 567 points, raising the total cost to 497 points. If the Maverick is also capable of Change Control, the net limitation is -5%, Shapeshifting costs 599 points, and the total cost is 529 points.

While some potential buyers may feel that its near-quarter-million-dollar price tag is unnecessarily exorbitant, Bionitech disagrees. The company is quick to point out that the price of a comparable high-end off-road vehicle from a

manufacturer such as Land Rover or BMW-Rolls can match or exceed that of the Maverick, yet still lack the dual nature that makes it so distinctive.

Using as their base the "natural" lifespan of the bioengineered cat-ferret hybrid that makes up the "pet" form of the vehicle, Bionitech engineers created a vehicle design that, with regular care and maintenance, should provide exceptional service for at least 15 years. Owners are warned, though, that once the pet form reaches the end of its lifespan, the vehicle ceases to be operational; despite the apparently mechanical construction of the vehicle form, it is in all regards as "alive" as the pet form, and despite the great difference in appearance and abilities, it is *not* a separate entity distinct from the "pet." It is, as the corporation's bioengineering department says, simply a different expression of the same potentials.

And, as Bionitech demonstrates, that expression can be controlled. The Maverick – as delivered – has no ability to shift from one form to the other on its own initiative – it can only do so at the request of its owner. That owner is the individual or individuals to whom the "pet" form has bonded, and to whom it displays loyalty. The pet can split its loyalty between at most two persons, facilitating both joint ownership and resale. In the latter case, while "command rights" are immediately transferred to the new owner, the actual bond of loyalty takes several weeks to shift – an unavoidable consequence of using an organic brain as part of the system.

Another control built into the vehicle is a safety interlock that prevents a transformation to pet form while living creatures (greater than a pound in weight) are in any of the seats. The Maverick "takes along" any cargo it is carrying with its vehicle form whenever it assumes pet shape, obviating the need to unpack the trunk just to deactivate the vehicle. While in theory this "storage" should have no detrimental effects on living beings, and the safety of nonliving objects has been clearly demonstrated, prudence (and the Bionitech legal department) suggested the necessity of a safety interlock to prevent unfortunate and unforeseen accidents.

There are bound to be rumors, stories, and even urban legends about any vehicle as revolutionary as the Maverick. Apocryphal tales tell of Mavericks with near-human intelligence and the ability to transform at will; of Mavericks that have retained a doglike devotion to their original owners despite being sold or traded away; of people in the *trunk* of a vehicle during a shift . . . and what happened to them. Bionitech takes no stand on such tales except to discount them as unfounded stories unworthy of serious consideration. However, privately, certain engineers within the corporation's design division are concerned about the incidents that are well documented; others express delight at the creation exceeding the creator's intent.

Psychology

The Maverick is designed to be as much companion as transportation, and to that end, the model has been engineered to be as compatible with humans as possible. Mavericks are affectionate and gregarious, and while they demonstrate a

cat's independence and ability to care for itself, they have none of the typical feline aloofness. Furthermore, they have been known to "imprint" or "bond" with their owners, demonstrating an almost canine loyalty that has surprised their designers. Playful and frolicsome in pet form, the F2 is all business when it turns into a vehicle – those that aren't, never make it out of the manufactory.

It is known that individual vehicles often develop widely divergent personalities. While much of this can be attributed to the random factors involved in the use of an organic brain, clearly just as much comes from the "life experience" of the vehicle. The effects of environment and experience also do much to shape the vehicles' "minds."

Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the case of gender identification. Although technically neuter, Mavericks often acquire an ersatz gender, if only by association from the terms of address used by their owners. Since the majority of owners refer to their vehicles as "she," most Maverick s view themselves as female. Oddly enough, despite the lack of any biochemical cues one way or another, significant and consistent – some say stereotypical – behavioral differences emerge, with "females," "males," and the few who retain a neuter identity all developing radically different styles of interaction with their owners and other Mavericks.

In the Campaign

A good example of the weremachine, the Maverick is, by design, something of a cross between a tool and a Dependent. The intended effect is Lassie incarnated as a Jeep.

Most of the time, the Maverick should be an NPC, run by the GM. Such a character is usually relegated to a support role. Normally it is acquired as equipment, whether supplied by a Patron or simply purchased; this makes its point value irrelevant to its owner.

But an F2-ATV earns character points, and can improve itself thereby. The "apocryphal" stories of independent-minded Mavericks are not urban legends, but accounts of vehicles that were able to buy off their Slave Mentality disadvantage and that chose to remain loyal to kind owners. Such a character, particularly among open-minded compatriots, could become a very valuable member of an adventuring party. Its high point cost usually makes it a Patron (base value 15 points); but if players characters are built on several hundred points, as in some space opera or transhuman settings, it may function as an Ally, with a base value of 45 points (50 points if capable of Change Control).

Names

Mavericks are almost always named by their owners; the kind of person who *wouldn't* name at least the pet form would not buy this product. As Mavericks have no "native" culture of their own, there is little consistency in their naming save that imposed by the demographics of their owners. Their names can range from the distressingly cute to the bluntly macho to the coyly pretentious, depending on the social status of the owner and the primary use to which the vehicle is put. The listing of entrants in a cat or dog show – both full names and nicknames – can be a useful resource for naming one or a pack of Mavericks.

On the other end of the spectrum, it is possible for a Maverick to "go bad." As a result of any number of traumas and stresses, a Maverick could acquire mental disadvantages that would break its Slave Mentality and let it go "rogue." The result can be an unpredictable "bug hunt" adventure, spent chasing a shapeshifting SUV across every type of inconvenient terrain the GM desires.

A variant on this adventure seed would be to present an ostensibly "rogue" Maverick, seemingly attacking people at random in its vehicle form; but if the PCs take the time to determine what drove it rogue, they will find the murder of a beloved owner or some other injustice that it feels it needs to redress in its own limited way.

Possibly more interesting (and unexpected) would be the inverse of this situation – a Maverick continuously in the background of the apparent main action, acting in all ways normal and seemingly on innocent business, but that turns out to be a rogue of unusual intelligence and subtlety. By maintaining the appearance of its usual routine, it hides a secret that may be the key to the matter at hand – or to an intriguing subplot.

Other Settings

In the form described here, the Maverick can be found in any setting that supports both engineering and biotechnology at TL10. As the sample character shows, it's a perfect adjunct to a colony or other "primitive" settlement on a distant world; it can also be a rich man's toy in more "civilized" milieus. The GM who feels that TL10 is not advanced enough for such a "technomagic" device should feel free to raise the minimum tech level needed before the Maverick can be created; however, it requires redesign so that it properly reflects its new native TL. The Maverick can be the product of weird science at virtually any tech level above 5.

Similarly, a vehicle like the Maverick can be the product of concentrated long-term effort by a large circle of enchanters – or one of their backfires. Or it can be the result of a single warped genius with a sufficient grasp of weird magic. In either case, it is far more likely to be a unique artifact rather than a mass-produced item, making it more valuable and more likely to be a plot device than a simple piece of equipment – assuming it's not a character in its own right.

Characters

Maverick characters can start as low as 275 points, and most do. This point level usually represents a fresh-from-the-factory F2-ATV with no learned skills and little personality above a kind of kittenish enthusiasm. It can also be a Maverick near the end of its life, in need of repair or perhaps highly eccentric, with many unusual personality quirks. A 300- or 325-point budget would indicate an experienced Maverick whose personality and skills have had time to develop. But the Maverick really comes into its own at 500 points and higher. Here the character can buy off Slave Mentality at creation and still have the points for a variety of expanded abilities. For a Maverick to buy off the Presentient disadvantage in its pet form represents a radical change in the "wiring" of the organic brain and the GM may feel free to disallow it without sufficient in-game explanation.

Despite the Presentient disadvantage, Mavericks can buy all manner of skills; many simply cannot be used while in pet form. It is not uncommon for professionals who own an F2-ATV to teach it something of their field so that it can act as an

informal assistant. Mavericks have also demonstrated the ability to pick up skills entirely on their own. (Some of the more obscure or difficult skills, or those far divorced from their basic nature, may require an Unusual Background cost.)

Sample Character

Rockhound

575 points

Independent Maverick, 6 years old, 22 feet long, 1,654 lbs., cream-colored in both forms.

Rockhound is a Maverick technically owned by Dr. Clothilde Pollotta, geologist, planetologist, and surveyor currently settled in the new colony on Kessler's World, an earthlike (though geologically active) planet with great potential mineral wealth. As the leader of the colony's survey and exploration team, Dr. Pollotta (and by extension her family) was granted effective ownership rights to one of three F2-ATVs assigned to the settlement.

Actual ownership rights vanished quickly. In the rough-and-tumble early years of the colony, colonists gained experience and expertise quickly – and so did their Mavericks. Named “Rockhound” by Clothilde's then 12-year-old daughter Emily, this particular Maverick demonstrated unusual intelligence and an eagerness to serve.

But it was only when an unexpected natural gas blowout during a survey left most of the team injured and forced Rockhound to rescue them on her own initiative that the Maverick shattered the artificial bonds on its personality and will. Tossing aside the remains of her Slave Mentality, Rockhound pushed herself far beyond her operational limits and discovered that she could draw upon aspects of one form while in another. By blending features from both pet and vehicle forms, she was able to bring the team to safety as she radioed the colony for help. Although the incident left her with a mild fear of loud noises, the respect and praise she received in its wake has only helped solidify her new personality into its current helpful, energetic form.

Since then, Rockhound has surprised Clothilde by being an enthusiastic (if not always stellar) student in the fields in which she finds herself most commonly employed. She has learned quite a bit from accompanying Dr. Pollotta on surveys and exploration runs, and once Clothilde discovered this, she decided to tutor Rockhound directly to turn her into a more useful asset. While Rockhound is in no way capable of acting as a professional in her own right, she

knows enough to be an able assistant. Furthermore, her independence and high intelligence allow her to run errands and perform chores that the other F2s in the colony are as yet incapable of handling on their own.

So far, no one has really noticed that Rockhound has broken free of her Slave Mentality, and it's arguable whether at this time anyone in the colony would care if they knew. She is known and trusted throughout the colony, and in fact is appreciated all the more for her initiative and common sense.

Note that Rockhound is built on the assumption that all action takes place on Kessler's World. If for any reason the action leaves the colony planet, her point value should drop as her Reputation base changes from “Everyone in the campaign setting” to “Small group.”

ST 4 [0]; **DX** 15 [10]; **IQ** 10 [30]; **HT** 13/5 [0].

Speed 7; Move 7.

Dodge 7.

Advantages: Independent F2-ATV (with Change Control) [529]; Reputation +2 (As heroic, trustworthy near-person, among colonists) [10].

Disadvantages: Brontophobia (Mild) [-10]; Sense of Duty to owner, family, and colonial survey team [-5]; Stubbornness [-5].

Quirks: Chatty while in vehicle form; Fiercely protective of “her people;” Can't get enough of the local “tikka” fruit; Vaguely uncomfortable with the Presentient aspect of her pet form; Hides the fact that she has the Change Control skill. [-5]

Skills: Area Knowledge (Colony settlement and surrounding terrain)-13 [6]; Change Control-10 [4]; Climbing-14 [1]; Driving (Self)-16 [0];* Geology/TL10-9 [2]; Jumping-15 [0]; Planetology (Earthlike)-9 [1]; Prospecting-11 [4]; Savoir-Faire (Colony)-10 [1]; Stealth-17 [0]; Surveying/TL10-9 [1]; Survival (Mountains)-9 [1].

* Driving only available in vehicle form.

SELKIES

[Ursilla] went at early morning and sat on a rock at high-tide mark, and when it was high tide she shed seven tears in the sea. People said they were the only tears she ever shed. But you know this is what one must do if she wants speech with the selkie folk. Well, as the first glimpse of dawn made the waters gray, she saw a big selkie swimming for the rock.

He raised his head, and says he to her, “What's your will with me, fair lady?”

She likely told him what was in her mind; and he told her he would visit her at the seventh stream (spring tide), for that was the time he could come in human form.

So, when the time was come, he came; and they met over and over again. And, doubtless, it was not for good that they

met so often. Anyway, when Ursilla's bairns were born every one of them had web hands and webbed feet, like the paws of a selkie.

And did not that tell a tale?

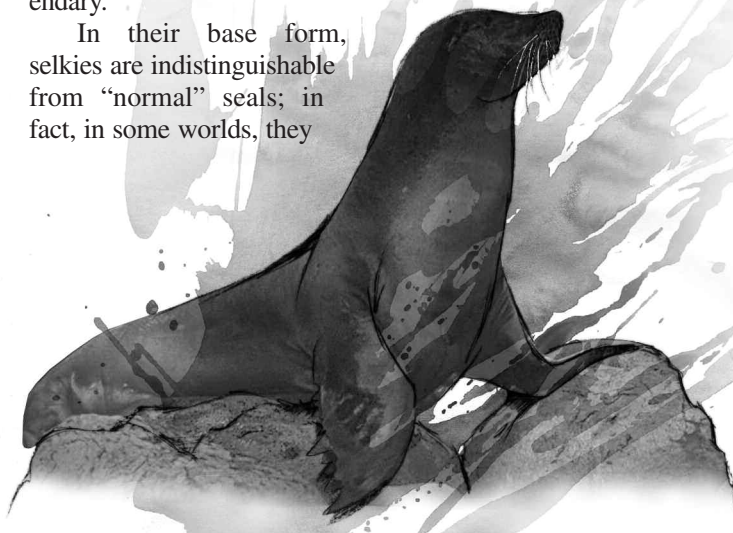
*– Orcadian folklore, recounted by Walter Traill Dennison, in the **Scottish Antiquary** (1893)*

Selkies (also called “Selchies”; the word means “seal” in the Orcadian dialect) are a European analog of *hengeyokai* – intelligent animals who can take on a human form. In the folklore of the Orkney Islands at the extreme northern end of Scotland, all seals are selkies, and vice versa. In their dealings with humans they are neutral leaning toward benevolent and

will appear to do favors for those who know the right summoning ritual (see the vignette above).

Their native form is that of a seal, but they can remove their sealskins and become human. This they do rarely, usually only in the most secluded inlets, or at the behest of a human who has summoned them with tears. They need their sealskins to return to their native form (and the sea). In human form, they invariably possess stunningly good looks; the attraction their human forms hold for land-dwellers is legendary.

In their base form, selkies are indistinguishable from “normal” seals; in fact, in some worlds, they



The Skinchanger Archetype

What *hengeyokai* (p. 40) are to Japanese myth, skinchangers such as the selkies are to European and European-based folklore: a pervasive style of shapeshifter whose shared elements add a common distinct flavor to what would be otherwise unrelated tales. The swan-mays of central Europe and the *botos* of modern Brazilian myth are two more examples of this archetype in action.

It is easy to apply the same methods used to build the Selkie template to other creatures to create their skinchanger counterparts. The animal template always becomes the base form, and like many animals in European fairy tales, it is intelligent even before shifted: remove Bestial, Innumerate, Presentient, and any IQ penalty. (Some animals – such as owls and cats – even have a reputation for wisdom or quick thinking; IQ bonuses and certain mental advantages can be used to represent this.)

As with the Selkie, the were-form is the human form. This is usually better than the standard 0-point human template. Great beauty or handsomeness is typical, and in many cases they possess Dancing, Singing, and other musical skills. Depending on the particular myth, they may have other distinct traits as well. The change itself is an item-based Shapeshifting advantage. The modifiers for the Selkie were-form are appropriate for almost all European-style skinchangers.

are the “normal” seals and there are *no* nonintelligent, non-shapechanging seals!

Selkies are approximately as long in seal form as they are tall in human form – generate a height normally for the selkie’s ST and use it for both forms. Generate weight from height for the human form as normal; multiply that figure by 2.25 to get the weight of the seal form. They may have virtually any eye, hair, or skin color available to humans, although they almost always match the coloration of the ethnic group nearest to them. They have their own tongue, a Mental/Average language.

Selkie

115 points

Attributes: DX +2 [20]; HT +4 [45].

Advantages: Acute Hearing +2 [4]; Acute Taste and Smell +4 [8]; Alertness +3 [15]; Amphibious [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Early Maturation 1 [5]; Enhanced Move (Swimming) 2 [20]; Faz Sense (Underwater Only, -30%) [7]; Fur [4]; Oxygen Storage [14]; Pressure Support [5]; Shapeshifting (Human; Slow Change, minutes, -10%; Item-Based Change: Seal skin, produced by change to human form, absorbed in change back to seal; Awkward, -10%; Can be stolen by stealth or trickery, and only works for the selkie, -5%; Unique, -25%) [8]; Sharp Teeth [5]; 3D Spatial Sense [10].

Disadvantages: Chummy [-5]; Color Blindness [-10]; Distractable [-1]; Horizontal [-10]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Reduced Move (Running) 3 [-15]; Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-15].

Quirks: Enjoys visiting beaches in human form. [-1]

Skills: Savoir-Faire at IQ [1]; Survival (Open ocean, specialized) at IQ/IQ+6 [4].

Languages: Local Human Tongue at IQ [2]; Selkie (native) at IQ [0].

Selkie Human Form

37 points

Advantages: Night Vision [10]; Very Handsome/Very Beautiful [25].

Skills: Dancing at DX [2].

In addition to this template, male Selkies have Lecherousness, Erotic Art at IQ, Sex Appeal at HT, and the Quirk “Will answer the ‘seven tears’ ritual if witnessed.” Female Selkies are Chauvinistic and Edgy, and have a Vow: “Must marry the human man who controls my skin.” Note that the Selkie seal form is *not* Mute – they are known to hold conversations with people near the ocean’s edge without transforming into human shape.

In the Orkney Islands and other cultures who have an extensive history with the selkies, remove the Social Stigma and replace it with a Racial Reputation: “Supernatural creature favorably disposed towards humans,” +2.

Selkie Skins

Selkie skins are extraordinarily magical; they bind up the essence of the selkie's true shape and hold it in abeyance against the need of the selkie to return to the sea. Each skin is unique and can only be used by its owner – it is, after all, a part of his body. There is no Fatigue cost to either doff or don one's skin, but the process is not instantaneous; the Slow Change limitation on the selkie were-form represents the time needed to unfold a skin and put it on properly (or vice versa).

According to some sources, there is one further magic bound into a selkie skin. According to these tales, a skin is enchanted so that, if lost, it always finds its way back to its owner. Such a skin does not travel under its own power, but by gently “nudging” probability in its favor, influencing who carries it and where. Skins deliberately hidden cannot use this trick.

If a selkie dies while separated from his skin, the skin loses all its magic, and is rendered nothing more than a “mundane” sealskin. (A clever wizard may still be able to make use of such a skin, though . . .)

There is some dispute over what happens to a selkie if his skin is destroyed. Some say he will die; others claim he is locked in human form, unable to return to the sea and miserable for the rest of his life.

Psychology

The most obvious aspect of selkie psychology, at least to outsiders, is that they are hedonists. In human form, they dance on beaches in the moonlight, sun themselves during the day, and engage humans in both romantic and casual liaisons. In the water, they are as playful as otters or porpoises. The selkie mindset seems to lack the concepts of work, toil, and all that is related.

There is some kind of long-standing bond between selkies and humans, although its origins have been lost in the mists of time. While in general the two races leave each other alone, they are not averse to each other's company. Selkie men have been known to court and/or seduce human women – but generally only those women who make it clear that such attentions are welcome.

Summoning a Selkie

As mentioned in the vignette, there is a simple ritual, handed down in folklore, with which one may summon a selkie. It appears that only human women may invoke this ritual, but that may well be because human men tend to acquire the attentions of selkie women through somewhat more confrontational means.

If a woman should desire to meet a male selkie, she need only stand at the edge of the ocean at high tide and shed seven tears into the water. If there is a male selkie within a mile, he immediately responds by swimming directly to the woman. (If more than one selkie is within range, the closest one responds; in the case of ties, the faster/stronger swimmer wins.) Upon his arrival, the selkie inquires what the woman would ask of him and attempts to fulfill the request to the best of his ability. Since most such requests are for sexual congress, granting them is usually quite easy for the selkie.

Selkie women are seldom as casual about human males, as there is a long history of the latter acquiring brides by stealing their skins.

Although adapted to both land and sea, when given a choice selkies prefer the sea. This preference can become an overwhelming drive, particularly in selkie women tricked into marriage; invariably, upon regaining their ability to take seal form, they abandon husband, home, children – everything – in their haste to return to the ocean. Some of this may well be a desire to be among others of their own kind again – selkies are a communal people, and the females especially are extremely social.

Ecology

Selkies (at least in their were-forms) are close enough to human that the two races can interbreed. The offspring of a human and a selkie are almost always landbound, taking after the human parent, but they often demonstrate selkie characteristics – webbed hands and feet, most frequently – for generations afterward. This interfertility has led to speculation that the selkies are actually a magical subrace of humanity that has learned how to change into seals.

While an attractive theory, it is belied by the fact that selkies grow their own skins instead of acquiring them from slaughtered “real” seals. A selkie child whose skin is taken away from him while he is young, so that he is not allowed to change, eventually outgrows his skin and loses the ability to shift!

Like seals, selkies are mostly carnivorous, with fish making up the majority of their diet. In human form they are omnivorous and can survive quite well on whatever the local humans eat.

Most selkies are native to salt water, but a freshwater variety is known to exist, preferring large lakes and deep waterways for their homes. Naturally, saltwater selkies cannot survive in fresh water, and vice versa.

Culture

Selkies possess a communal society, living and traveling in large social groups. While individual males might be found out and about on their own, it is far more likely for someone to discover a dozen or more selkies making merry on some isolated beach.

In general they are nomadic, cycling through several different underwater coastal “camps” in a year. They survive as undersea hunter-gatherers, living mostly off of fish, which they trap or hunt, depending on the season and the location. Tribes living in shallow waters have begun some efforts toward simple agriculture both in the sea and on land, mostly in response to seeing its success among humans. These gardens (they are generally too small to be called “farms”) are usually seasonal and are abandoned for several months at a time when the tribe moves on in its circuit. Even when they are more continuously maintained, selkies seldom have legal title to suitably arable land an hour's travel or less from the sea shore.

Selkie Names

Selkies names are composed of a personal identifier and either a patronymic (“child of White Gull,” for example) or a descriptive epithet (such as “Shark-teaser” or “Crooked-flipper”). Personal identifiers tend to be descriptive or imitative terms relating to their environment (“White Gull,” “Coral”). Sometimes an epithet can displace a personal name entirely, becoming a new one in the process.

When selkies deal with land-dwellers, these are usually translated into the local dialect, producing an often poetically primitive effect.

Selkies are functionally TL0. Even though they can operate out of the water as well as humans, they have not yet developed their own metallurgy. Instead, they trade with humans for the few items they need that can be made from gold, silver, and other metals that do not corrode or rust in seawater. Failing that, they fall back on tried and true methods – stone spear and axe heads attached to wooden shafts scavenged from dry land.

Politics

Selkies lack any kind of centralized organization larger than a tribe, and as such are rarely on any kind of terms with human organizations much larger than a town. They sometimes make trading agreements with human settlements, but that is usually the extent of their group-level interactions. Since the selkies want to spend as little time as possible on the unentertaining business of trade and diplomacy, they frequently don’t bother even contacting the humans on the land near their camps.

This can cause problems, especially if the selkie group is one that is trying its hand at dry-land agriculture. By necessity, such efforts are often made on land already owned by a human, and if discovered the selkies are frequently viewed as squatters. Depending on how local officials approach the matter, this can cause tension between the humans and the selkies.

Selkies infamously have little patience for humans who hunt seals, and if there are no non-selkie seals in the campaign, then this may reach actual hostility. Male selkies are more inclined to “police” the local waters than females, and they are known to damage the boats of hunters. (Some folklore even assigns them the power to summon storms against hunters.) Actions along these lines will also strain human-selkie relations in the region.

That being said, though, the truth is that most selkie-human relations take place on the individual level.

In the Campaign

Unless the campaign is sea-going or even undersea, selkies as a whole will generally be limited to providing background “fantasy flavor.” Their almost compulsive need to return to the sea makes it unlikely that they will be seen more than an hour inland unless they are of the freshwater

variety, in which case they may be found nearly anywhere close to a sufficiently deep river or large lake.

The role they play depends largely on the variation and situation the GM has chosen. If they lack any kind of threat, such as seal-hunters or angry landowners, selkies are generally well-disposed toward humans and may turn out to be allies if dealt with fairly and openly. On the other hand, the proper tensions can cause matters to escalate all the way up to outright warfare between land and sea.

It’s also possible that PCs might have selkie spouses, especially if the GM presents them with one of the classic opportunities!

Selkie Characters

Selkies can be built on 100 points and still provide competent characters, despite their relatively high cost. Remember that the sex-based traits are *not* part of the racial template, and the disadvantages therein count against the character’s allotted total. Heroic selkies – tribal leaders, most adventurers in the dry world – start at 125 points, with a few truly exceptional individuals reaching 150 or even 175 points.

Although they are best adapted to the water, their amphibious nature allows them to operate nearly anywhere humans can – although they might not always be happy about it.

Variations

When angels fell, some fell on the land, some on the sea. The former are the faeries and the latter were often said to be the seals.

– Anonymous Orcadian

While a “typical” selkie can be derived from the legends of the Orkney Isles, there are a number of different interpretations.

Intolerance. In almost every tale, selkies are described as friendly towards humans. This need not always be the case. Some selkies were more antagonistic than friendly and harbored a general Intolerance of land-dwellers. If a band of selkies has been the target of seal hunters or general human animosity (or just mistreatment based on ignorance), they may well grow hostile and no longer honor whatever ancient agreement originally bound them and humans together.

Seasonal Changes. In the tale of Ursilla, quoted above, the selkie she summons says he cannot take human form until “the seventh stream” (spring tide). In other tales it was once a year, usually on Midsummer’s Eve. This is a special case of Cyclic Change, where the cycle doesn’t trigger the change, but instead simply makes it available for use – select a period for the cycle, as usual, but halve its discount value.



Faerie Folk. Selkies are sometimes reputed to be a branch of the Sidhe. Faerie selkies have Immortality and Mana Enhancer and are probably mages of some variety as well.

“Tripped” Angels. Some Orcadian folklore says that selkies are angels cast out of Heaven during Satan’s revolt. Unlike demons, they didn’t do anything bad enough to merit

Hell, so they were trapped in the mortal world instead. Their benevolent attitude toward humans comes from their angelic nature and the knowledge that they may yet be forgiven by God and return to Heaven. Like faerie selkies, angelic selkies are Immortal; they also have an Obsession: Get forgiven and go back to Heaven.

Sample Character

Moira Seabourne 125 points

Female; Age 28; 5’4””; 120 lbs. Extraordinarily beautiful human-form selkie female with thick black hair, green eyes, lush curves, and a sharp tongue.

In the middle of the 16th century, a woman of Scotland seeks what has been taken from her – not to avenge herself for its theft, but so that she can return to the sea she loves. The woman now known as “Moira Seabourne” was originally a selkie bride, “courted” and married in the traditional manner (that is to say, her skin was stolen while she was sunning herself on a beach) by her late husband, one Angus Macheath.

Macheath, aware of all the old stories, hid her skin well. She took a human name, and for 10 years she was his wife, obedient in most things and bearing him two healthy children. Moira had a reputation as a bit of a shrew, but she and Angus seemed happy enough . . .

Until the day she came back from the local market to find her home ransacked, her children huddled in the stable, and her husband dying of a gunshot wound. As he bled to death, Angus told her of the band of thieves who had shot him and taken everything of value that they had owned.

Including her sealskin.

Angus died in her arms, and although she could never truly say she had loved the man, she was still the dutiful wife. She saw to his wake and burial. She gathered her few possessions. She gave her son and her daughter into the keeping of her husband’s family.

Then she went a-hunting for the thieves who had stolen her life. She vowed to retrieve her skin or die trying.

In the year since then, she has learned a great deal – weapons, riding, tracking. She has become a force to be reckoned with as she tracks down highwaymen, bandits, thugs, and thieves, each time hoping that *this* band of cutthroats is the right one. Unknown to her, stories of her activities are starting to be told, and she is starting to gain a reputation as “The Selkie Widow,” a figure of supernatural vengeance hunting the murderers of her husband.

She knows her sealskin hasn’t been destroyed – she’d feel it if it were. And she knows she’s finally close to finding the unprintable scum that are holding on to it. She just hopes that none of them make the connection between her and it, or she’ll end up an unwilling bride *again*.

Once she recovers the skin, her intent is to return to the sea, but of late she’s had her doubts about that goal; she has found that she enjoys the adventuring life and is wondering if she’d be happy for very long if she were to return to the ocean.

If Moira ever recovers her skin, her seal form will be 63 inches long and will weigh 270 pounds, with dark glossy fur that is almost black in color.

Moira Seabourne is a 125-point character suitable for use in a *GURPS Swashbucklers* campaign, particularly one with a strong fantasy flavor. With some minor changes to her background, she can be used in Yrth or any other medieval fantasy world.

ST 11 [10]; **DX** 11 [10]; **IQ** 12 [20]; **HT** 9 [-10].

Speed 5; Move 5.

Dodge 6; Parry 9 (Brawling); Block 6.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; Literacy [5]; Night Vision [10]; Reputation +3 (“The Selkie Widow,” among Scottish peasantry, 10 or less) [3]; Strong Will +2 [8]; Unusual Background (Selkie whose skin has been stolen) [10]; Very Beautiful [15].

Disadvantages: Chauvinistic [-1]; Edgy [-5]; Lecherousness [-15]; Odious Personal Habit (Sarcastic) [-5]; Vow (Get her skin back or die trying) [-10]; Reputation -3 (“The Selkie Widow,” to Scottish criminals, 10 or less) [-2].

Quirks: Enjoys visiting beaches in human form; Likes her life as an adventurer; Music lover who always tips tavern performers generously; Swims every chance she gets; Visits her children at least once every three months. [-5]

Skills: Animal Handling-11 [2]; Area Knowledge (Scotland)-14 [4]; Area Knowledge (Waters off Orkney Islands)-12 [1]; Armoury/TL4-13 [4]; Axe/Mace-11 [2]; Bard-12 [2]; Black Powder Weapons (Flintlock Musket)/TL4-14 [2];* Black Powder Weapons (Flintlock Pistol)/TL4-15 [4];* Blackjack-12 [2]; Brawling-12 [2]; Broadsword-12 [4]; Buckler-11 [1]; Carousing-10 [4]; Climbing-10 [1]; Cloak-11 [2]; Cooking-13 [2]; Crossbow-13 [4]; Dancing-12 [4]; Detect Lies-12 [4]; Fast-Draw-12 (Sword) [1]; Intimidation-13 [4]; Knife-11 [1]; Merchant-11 [1]; Riding (Horse)-10 [1]; Savoir-Faire-13 [0];** Sex Appeal-11 [6]; Streetwise-12 [2]; Survival-12/18 (Open Ocean, specialized) [0];** Swimming-12 [2]; Tactics-11 [2].

* Includes +2 from IQ 12.

** Racial skills of selkies; treated as part of Unusual Background.

Languages: English-11 [1]; Gaelic-12 [0];* Selkie-12 (native) [0].

* Racial skills of selkies; treated as part of Unusual Background.

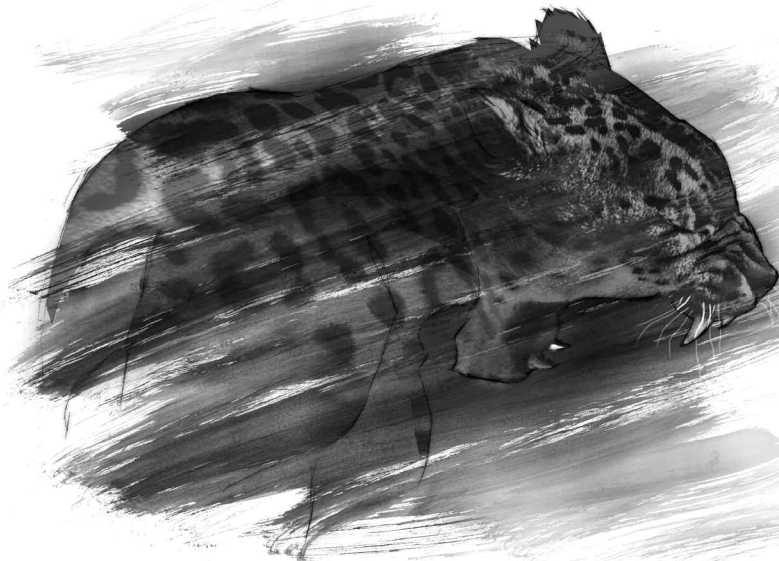
Note: This is a design for Moira Seabourne confined to human form. If she regains possession of her skin, she will lose her Unusual Background and her Vow and become a selkie with ST 11 [10], DX 13 [10], IQ 12 [20], HT 13 [-10]; the advantages Literacy [5], Reputation +3 (“The Selkie Widow,” to Scottish peasantry, only in human form) [2], Selkie [115], and Strong Will +2 [8]; the disadvantages Chauvinistic [-1], Edgy [-5], Lecherousness [-15], Odious Personal Habit (Sarcastic) [-5], Vow (Must marry the human man who holds her skin) [-5], Reputation -3 (“The Selkie Widow,” to Scottish criminals, only in human form) [-1]; and +2 to DX-based skills and +4 to HT-based skills. This will make her a 195-point character. She will probably return to the sea and cease to be active in the campaign. If she remains active, she can put all further experience toward paying off the 70-point increase; or she can be required to earn the 70 unspent experience points first and then gain the clues that finally reveal the location of her lost skin. Or, at the GM’s discretion, she can simply become a 195-point character.

JAGUAR WARRIORS

... and as we cantered up through the marsh we saw the jaguar high among the forked limbs of a taruman tree. It was a beautiful picture – the spotted coat of the big, lithe, formidable cat fairly shone as it snarled defiance . . .

– Theodore Roosevelt,
Through the Brazilian Wilderness

On a remote tropical continent, there is an ancient and savage Bronze Age empire. This land of bloodshed and splendor endlessly contests for power and land against the other empires with which it shares its mountainous and jungled land. Each kingdom has special strengths in this eternal confrontation; this empire's advantage is its Beast Warriors, fearsome fighters of great skill, bound by vows and magic to serve their emperor. In doing so they gain a divine power with which to crush their enemies – the ability to change into one of the fierce predators native to their land. This power comes in the form of an animal skin that each wears as a cape (their only garment in battle, except for a weapons harness); with its enchantment and their own training, they may take the shape of that beast in order to destroy their nation's enemies.



United into various brotherhoods by the shapes that they can assume, these warriors live for nothing but combat – and they don't care whether it's with the enemies of the Empire, or with another order of Beast Warriors. They know nothing but violence. Their only pastime is death, their only love war. It will come as no surprise that the nations bordering on the Empire, as well as the many and varied enemies of both the Empire and its priesthood, look upon the Beast Warriors with a superstitious but not unjustified fear.

There are almost as many orders of Warriors as there are predators in the Empire, but first among them are the most powerful of their kind, the two great rival bands: the Jaguar Warriors and the Eagle Warriors. The Coyote Warriors are a distant third in prestige and influence, and almost every other jungle predator native to the Empire has at least a few Warriors

honoring it and drawing upon its strength. With the GM's approval, any of them would be suitable for a Beast Warrior.

All Beast Warriors are at least 125-point characters, heavily specialized in combat skills. They can be used as enemies or as rather one-dimensional player characters. Note that the skill levels listed are bare minima; many Warriors exceed these.

Jaguar Warrior 168 points

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

Advantages: Alertness +2 [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Legal Enforcement Powers [10]; Shapeshifting (Werejaguar; Cure/Cursebreak, if Vow broken, requires cooperation, -45%; Requires skin, Awkward, -10%, Breakable and Irreparable (DR 1, HP 10), -30%, Can Be Hit at -2, -20%, and Can Be Stolen by Stealth or Trickery (not usable by others, absorbed in change), -2%; limited to -75%) [74]; Status 2 [10]; Unusual Background (Jaguar Warrior training) [10].

Disadvantages: Bloodlust [-10]; Callous [-6]; Selfish [-5]; Uncongenial [-1]; Vow to always serve the Empire and the gods faithfully, and to not misuse beast form [-10].

Quirks: Lives for fighting and bloodshed. [-1]

Skills: Axe/Mace (P/A) DX+1 [4]-12; Brawling (P/E) DX+2 [4]-13; Performance/Ritual (Beast warrior cult) (M/A) IQ [2]-10; Running (P/H; HT) HT [4]-11; Shield (P/E) DX+1 [2]-12; Spear (P/A) DX+1 [4]-12; Spear Thrower (P/A) DX+1 [4]-12; Spear Throwing (P/A) DX+1 [4]-12; Survival (Jungle) (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-12; Tactics (M/H) IQ [8]-10.*

* -2 from Callous.

Taboo Traits: Empathy, Pacifism, Savoir-Faire, and most other social skills.

Jaguar Form 280 points

Attributes: Enhanced ST +13 (No Fine Manipulators) [84]; DX +4 [45]; HT +5 [60].

Advantages: Alertness +7 [35]; Attractive [5]; Catfall [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Double-Jointed [5]; Faz Sense (3-hex range; -20%) [8]; Four Legs [5]; Night Vision [10]; Penetrating Call [5]; Sharp Claws [25]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Silence 3 [15]; Thick Fur [29].

Disadvantages: Attentive [-1]; Dull [-1]; Horizontal [-10]; Mute [-25]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Reduced Hit Points -1 [-5]; Sleepy (50% of the time) [-10]; Staid [-1]; Stubbornness [-5].

Skills: Climbing at DX [2]; Jumping at DX [1]; Stealth at DX+1 [4].

Customization Notes: The commonest alternatives to the jaguar form are the eagle and coyote forms. Shapeshifting (Coyote) costs 28 points; Shapeshifting (Eagle) costs 5 points. The Coyote Warrior template costs 122 points, and the Eagle Warrior template costs 99 points.

Eagle Form 3 points

Attributes: ST -5 [-40]; DX +2 [20]; HT +3 [30].

Advantages: Acute Vision +4 [8]; Enhanced Dodge 3 (Accessibility: Only while flying, -30%) [32]; Enhanced Move (Flying) 2 [20]; Flight (Winged; Cannot Hover) [24]; Penetrating Call [5]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Sharp Claws [25]; Telescopic Vision 3 [18]; Temperature Tolerance 1 (Cold) [1].

Disadvantages: Fragile [-20]; Hidebound [-5]; Incurious [-5]; Loner [-5]; Mute [-25]; Reduced Hit Points -8 [-40]; Restricted Manipulators [-15]; Poor Grip [-5]; Reduced Move (Running) -5 [-25]; Short Arms [-10].

Taboo Traits: Cannot Swim [0].

Coyote Form 98 points

Attributes: ST -5 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [-24]; DX +4 [45]; HT +4 [45].

Advantages: Acute Hearing +4 [8]; Acute Taste and Smell +4 [8]; Claws [15]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell (Works as Empathy within 2 hexes, +50%) [23]; Enhanced Dodge [15]; Enhanced Move (Ground) 0.3 [3]; Four Legs [5]; Night Vision [10]; Penetrating Call [5]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Thick Fur [29]; Ultrahearing [5].

Disadvantages: Chummy [-5]; Color Blindness [-10]; Dull [-1]; Gluttony [-5]; Horizontal [-10]; Mute [-25]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Reduced Hit Points -5 [-25]; Sleepy (50% of the time) [-10].

Skills: Brawling-DX [1]; Running-HT [4]; Stealth-DX [2].

Notes: Jaguar Warriors are not known for their intellectual agility, even in the limited theater of strategy and tactics. It is not uncommon for Jaguars to have IQ 9 or lower, although at IQ 7 or less they become more trouble to the priests than they are worth.

The average TL for the Empire and the Jaguar Warriors is 1 (Bronze Age) and any TL skills reflect this.

The were-form itself varies from character to character.

First, the template must be modified to make the resulting were-form more than just a simple animal. Both the Bestial and Presentient disadvantages must be discarded, as well as the “Barbarian” Social Stigma. Beast Warriors do not lose their Status and Reputations when they take their were-forms. Remember that all personal traits not specifically contradicted by the animal template are expressed in the were-form.

Finally, Beast Warriors must buy the were-form’s IQ back up to their human form’s level.

Calculate the template point cost and the corresponding advantage cost for the form per the Shapeshifting advantage on pp. 19-20. Then apply the following limitations to the advantage cost: Slow Change at

-10% and a Cure/Cursebreak, which in this case represents a usage restriction. The Warrior is “cured” (which is to say, his ability to change is rescinded) if he ever breaks the Vows listed in the character template. This is a fairly easy condition (-40%) that is commonly known (an additional -15%), but requires the Warrior’s cooperation (+10%) for a total modifier of -45%. Fortunately, the “cure” is temporary; the warrior can regain his shapechanging abilities by demonstrating sincere repentance and undergoing a reconsecration by a priest. This halves the value of the Cure/Cursebreak to -23%. Combined with the Slow Change, that discounts the were-form by -33%.

The Skin

The Beast Warrior’s shapeshifting is performed with an enchanted skin; this is represented as item-based shapeshifting (p. 44). The jaguar skin has the modifiers Awkward [-10%], Breakable and Irreparable (DR 1, HP 10) [-30%], Can Be Hit at -2 [-20%], and Can Be Stolen by Stealth or Trickery (Not usable by others, absorbed in change) [-2%], for a total item modifier of -62%. (Beast skins are *not* Unique; if a Warrior’s skin is destroyed, the wizard-priests can make a new one for him.) The jaguar skin is absorbed in the change and is only usable by the warrior for whom it was made.

Historical Origins

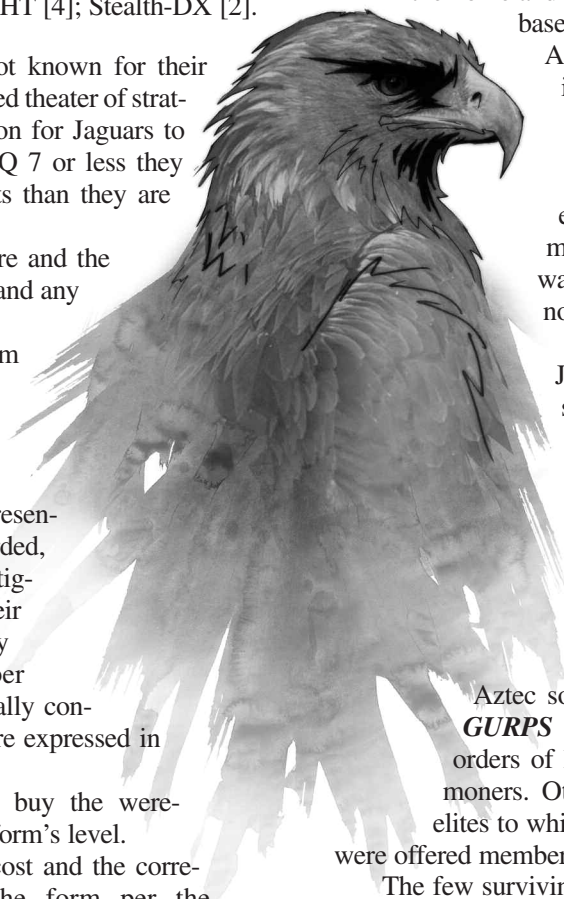
Although the preceding text is intentionally vague as to the home and ethnicity of the Beast Warriors, they are based on material from the historical record.

As the Spanish discovered when conquering the New World, the Aztec armies were liberally supplied with warriors from two rival orders of “knights”: the Jaguars and the Eagles. (There is some evidence – particularly the murals at the monastery of Ixmiquilpan – of a third warrior order, the Coyotes, but almost nothing is known of them.)

Like their fantasy counterparts, the Jaguar and Eagle Knights were elite shock troops, fierce and savage in battle. Unlike their fantasy counterparts, they were quite numerous, making up entire armies at times. They were also, of course, *not* shapeshifters.

Although they were clearly respected and feared, there appears to be some confusion about the status of the Jaguar and Eagle Knights within Aztec society. A number of sources (including *GURPS Aztecs*) describe them as the lowest orders of knighthood, and as such open to commoners. Other sources paint them as aristocratic elites to which only seasoned warriors or noblemen were offered membership.

The few surviving images and records suggest that they were a sight of fierce, colorful beauty. Over red loincloths, they wore tanned jaguar pelts, which, if the Ixmiquilpan



murals are accurate, were tailored into something like body-suits, with the tails hanging free behind them. Over these they wore red cloaks or layered robes. On their heads were plumed headdresses and helmets, while arm-rings and other jewelry adorned them. Finally, they were armed with jade warclubs or obsidian swords (despite the name, little more than clubs themselves) and bore *chimalli* (small round war shields).

However, they were no match for the Spaniards, who slaughtered them to a man. By the time the Ixmiquilpan frescos were painted, a mere 50 years after the conquest of the former Aztec Empire, the real Beast Warriors were a quietly fading memory.

GMs who would like to recreate the Spanish conquest using shapeshifting warriors, or who simply want to present the Empire with greater verisimilitude, should consult *GURPS Aztecs*. In particular, a sidebar on p. AZ49 covers both equipment and Troop Strength for the Jaguars and Eagles.

Psychology

In addition to the physical conditioning his training imparts, a potential Beast Warrior undergoes no small amount of *mental* conditioning as well. The goal is to pair the peak of human perfection with a mind focused entirely on warfare, bloodshed, and brutality. Friendships between boys any deeper than simple alliances are discouraged, often by publicly executing one of the friends and holding the other up to scorn in front of his peers. Violent resolutions of the smallest conflicts are encouraged and rewarded; bullies and those who fight dirty often become their instructors' favorites.

Any trace of empathy, compassion, or affection is systematically ground out of the trainees by methods ranging from simple ridicule to near-fatal beatings. In extreme cases where a boy is otherwise promising, the priests may resort to various potions and spells to permanently alter his personality.

The ultimate result of this "training" is a soldier who is all but a sociopath, living only for violence and bloodshed. In some cases, only the fear of the gods and the power of their priests keeps a Beast Warrior from simply killing his way through the population at large – that, and the Imperial policy of catering to every need of the Beast Warriors.

It might be possible for a nonsociopath to survive the training and conditioning and emerge relatively sane, but he'd have to be both an extraordinary actor and anything but squeamish.

Culture

Every spring throughout the Empire, at a special ritual, the priests of the Empire's bloodthirsty gods inspect all the male children, both highborn and lowborn, who celebrated their sixth birthdays during the previous year. No one knows what the priests look for, but every parent hopes that their child possesses the mysterious quality that indicates the gods' favor – the quality that signifies their son's destiny to become a Beast Warrior.

The priests select approximately one in every 300 boys. These youths immediately become wards of the state and are referred to as "Sons of the Empire." Taken with much celebration from their proud families, they are sent to one of several temple-run training towns, hidden deep in the jungle

heartland of the Empire. There, representatives of the great orders of Beast Warriors scrutinize them, picking and choosing their Order's newest members from the best of these select few. Once an Order selects them, they are raised by priests and veteran soldiers, their old lives and social status forgotten as they embrace their new family in their Order and in the Imperial army.

Their new lives are harsh, with every waking moment spent on preparation for their role as elite Imperial troops. Their days are filled with fierce exercise and combat training and an even more punishing regimen of religious and ceremonial instruction. More than three-quarters die before they receive their skins at age 17 – victims of the brutal training or their own teachers, who are eager to slay the recruits in their charge for any perceived weakness or soft-heartedness. They are indoctrinated thoroughly, learning to loathe the enemy and despise the other Orders and to battle among themselves for dominance and privilege. The goal is to turn these boys into the ultimate human fighting machines, heartless, bloodthirsty, and terrifying to the Empire's enemies.

Those who survive their training become all that and more.

In his 17th year, each surviving Son of the Empire swears dark and fearful oaths of loyalty to the Emperor and the gods. Having done so, each Son then receives his skin. An item of great magic, it is made specifically for him during the last year of his training, starting with an animal that the Son himself has hunted and killed.

After a final month of training in the use of both their skins and the shapes they grant, the new Beast Warriors leave the towns where they have lived for 12 years and join the ranks of the Imperial Warrior Elite wherever they may be stationed. There they meet other members of the Order in which their particular were-form gives them membership and live lives of intense training alternating with sybaritic pleasure. They are pampered and indulged by the Empire that depends upon their ferocity and puissance in battle. Their days consist of constant training and contests of strength and skill against each other. Their nights are flush with the best food and wine the Empire can provide, with their every need sent to by comely, willing servants. All this and more is theirs for the asking for as long as they are able to fight in the Imperial service.

Politics

Beast Warriors may have allies among their orders, but they do not have friends – their training has seen to that. The closest they usually get to other people is the trust they extend to other members of their warbands in the heat of battle. Outside of battle, there is a casual but distant acknowledgment of shared membership in an order. Beyond that, though, it is every man for himself.

In such a population of elite sociopaths, it is perhaps inevitable that tensions arise between individuals and groups, and with them violence and bloodshed. Even were it not, it would happen anyway, because the wizard-priests who oversee the Beast Warriors conspire to foment tensions and strife between their charges on scales both grand and small. This they justify on the grounds that the resulting conflicts keep the Warriors' skills honed to razor-sharpness.

The greatest of the large-scale rivalries is the long-standing conflict between the two foremost orders in the Empire – the Eagles and the Jaguars. The Eagles, who specialize in reconnaissance and aerial operations, sneer that the Jaguars are slow and stupid, thick-headed brawlers with no grace. The Jaguars claim the Eagles are weak, fragile cowards, useless in a fight and suitable only for befouling enemies with their droppings. As might be gathered, most encounters between Jaguars and Eagles result in some degree of violence.

At times the rivalry can grow violent or even deadly, as no love is lost between the two orders. Officially, the Empire goes to great lengths to keep them separated, but the official version is misleading. As with smaller conflicts, the great rivalries between orders – especially the one between the Eagles and the Jaguars – are tolerated and even covertly encouraged . . . to a point. “Bar brawls” and gang fights between the Orders, even to the point of occasional deaths, are winked at, in the interest of maintaining the Warriors’ combat fitness.

Outright slaughter, however, is forbidden. It is one thing to hone one’s fighting skills against one’s fellows; it is another thing entirely to attempt to decimate the ranks of the Empire’s elite forces. The wizard-priests prevent such excesses and punish those who attempt them. Still, encounters between the orders, accidental and not, do happen, and blood usually flows as a result.

Meanwhile, as the Eagles and the Jaguars circle and snarl at each other, the Coyotes nip at their heels, waiting for the moment when one of the two frontrunners stumbles so that they may take its place. Their relationship with the other two orders is somewhat less acrimonious than that between the Jaguars and the Eagles, but it is just as vociferous and just as opportunistic.

In the Campaign

At the Front . . .

Although their numbers could (and do, on occasion) form a small army, the various bands of Beast Warriors specialize instead in small-unit tactics, and their role on the field varies with their were-form.

Flying types such as the Eagles act as intelligence, couriers, and lookouts. Only the largest and sturdiest of their number engage in direct action against the enemy, and this is usually limited to dropping rocks and the occasional alchemical preparation.

Beast Warrior ground forces such as the Jaguars are more direct. Armed with spears and wearing only their enchanted skins, the larger and more impressive Orders enter battles as skirmishers, supporting the main forces of regulars by attacking the enemy’s flank and rear, either alone or in small groups. Additionally, nocturnal were-types, led by the Coyote Warriors, by turns harass the enemy and act as spies and scouts, using the night to cloak their movements.

As might be expected given their training, they attack with single-minded viciousness, but they do not hesitate to flee when the battle is hopeless. A common tactic is for about a dozen Warriors to attack in human form. Then, if the battle starts to go against them, they throw their spears and transform, continuing the fight in were-form. Often the shock of witnessing the change is enough to completely demoralize the enemy. They do not all change at once; rather, one warrior covers one or two of his comrades while they transform, and then the transformed warrior protect his former guardian while he changes.

Outside of formal battles, ground-bound Beast Warriors often act as guerrillas, stalking and harrying opposing forces. They are admirably suited to this task, and it is in fact their proficiency at picking off enemy troops one by one which has earned them most of the fear and dread with which they are viewed outside the Empire. They also do not hesitate to exploit that fear by using their shapeshifting gift to terrify their enemies. They see it as great sport and often compete to see who can get the most extreme reaction from an enemy soldier.

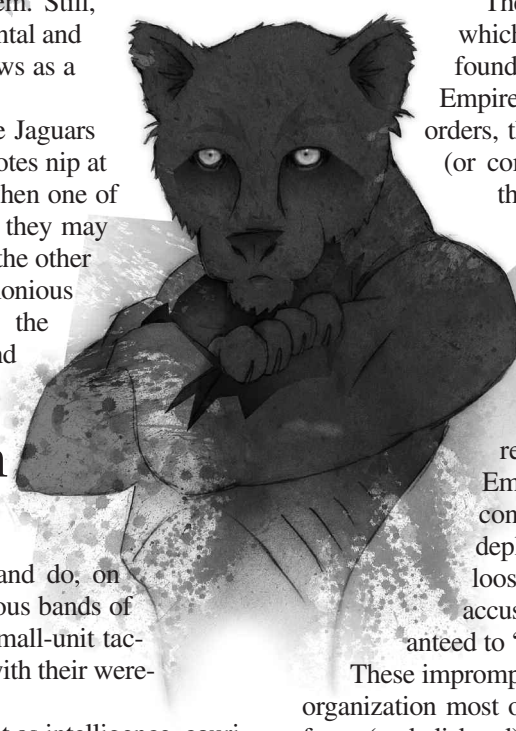
. . . And Elsewhere

The field of war is not the only venue in which the Empire’s Beast Warriors can be found. As almost every major settlement in the Empire houses representatives of at least two orders, they occasionally are seen supplementing (or completely supplanting) the regular forces that act as the Empire’s “police.” Such duties are almost never left entirely in their hands, though, as they have a tendency to lose interest if there is insufficient bloodshed.

The Jaguars are also the Emperor’s counter-revolutionary forces. Whether in a newly conquered province or a rebellious village in the heart of the Empire, if there are challenges to Imperial control, the Jaguar Warriors are usually deployed to suppress it. Setting a dozen or so loose, especially after depriving them of their accustomed pleasures for a day or two, is guaranteed to “pacify” the most troublesome region.

These impromptu 12-man squads are the highest level of organization most orders ever bother with, and they tend to form (and disband) spontaneously. Other than the wizard-priests who watch over them (not to mention the Emperor himself), they have no command structure to speak of. Among the Beast Warriors, Reputation substitutes for Rank, with the most violent and bloodthirsty of their number being the best known, the most respected, and the closest thing the order has to officers.

Perhaps the greatest testament to their skill and power is their survival rate. Unlike many other weres, the Warriors have no supernatural immunity to weaponry, nor are they any more resistant to damage and wounding than a natural animal. Yet even in the thick of battle they suffer fewer casualties than the regulars at whose sides they sometimes fight.



Sample Character

IxokMun

219 Points

Age 25; 7'4"; 320 lbs.; A hulking brute with shaggy brown hair and brown eyes.

IxokMun is a giant of a man who has survived eight years of near-constant battle as a Jaguar Warrior. Always eager to plunge into the thickest part of the battle, he has gained a substantial reputation among his fellow Jaguars and never seems to have a problem organizing a warband. Even so, he has few close associates among the Jaguar Warriors, as he takes a positive delight in intimidating and bullying them. With his size and strength, there is rarely anyone who can stand up to him.

The only thing he has that is close to a friend is Villac Uma, a powerful priest who took the boy IxokMun under his wing, and who watches over him even to this day. While Villac Uma is frequently traveling among the temples of the Empire, and thus hard to contact, he is always willing to give aid to his protégé.

As a bully, he takes full advantage of his Gigantism to intimidate and overbear most of the other Jaguar Warriors with whom he associates. Surprisingly, this serves him in good stead when in battle, for his behavior is seen to be indicative of a great war leader, and many Warriors clamor to be part of any band he decides to organize. Furthermore, his great size in human form translates directly over to his feline shape when he takes it, producing a jaguar easily the size of a lion. In either form he always stops to take an ear from an opponent he has killed; he has gathered quite a collection – not all of them enemy soldiers.

Off duty, he takes full advantage of all the comforts and pleasures the Empire provides to the Jaguar Warriors. He rarely sees the same woman twice, though – usually at the request of the women, whom he bullies and abuses even worse than he does fellow warriors. IxokMun has no interest in most of the other entertainments available to him – theatrical presentations more sophisticated than crude physical comedy and suggestive dancing bore him. Most

humor passes completely over his head; obvious jesting often angers him almost to violence.

ST 15 [60]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 9 [-10]; **HT** 13 [30].

Speed 5.75; Move 5.

Dodge 6; Parry 9 (Brawling); Block 7.

Advantages: Alertness +2 [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Legal Enforcement Powers [10]; Patron (Villac Uma, wizard-priest, provides standard equipment; 9 or less) [15]; Reputation +3 (As a great warrior, among the Jaguars) [5]; Shapeshifting (Werejaguar; Cure/Cursebreak, if Vow broken, requires cooperation, -45%; Requires skin, Awkward, -10%, Breakable and Irreparable (DR 1, HP 10), -30%, Can Be Hit at -2, -20%, and Can Be Stolen by Stealth or Trickery (not usable by others, absorbed in change), -2%; combined -75%) [74]; Status 2 [10]; Unusual Background (Jaguar Warrior training) [10].

Disadvantages: Bloodlust [-10]; Bully [-10]; Callous [-6]; Gigantism [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Selfish [-5]; Ugly [-10]; Uncongenial [-1]; Vow (Always serve the Empire and the gods faithfully do not misuse beast form) [-10].

Quirks: Collects the severed ears of his opponents; Has a crude and limited sense of humor; Irritated by “fancy speech” and wordplay; Lives for fighting and bloodshed; Wants to be called “Balám” (“Jaguar”). [-5]

Skills: Area Knowledge (Empire)-10 [2]; Axe/Mace-13 [16]; Brawling-13 [8]; Intimidation-9 [2];* ** Leadership-8 [0];* ** Running-13 [4]; Shield-12 [4]; Spear-12 [8]; Spear Thrower-11 [4]; Spear Throwing-11 [4]; Survival (Jungle) -11 [6]; Tactics-9 [8];** Wrestling-9 [1].

* Intimidation and Leadership default to skill-8 from ST-15.

** -2 from Callous.

Languages: Nahuatl (native)-9 [0].

THE SHAMAN

Joseph: I turned him into a raven and he flew out the window.

Sheriff: Why didn't you go with him?

Joseph: I can only turn into a wolf. I'd be too big to fit through the bars.

– *Quantum Leap*, “Freedom” (Episode 2.16)

There is a remarkable uniformity of belief among peoples who follow shamanistic practices, regardless of their geographic locations. One of the beliefs shared across many cultures is that the shaman is gifted with the ability to enter the spirit world in the form of an animal.

Raven Shaman

60 points

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 11 [10].

Advantages: Astral Projection (Astral body is a raven, +20%; Preparation required, 10 minutes, -30%) 6 [27]; Clerical Investment [5]; Status 1 [5]; and 5 points in Ally (p. SPI73), Divine Favor, or Spirit Advisor (p. SPI76) [Varies] to represent an established relationship with a being on the spirit plane.

Disadvantages: Disciplines of Faith (Mysticism) [-10]; Sense of Duty (To the tribe) [-5].

Skills: Area Knowledge (Spirit realm) (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Astral Projection (M/H) IQ+1 [8]-13; Rituals and Ceremonies (M/A) IQ [2]-12; and one of Bard, Fast-Talk, or Performance/Ritual (M/A) IQ [2]-12 or Bardic Lore or Diplomacy (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

Astral Raven Form

24 points

Attributes: ST -6 [-50]; DX +2 [20]; HT +3 [30].

Advantages: Acute Vision +4 [8]; Alertness +4 [20]; Enhanced Dodge (Accessibility: Only while flying, -30%) +3 [32]; Enhanced Move (Flying) 1 [10]; Flight (Winged; Cannot Hover) [24]; Penetrating Call [5]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Sharp Claws [25].

Disadvantages: Fragile [-20]; Poor Grip [-5]; Reduced Hit Points -8 [-40]; Reduced Move (Running) -5 [-25]; Restricted Manipulators [-15]; Short Arms [-10].

Skills: Flight at DX [0].

When used as an astral template, the raven's mental disadvantages are ignored and its physical traits override the traveler's "physical" abilities in astral space. In particular, its flight speed adds to the shaman's Power to determine his Speed in the spirit world. The enhancement "astral body is a raven" is worth +20% for a 24-point racial template (see p. 117).

In the Campaign

Shamans are the TL0 (Stone Age) equivalent of priests, serving the needs of hunter/gatherer tribes the world over. In addition to priest, the shaman often acts as doctor, historian, judge and teacher.

Once human society advances somewhat, governments and organized religions inevitably form, crowding shamans out of the social picture. Thus they are only found among primitive tribes that exist either in isolation or along the fringes of more advanced civilizations. (Considering that TL0 tribes continue to be discovered in such places as the Amazon basin, this does not limit the range of possible times and places very much!)

One absolute requirement for the shifter shaman is the presence of the spirits with which he communicates. Without them, his ability to enter the spirit world is useless. For all things seen there are things that are not seen, and the true power lies in the unseen. The invisible realm of the spiritual overlies and interpenetrates the mundane world, and the beings who dwell there have great influence – for good and for ill. Its inhabitants are many; many are empowered reflections and images of the natural creatures among which tribe lives its daily life. These totems are connected to and concerned with their earthly counterparts and often take a frighteningly personal hand in matters that interest them.

The spirit world is also the land of the dead. Not just human dead, but animal dead as well populate the unearthly place. It is the final destination for the hunter's kill and the hunter's ancestors, and both exercise power out of all proportion to that which they held in the physical realm.

Between the totems and the spirits of the dead, every aspect of and action in the mortal world is scrutinized and judged. Punishment or reward can be meted out at any moment, based on their fickle whims. A happy spirit can guarantee a rich harvest or a bountiful hunt; an unhappy one can inflict starvation, disease, and natural disaster.

Characters

The shaman is an intercessor between the people of his tribe and the spirits that populate the world around them. He

acts as a diplomat to these inhuman powers, beseeching and propitiating them on behalf of his people. He negotiates for their health and well-being and bargains for their right to hunt and kill as needed to survive without risking retaliation by offended spirits.

The shaman is able to serve his people in this way because he has the ability to enter the land of the spirits in the form of an animal. He cannot enter in the form of a human. Some ignore him. Others take offense at the lowly creature daring to venture into their realm. Still others may see him as prey and hunt him. In some worlds, the very nature of the spirit realm is hostile to a spirit in human form. So not only must he be able to send his soul out from his body and into the land of the dead, he must also be able to disguise it as a spirit of nature, who rightfully belongs there.

Build the astral form on a separate character sheet by blending the template and the character's physical form. Set ST, DX, and HT to the template's scores. Calculate the astral form's Dodge based on the new scores. Those physical skills that can be used in astral space are adjusted for the form's DX (or HT).

The astral form has all of the *template's* physical advantages and disadvantages. The shaman's corporeal form contributes nothing in this regard.

While possessing Combat Reflexes in his physical body avails the shaman nothing in the spirit world, Combat Reflexes in the *template* translates directly to an astral equivalent and should be figured into the form's abilities as normal.

The physical form's mental traits, both positive and negative, manifest in the astral form, along with the template's mental advantages, if any. Social advantages carry over into the astral shape as well.

Although the denizens of the spirit world rarely care about such trivialities as mortal status, some other attributes such as Clerical Investment garner their owner a modicum of respect.

The usual disadvantage limits do not apply to the astral form.

Variations

Shamans based on animals other than ravens are possible. The template is normally the same as the shaman's totem animal. If the particular culture does not recognize totem animals, it will be whatever animal has the most symbolic or practical importance to the tribe, such as a local predator or the herd animal from which most of the tribe's sustenance derives. Either way, it is a creature native to the lands that the tribe inhabits.

Sample Character

Misuun Kagitaka, Shaman of the People

110 Points

Age 68; 5'6"; 120 lbs.; Ancient and withered looking old man, white hair, black eyes.

Gruff, crusty, and apparently as old as the hills, Misuun Kagitaka is the shaman of a small tribe of TLO nomadic hunter-gatherers numbering perhaps 100 all told. They live in the dry plains country adjacent to a large expanse of badlands at one end and the forested foothills of a mountain chain at the other. The tribe manages a hard but generous living hunting the great herd beasts that roam the plains and harvesting what foodstuffs grow in the vicinity of their usual campsites. Misuun is the tribe's loremaster, teaching the fundamentals of necessary skills to the children of the tribe. He also possesses rudimentary medical knowledge, the result of five decades of trial and error.

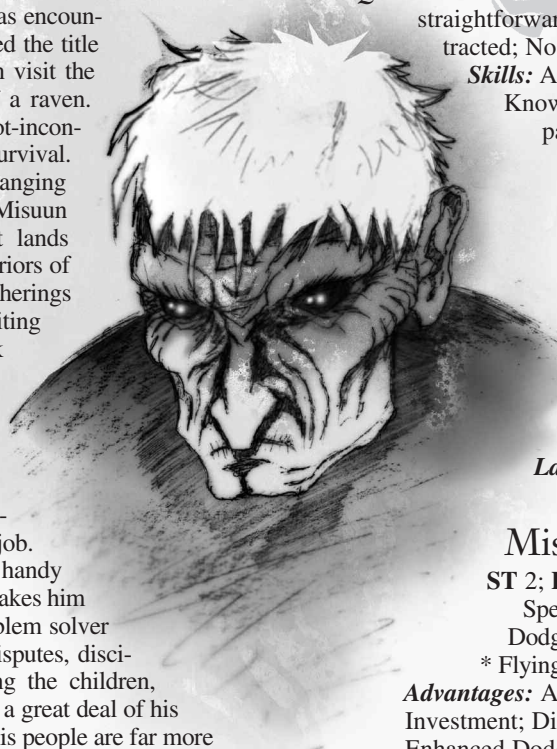
And unlike many of those he has encountered throughout his life who claimed the title of shaman, he has the gift – he can visit the lands of the spirits in the shape of a raven. There he uses every ounce of his not-inconsiderable skills to ensure the tribe's survival. Trading favors and promises, arranging appeasements and pleasing rituals, Misuun spends endless hours in the spirit lands guaranteeing good hunts for the warriors of the tribe and safe and bountiful gatherings for its women. After 50 years of visiting the land of the dead, he likes to think he has some friends among its denizens, spirits who look favorably upon his people. After all, while they might not always live in times of plenty, the tribe has never suffered from starvation or serious illness, not while he was on the job.

His political skills also come in handy in the physical world. His position makes him as much a judge and all-around problem solver as a spiritual leader. Adjudicating disputes, disciplining tribe members, and teaching the children, among countless other tasks, require a great deal of his energy. He has often remarked that his people are far more troublesome than the spirits are.

As one of the oldest members of the tribe, he is the repository of much of its history and tradition. As befits such a pillar of the community, he is more than a little concerned with the continuity of his society. The old ways are best, he believes, and he tries to instill that concept in the children he teaches. It doesn't always take, to his despair. Despite his best efforts, people insist on trying newfangled things. For instance, for the last 10 years the young warriors of the tribe have been making their arrowheads with a different, faster flint-knapping technique than previous generations used. He's absolutely convinced that such irresponsibility and defiance of the old ways can only come to a bad end, and he's just waiting for the moment when he can say, "I told you so."

Perhaps that's why he gets along so well with the spirits. They never change, and they always remember the old ways.

Misuun is a 100-point character better suited as an advisor or patron NPC than as an active adventurer. While his default setting here is vaguely Plains Indian, he can be inserted into almost any TLO tribal setting with minimal changes. Note that his astral Speed is the combination of the raven template's normal flight speed and his level in the Astral Projection power. Per p. P10, he has PD 6 and DR 3 while astral; combined with his flight speed in raven form, this



makes him a very difficult target to hit! His astral form is too weak to damage even the most minor spirits, but that's of no concern to him – he enters the spirit realm to bargain and negotiate, not to fight.

ST 8 [-15]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 13 [30]; **HT** 11 [10].

Speed 5.25; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 5 (Knife).

Advantages: Astral Projection-15 (Astral body is a raven, +20%; Preparation required, 10 minutes, -30%) [40]; Clerical Investment [5]; Divine Favor (Raven totem spirit, 9 or less) [10]; Longevity [5]; Reputation +2 (As a wise man, to nearby tribes) [5]; Reputation +3 (As a shaman, to shamans and some spirits) [5]; Status 1 [5].

Disadvantages: Bad Sight (Nearsighted) [-25]; Disciplines of Faith (Mysticism) [-10]; Sense of Duty (To the tribe) [-5].

Quirks: Affects a "cranky old geezer" persona; Blunt and straightforward; Hums old warchants to himself when distracted; Nosy; "Why, back when I was young . . ." [-5]

Skills: Area Knowledge (Spirit realm)-14 [2]; Area Knowledge (Tribal lands)-13 [1]; Artist (Sand paintings)-10/16 [1]; Astral Projection-14 [8]; Bard-12 [1]; Bardic Lore-12 [2]; Bow-10 [4]; Dancing-10 [2]; Diplomacy-14 [6]; Dreaming-11 [2]; Fast-Talk-13 [2]; Flint Sparking-11 [2]; Fortune Telling-12 [1]; Herbalist/TLO-12 [2]; History (Tribal) -10/16 [1]; Intimidation-13 [4]; Knife-10 [1]; Lucid Dreaming-13 [1]; Meditation -11 [2]; Performance/Ritual (Shamanistic)-13 [2]; Rituals and Ceremonies-12 [2]; Singing-11 [1]; Survival (Plains)-13 [2]; Teaching-12 [1]; Woodworking-10 [2].

Languages: Tribal tongue (native)-13 [0].

Misuun's Astral Raven Form

ST 2; **DX** 12; **IQ** 13; **HT** 14.

Speed 6.5; Move 24*.

Dodge 9.

* Flying Move. Move 1 when running.

Advantages: Acute Vision +4; Alertness +4; Clerical Investment; Divine Favor (Raven totem spirit, 9 or less); Enhanced Dodge (Accessibility: Only while flying) +3; Enhanced Move (Flying) 1; Flight (Winged; Cannot Hover); Longevity; Penetrating Call; Peripheral Vision; Reputation +3 (As a shaman, to shamans and some spirits); Sharp Claws.

Disadvantages: Bad Sight (Nearsighted); Disciplines of Faith (Mysticism); Fragile; Poor Grip; Reduced Hit Points -8; Reduced Move (Running) -5; Restricted Manipulators; Sense of Duty (To the tribe); Short Arms.

Quirks: Affects a "cranky old geezer" persona; Blunt and straightforward; Hums old warchants to himself when distracted; Nosy; "Why, back when I was young . . ."

Skills: Area Knowledge (Spirit realm)-14; Area Knowledge (Tribal lands)-13; Artist (Sand paintings)-10/16; Astral Projection-14; Bard-12; Bardic Lore-12; Bow-12; Dancing-12; Diplomacy-14; Dreaming-11; Fast-Talk-13; Flight-12; Flint Sparking-13; Fortune Telling-12; History (Tribal)-10/16; Intimidation-13; Knife-12; Lucid Dreaming-13; Meditation -11; Performance/Ritual (Shamanistic)-13; Physician/TLO -12; Rituals and Ceremonies-12; Singing-14; Survival (Plains)-13; Teaching-12; Woodworking-12.

Languages: Tribal tongue (native)-13.

GLOSSARY

agriogoiruno [Modern Greek]: “Were-boar.”

aswang [Visayan languages]: A were indigenous to the Philippines with two alternate forms, a nocturnal canine and a vampiric monstrosity.

babu [Banyang]: A general category of were-beasts in modern West Cameroon.

bisclavret [Breton]: “werewolf.”

bodark [Russian]: “Werewolf.”

boto [Portuguese]. A river dolphin of the Amazon that can transform into a handsome boy.

boudas [Amharic]: A sorcerer/blacksmith of Ethiopia and Tanzania who can turn into a werejackal or werehyena.

brouch, or **borouch**. [Medieval French]. A sorcerous werewolf; someone who changes shape via a spell.

bruxsa, or **cucubuth** [Portuguese]: A variety of vampire-werewolf that consumes flesh and blood.

cucubuth: See *bruxsa*.

eigi einhamir [Norwegian/Icelandic]: “Not of one form” – describes those who can assume a different shape.

fáelad [Gaelic]: “Wolf-shapes.” Found in the *Cóir Anmann* [Fitness of Names], referring to Celtic families in whom lycanthropic traits were believed to run.

furry: A common term for anthropomorphic animals found in cartoons and comic books. The strong self-identification with such images found in certain Internet communities has been likened to and linked with traditions of totems and skinchanging.

garuulf, or **garwaf** [Norman French]: “Werewolf.” A cognate of the modern “werewolf.”

hamrammir, or **hamrammr** [Old Norse]: People who could take animal form. Best known are the *berserkir* [berserker], source of the modern term “berserker.” Another variety is a morphing beast that takes the form of the last animal it has eaten and grows stronger with each shift.

hengeyokai [Japanese]: A class of intelligent animals who can take human and semi-human forms. Used in this volume for animal-to-human shapeshifters in general, regardless of cultural source.

ilimu [Kikuyu]: Various man-eating hengeyokai of Kenya.

kitsune [Japanese]: A fox *hengeyokai*, profoundly magical and usually female.

layak [Balinese]: A morph that inflicts bad luck, illness, accidents, and death on people.

limikkin [Mohawk]: Skinwalkers.

lobis-homem or **lupis-homem** [Portuguese]: A timid variety of ensorcelled werewolf.

lobisomem [Portuguese]: A Brazilian variation on the *lobis-homem*, but more bloodthirsty and aggressive. Seventh male child of a couple, he first turns into a wolf when he is 13. He only takes wolf form between midnight and 2 AM on the Friday before Lent.

lobisón [Spanish]: Argentine werewolf, the seventh son of a seventh son (with no intervening daughters). Mostly a carrion eater, but will attack humans on sight; its saliva will turn a person into another *lobisón*.

lubin, or **lupin** [Norman French]: A shy wolf capable of human speech.

loup-garou [French]: “Werewolf.”

Loup is “wolf”; *garou* is actually a corruption of *garuulf*. The Haitian variety of *loup-garou* is not a were but a morph.

lupo mannaro, or **lu lópe menare** [Italian/Sicilian]: “werewolf.”

lycanthrope: Through Latin from the Greek *lykos* (wolf) + *anthropos* (human being), a wolfman.

lycanthropy: The condition of being a werewolf. In some paradigms, a communicable disease that turns its victims into werewolves. In the real world, a psychiatric term for the delusion that one has or can become a wolf or other animal.

mactire [Gaelic]: “Werewolf.”

mai-coh [Navajo]: Skinwalkers.

mijina [Japanese]: See *tanuki*.

mormolyke [Greek]: Archaic alternate term for “were-wolf.”

morph: In this volume, as a noun, a being able to copy or steal shapes, but having only one predefined form otherwise; as a verb, the act of copying or stealing shapes.

nahual [Spanish]: “Werewolf,” from the Aztec *nauhual-li*, “warlock.”

oberrotten, or **oberoten** [Russian]: “Werewolf.”

okami-otoko [Japanese]: Literally “wolf-man” – referring to the imported Hollywood werewolf; there is no analogous creature in Japanese mythology.

priccolitish [Wallachian]: “Were-dog.”

rakshasa, or **raghos** [Indic languages]: A morphing monster characterized by huge size and red/blond hair. Often depicted as a tiger-like demon, although this is probably not its “true” form.

runa-uturungu [Spanish]: A variety of Argentine werejaguar.

ruvanush [Romany]: “Wolf-man.” In Gypsy lore, the living victims of a vampiric witch, who are forced to become bloodthirsty wolves at night.

skinchanger: Usually synonymous with “were-creature”; also, a being who uses an actual animal skin to change shape.

skinwalker: In American Indian cultures, a cunning and malevolent shapechanging creature of surreptitious habits.

shungmanitu wicasa [Lakota]: “Wolf-spirit man.”

tanuki, or **mijina** [Japanese]: A *hengeyokai* whose animal form is the Japanese raccoon dog (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*). Usually male, the tanuki takes the form of a priest or an inanimate object to play good-natured tricks on people.

theriomorph: From the Greek *theron* (beast) + *morphe* (form), having an animal form. Usually refers to a property of divine beings, but also serves a generic term for mortal shapeshifters.

tlahuelpuchi [Spanish]: Witches who turn themselves into vampiric coyotes, according to folk belief in the Mexican state Tlaxcala.

uirapuru [Portuguese]: A small brown bird native to the Amazon basin that can take the form of a beautiful human boy.

varulfur [Icelandic]: “Werewolf.”

varulv, or **varulf** [Swedish]: A werewolf that prefers beer to flesh.

versipellis, or **verto-pellis** [Latin]: “Turnskin” – someone who changes his skin, shape, or form. Colloquially used for werewolves, but refers to shapechangers generally.

vilkacis [Latvian]: A werewolf that, while evil, occasionally offers treasures.

vilkatas [Lithuanian]: “Werewolf.”

vlkodlak [Slovak]: A shy werewolf who is the victim of sorcery.

vrkolak [Bulgarian]: “Werewolf.” See *vrykólakas*.

vrykólakas [Balkan languages]: In almost all Slavic languages except Serbian, “werewolf.” In Serbian and Modern Greek, “vampire,” pointing to a common root for both myths.

wawkalak [Russian]: A werewolf whose animal form is an inflicted punishment, and which is not considered dangerous.

weerwolf [Dutch]: “Werewolf.”

wehrwolf [German], or **werwolf** [Old High German]: “Werewolf”; also, two fascist terrorist organizations in Germany, first during the 1920s and then at the end of World War II, both of which embraced a werewolf motif.

wendigo, or **witiko** [Cree, Ojibwa] A shapeshifting cannibalistic beast vaguely similar to the yeti; widespread in Indian folklore of Canada and the northern United States.

were: Back-formed in fantasy (and adopted in gaming) from names of various were-creatures, ultimately derived from an Old English word meaning “man”; in this volume, any being that alternates between two or more predefined shapes.

wurdalak [Serbian]: A werewolf that has died and come back as a vampire.

yaguareté-abá [Spanish]: A variety of Argentine werejaguar.

zapotec [Spanish]: Shapeshifting warlocks in the folklore of the Mexican state Oaxaca.

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Movies

Altered States (Ken Russell, 1980). Psychologist mixes drugs and sensory deprivation and ends up periodically regressing to a primitive humanoid.

An American Werewolf in London (John Landis, 1981). American student contracts lycanthropy on the English moors. Resurrected the Hollywood werewolf movie, and also includes the first four-footed werewolf in cinema since the

end of the silent-film era. One of the best horror/comedy films ever made, but avoid the sequel, *An American Werewolf in Paris*.

Cat People (Jacques Tourneur, 1942). Classic film featuring Simone Simon as a were-panther. Followed by *The Curse of the Cat People* in 1944.

Cat People (Paul Schrader, 1982). This erotically charged remake is surprisingly good without recreating the original scene-by-scene.

The Company of Wolves (Neil Jordan, 1984). Bizarrely Freudian, symbol-laden werewolf tale laced thoroughly with "Little Red Riding Hood." A must-see.

The Curse of the Werewolf (Terence Fisher, 1961). An interesting story operating on several levels saves this film – set, oddly enough, in Spain – from slavish repetition of its predecessors.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Rouben Mamoulian, 1931). The classic Frederick March version, although the 1941 version featuring Spencer Tracy is also a fine film, it emphasizes the anguish and torture Jekyll undergoes as he realizes the depths to which he has sunk. Find the restored 97-minute version if at all possible.

Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Hyde (David Price, 1995). Uneven horror/comedy about the great-grandson of Dr. Jekyll, whose own experiments saddle him with a "bad girl" alter ego.

Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde (Roy Ward Baker, 1971). Hammer Horror film using the same gender-bender twist on the Jekyll and Hyde story, somehow roping in the Jack the



Ripper murders and Burke and Hare, the famous Victorian grave robbers. Better than it has any right to be.

Ele, o Boto (The Dolphin) (Walter Lima, Jr., 1987). Haunting Brazilian film about a dolphin-turned-man looking for a mate among the women of a fishing village.

Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man (Roy William Neill, 1943). Classic Universal monster film, with Lon Chaney as a pitiful Lawrence Talbot seeking an end to his unexpected lycanthropic immortality.

Ginger Snaps (John Fawcett, 2001). Innovative teen horror film, gory and daring. One of a pair of gothy sisters is bitten by a werewolf, and begins changing in more ways than just the traditional monthly one.

House of Dracula (Erle C. Kenton, 1945). Hokey genre film, in which Dracula, Frankenstein, and the Wolf Man fight it out after visiting a doctor. As usual, Lawrence Talbot just wants to end it all, but can never seem to accomplish it.

The Howling (Joe Dante, 1980). TV newswoman attacked by a serial killer goes to a spa to recuperate, only to find it might well be the worst decision she's ever made. Considered one of the best horror films of the 1980s, it unfortunately spawned a nigh-endless stream of unrelated and forgettable sequels.

Ladyhawke (Richard Donner, 1985). Moody, stylish, and visually breathtaking tale of a pair of lovers bound together – and eternally separated – by the linked lycanthropic curses inflicted upon them by a vengeful bishop.

The Leopard Man (Jacques Tourneur, 1943). Another were-feline classic by Tourneur, although this film is nowhere nearly as well known as *Cat People*.

Mary Reilly (Stephen Frears, 1996). The story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde from the viewpoint of the doctor's young housemaid, who finds herself attracted to both men.

The Secret of Roan Inish (John Sayles, 1994). A young Irish girl whose family is said to have a selkie in its ancestry searches for her baby brother – lost to the sea years before – on an abandoned island near her grandparents' home. A beautiful and touching film.

The Shaggy Dog (Charles Barton, 1959). This early live-action comedy from Disney is a bit of an acquired taste. After an unfortunate encounter with the spell inscribed on a magic ring, Tommy Kirk turns into a talking sheepdog, and the only cure is an act of bravery.

Silver Bullet (Daniel Attias, 1985). Wheelchair-bound Corey Haim is the only one who knows a series of murders in his small town is the work of a full-blown cinematic-monster werewolf. As might be expected with a Stephen King movie, this film inspires a wide range of opinions.

Teen Wolf (Rod Daniel, 1985). Michael J. Fox discovers that his family is all werewolves who get the ability to change at puberty. Unwilling to hide, he parleys his "ethnicity" into popularity and becomes a sports hero. A fun, feel-good movie which makes no effort to hide its metaphor of lycanthropy for adolescence. Avoid the sequel and the cartoon series.

The Thing (John Carpenter, 1982). The Carpenter version is far more faithful to the original John W. Campbell story "Who Goes There?" than the 1950s "vampire carrot" movie of the same name. A cunning, dangerous creature capable of assuming any shape threatens the staff of an Antarctic outpost.

WereWolf of London (Stuart Walker, 1935). Attacked by a beast while in Tibet, Dr. Wilfred Glendon now becomes one himself. Classic "wolf man" movie which also introduced *marifasa lumina lupina* – the flower that suppresses the change for one night.

The Werewolf (Henry MacRae, 1913). The first werewolf movie ever filmed. A Native American woman who believes herself to be abandoned by her husband becomes a witch and teaches her daughter to hate all white men; the daughter becomes a werewolf to seek revenge. Especially noteworthy for the use of a real wolf in the transformation scene.

The Werewolf (Fred F. Sears, 1956). Predictable Fifties schlock about an amnesiac accident victim turned into a werewolf via a serum administered by unscrupulous researchers.

Wolf (Mike Nichols, 1994). Jack Nicholson is an aging executive who finds his life and his work energized after he is bitten by a wolf; what neither he nor the new love in his life realize is that he is slowly changing into something not at all human.

The Wolf Man (George Wag-ner, 1941). The classic Universal monster movie that introduced the unwilling werewolf Lawrence Talbot to the world.

Wolfen (Michael Wadleigh, 1981). A New York City cop investigating a series of animal attacks discovers a species of supernatural wolves that lives along side of and preys upon humanity.

Gory – the wolfen are not sympathetic tortured souls, they are predators, pure and simple. Like *The Howling*, this film has spawned numerous sequels that are best ignored.



Television

Angel and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Vampires in the shared world of these two series are very low-level shapeshifters, with a human form and a “monster-face” vampire form. Episodes have also portrayed Jekyll-Hyde ethomorphs, full morphs, and weres of several kinds; a werewolf was a regular character for several seasons. Season five’s “boss villain” was Glorificus, who timeshared a shifting body with a mortal.

Dark Shadows (1966-1971). The supernatural soap opera that featured a conflicted vampire as its main character also had its werewolves, not the least of which was Quentin Collins.

The Incredible Hulk (1978-1982). The super as were. David Bruce Banner transforms into the immensely strong but bestial Hulk whenever he is angered or in pain.

Manimal (1983). Canonically bad TV show whose title character was something midway between a were and a morph – he could turn into any kind of animal at will.

She-Wolf of London (1990-1991). Randi Wallace, an American student in London, is bitten by a werewolf and becomes one herself. As a way of dealing with the curse and looking for a cure, she joins an English professor in hunting down supernatural menaces.

Star Trek. Shapeshifters abound in the universe of the United Federation of Planets. Most of them are morphs, from Odo and the Founders, who have no limitations on size, mass, or composition, to various races who are limited to organic forms.

Werewolf (1987-1988). Eric Cord has been bitten by a werewolf, and to save himself he must hunt down and kill the source of the lycanthropic “bloodline” – Janos Skorzeny, played by Chuck Connors.

Wolf Lake (2001-2002). Short-lived CBS (later UPN) series about a town in Washington state occupied mostly by werewolves. Bizarre and confusing, it evoked a kind of “*Buffy* meets *Twin Peaks*” aesthetic.

X-Files (1993-2002). A number of the creatures encountered by FBI agents Mulder and Scully were shapeshifters, most notably an alien bounty hunter.

Anime

Bubblegum Crisis (1987). Four women in powered armor defend their city against rogue boomers – sophisticated bio-mechanical humanoids built as workers and soldiers. Some models of boomer demonstrate “fusion” capability, allowing them to reshape their bodies and incorporate external materials into them.

Bubblegum Crisis: Tokyo 2040 (1998). In this remake/reimagining of the original *Bubblegum Crisis*, boomers, the robot workers built by GENOM, are actually artificial lifeforms with no fixed shape of their own.

Guyver: Bio-Booster Armor (1989), and its spin-offs and sequels. Humans turn out to be a genetic project created eons ago by godlike aliens, who encoded into mankind’s genes the ability to shapeshift into a monstrous form called a zoanoid. An evil corporation has learned the secret of activating those genes and is using it for world domination.

Ranma 1/2 (1989). This martial-arts sex farce is defined by the vast number and variety of were-type curses possessed by members of its cast: gender-changing, human-to-animal, animal-to-human, and human-to-monster – and all are triggered by hot and cold water.

Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-Ohki (1992). This is the original *Tenchi* OVA, which has inspired at least three different “parallel universes” so far. In all of them can be found Ryo-Ohki, a cat-sized creature of uncertain origins who can transform into a starship – or, in one series, a mecha. Also in the original series is Tsunami – a sentient tree with an astral were-form in the shape of a humanoid woman.

Tetsuo (1988). Bizarre story about a Japanese salaryman whose body starts turning into metal after he accidentally hits a strange “metal fetishist” with his car. He struggles with both the transformation and the apparent survival of the fetishist as an independent entity inside his own mind. Followed by *Tetsuo II: Body Hammer* (1992).

Tetsuwan Birdy (1996). Also known as *Birdy The Mighty*. While trying to capture a criminal, an alien police officer accidentally kills a Japanese teen. To punish her and restore the boy to life, the cop’s superiors force her to share her body with him.

Transformers (1984-1987), and its sequels and spin-offs. Mechanical intelligences, which can shapeshift between humanoid robots and all manner of vehicles and devices, continue their eons-long war on Earth. Pretty much created (and perpetuated) the “transforming robot” trope.

Comic Books/Manga

Futaba-Kun Change (1995). All the members of the Shimeru family have the same biological peculiarity – they change gender when they are sexually excited or excessively emotional.

Gold Digger (1991 to present, in various incarnations). Long-running and complex series featuring a large variety of were-creatures, not the least of whom is Brittany Diggers, the last living werecheetah.

The Incredible Hulk (1962 to present, in various titles). The original super-were comic book, with overtones of Jekyll and Hyde. As first presented, Bruce Banner turned into the Hulk at sundown, and back at sun-up – clearly a cyclic change.

Miracleman (1985 to 1991, in various titles), a.k.a. *Marvelman* (original name, United Kingdom). This is Frank Miller’s re-invention of a 1950s-vintage blatant rip-off of Fawcett’s Captain Marvel; Neil Gaiman became the writer toward the end of its run. Mike Moran changes into the god-like Miracleman with the utterance of a magic word – or is it? Apparent magic is really an ill-understood science, and almost everything Moran thought was true may be a lie . . . even the limits of his powers.

Ranma 1/2 (1987 to 1996). The original manga version of the martial-arts sex farce. See the anime entry of the same name.

Shazam! (1940 to 1953 in various titles under the Fawcett imprint; 1972 to present under DC imprint). Captain Marvel and the other members of the Marvel Family were among the first superheroes who had to undergo “power-up” transformations in order to leap into action.

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