

DIGITAL HERO #42

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DIGITAL HERO

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Issue #42 (March/April 2007)



When Last We Left Our Heroes...

by Steven S. Long

This month's column is just in time for our latest release, and gives me a chance to talk about the next book coming down the pike as well.

TUALA MORN

Making its debut at this year's DunDraCon, and by the time you read this available in the Online Store and other fine game retailers, is our latest *Fantasy Hero* offering, *Tuala Morn*. It's a setting book that describes Irish-/Celtic-themed Low Fantasy realm of bold warriors, wise wizards, capricious faeries, and a thousand different types of adventure! It's a setting I initially created nearly ten years ago for another company that never managed to publish it. Aside perhaps from Hudson City, it's just about my favorite of all the settings I've created, and I hope you'll find it as fascinating as I do. While it's neither historically nor mythologically accurate (after all, it's a Fantasy setting, not a history textbook), it's strongly influenced by my love of and researches into Celtic history, myth, and lore.

Chapter One, *The Chronicles Of The Tualans*, relates the history of the Tualans — how they came to the land they call Tuala Morn, and the battles they had to fight to claim it as their own and hold it against many perils.

Chapter Two, *King And Commoner*, describes the culture, customs, and society of the Tualans. It covers *cailshaen*, the system of Tualan "feudalism"; the *Dremir Veith*, or social hierarchy and political positions; the seasons and holidays; warfare; law; religion; trade; and much more.

Chapter Three, *The Ten Kingdoms: The Realms Of Tuala Morn*, discusses the geography and physical features of Tuala Morn, then provides a thorough kingdom-by-kingdom review of the ten realms and other areas within the land. If you want to know who rules a kingdom, who his prominent nobles are, what happens there, and what perils that realm faces, this chapter tells you. Each realm has a beautiful full-page map by John Lees so you don't get lost. ;)

Chapter Four, *The Board Of Notables*, covers character creation. It has Package Deals for the standard Tualan professions (and some Racial Package Deals as well), plus notes on how various Skills, Perks, Talents, and Disadvantages function in the Tuala Morn setting. It also includes rules for *Feats*, special (even magical) powers that spearmen possess, as well as price and equipment tables and a list of names appropriate for Tualan characters.



Chapter Five, *Tualan Magic*, describes what magic is and how it works within Tuala Morn. Besides covering the *Draichta* spells of druids, wizards, and witches, it discusses the Miracles of the Golden priests and the secrets of Smithcraft. There's also a section on enchanted items your characters might find.

Chapter Six, *The Tualan Bestiary*, contains dozens of adversaries for your PCs. Besides discussing the faerie-folk and their behavior in general, it provides character sheets for many specific types of faeries (or related monsters) and generic character sheets for enemies like witches and Pictoi warriors. Initially this was going to be a relatively short chapter, but when we decided to cancel *The Celtic Bestiary*, I took a lot of material I'd written for that book and included it here.

Chapter Seven, *Beyond Tualan Shores*, describes the rest of the Northlands as they're known to the Tualans: Logres, trading partner to the east; rich Aquitaine, barbarous Vulkringland; and many others.

Chapter Eight, *The Bard's Portion: Gamemastering Tuala Morn*, provides advice and information for GMs running Tuala Morn campaigns. In addition to guidelines for Heroic and Superheroic campaign styles, it has a *GM's Vault* of secret information about the setting only the GM should know, and a generous selection of plot seeds to get the GM's creative juices flowing.

CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE: NEWS OF THE WORLD

Next up on the schedule is a book described as “Champions Universe Update” in my various notes and files, and for which we finally settled on the Andy-suggested title of *Champions Universe: News Of The World* (we even commissioned a cover to match). It’s been nearly five years since the publication of *Champions Universe*, and in that time Hero Games has published many other Champions books that expand the setting in nearly every possible direction. Champions gamers often ask us questions like, “What would happen if such-and-such group teamed up with this group?”, “What are the members of the Sentinels like?”, and “What’s Dr. Destroyer been up to?”.

Champions Universe: News Of The World attempts to answer those questions, and many others, by reviewing what’s happened in the Champions Universe over the past five years. Naturally, we can’t cover every single aspect of a setting that’s so large and detailed, but you’ll find plenty of information about everyone from the movers and shakers of the Superhuman World to lower-powered street heroes like the Black Mask. You’ll also get to meet some new characters that you’ve only seen mentioned here and there in *Champions* books but who’ve never been detailed before.

Chapter One, “*Meanwhile, In Millennium City...*”, covers the latest events in the City of the Future – things like city expansion, the activities of the Champions (including new members joining the ranks... and some old members leaving), how the events depicted in Champions scenarios like *Sharper Than A Serpent’s Tooth* played out in the official game setting, what the kids at the Ravenswood Academy have been up to, and the fracturing of PSI.

Chapter Two, “*Down In Vibora Bay...*”, does the same thing for the Champions Universe’s lower-powered, more mystical city. Here you can find out what menaces the Black Mask and Dr. Ka have had to deal with, how Juryrig’s war on VIPER has progressed, and the effects of Hurricane Katrina on the Queen City.

Chapters Three and Four cover two of the Champions Universe’s most prominent superhero teams, the Sentinels and the Justice Squadron. Champions fans have wanted to know more about these heroes for years, and here you’ll find character sheets for all the current members, a history of each group, and other fascinating information.

Chapter Five, “*In Other World News...*”, expands beyond Millennium City and Vibora Bay to cover the rest of the setting. It includes brief descriptions of the major superteams in other American cities, what’s been going on with

organizations like UNTIL and the Trismegistus Council, and events around the world since the publication of *Champions Worldwide*. It introduces a new organization, the Goodman Institute, to help your heroes with their war on crime and injustice. Last but not least, it reviews what’s publicly known about the most important activities of supervillains and criminal organizations like VIPER, Dr. Destroyer, and even Foxbat.

But if you want to know the *non-public* information about those characters, you have to be a GM. The last two chapters of the book are for the GM’s eyes only. Chapter Six, *The Rogues’ Gallery*, provides revised character sheets for several villains to show how they’ve become more powerful (or just different) in the past five years, and also describes what various villains have been doing that the public doesn’t know about. Chapter Seven, *The GM’s Vault*, provides the secret, GM’s-eyes-only, information about what’s covered in the other parts of the book.

— Steven S. Long
HERO System Line Developer





HEROglyphs by Steven S. Long

Give It to Me Straight, Doc

CURING ILLNESS IN THE HERO SYSTEM

One topic that seems to crop up on the Hero Games message boards with a fair degree of regularity is how to model things like diseases and illnesses, and conversely the ways to cure them. That struck me as a good idea for a *HEROglyphs* column, so here we go. ;)

DISEASES IN GAME TERMS

Before we can discuss how to protect one's self against diseases, or cure them, in game terms, we have to define how they function in game terms. Fortunately, there are several examples in published material to draw on: rabies and bubonic plague on pages 22-23 of *The HERO System Bestiary*; and bubonic plague and inhalation anthrax on pages 127-28 of *The HERO System Equipment Guide*. In each case these diseases are built with multiple Drain effects. Typically these effects are described separately, since they may affect the victim over different periods of time or have different Power Modifiers, but in theory you could build a disease with a single Drain and the *Variable Effect Advantage* to affect two or more Characteristics simultaneously.

The Power Modifiers typically associated with a "disease Drain" are:

- Delayed Return Rate (typically 5 Character Points per Week, representing how long it takes a victim to regain full health... if he survives at all)
- NND (the defense being an appropriate Life Support: Immunity; in the case of diseases transmitted by air being inside a sealed environment [LS: Self-Contained Breathing] may also be a defense. Without this Advantage, ordinary Power Defense would protect against diseases, which generally isn't "realistic" at all.)
- Extra Time (the "onset time" between exposure and when the disease begins to affect the victim, usually rated in hours or days and sometimes depending on when an earlier stage of the disease takes effect)
- Gradual Effect (so that the disease progresses over time, rather than causing all its damage at once)

Other Limitations are certainly possible (such as Focus if the disease is a weapon, or HKA Must Do BODY if it's introduced into the body by an animal's bite), but those four are the standard ones for representing a "realistic" disease.

The type of Drain chosen to represent a disease depends on that disease's effects. Examples include:

- Drain CON (to represent the general weakness and frailty brought on by disease; Drain STR may also be appropriate, particularly if the disease causes severe muscle aches or cramps, and Drain END for diseases that are especially tiring)
- Drain COM (for diseases that include disfiguring sores or the like)
- Drain BODY (for diseases that can be fatal)

The amount of dice reflects the potential severity of the disease. A standard cold or flu might be just 1-2 dice of Drain CON, but the sorts of major illnesses that usually become a factor in games often feature 3-6 dice of both Drain CON and Drain BODY. For example, the Inhalation Anthrax bioweapon described in the *Equipment Guide* includes Drain CON 3d6, Drain END 4d6, and Drain BODY 6d6 as its effects, indicating a disease with significant weakening effects and an even greater chance of killing the victim.

CURING DISEASE

Protecting one's self against disease is simple: have the appropriate form of Immunity (usually as a result of an inoculation received at some point during the character's life). However, Immunities are fairly rare among PCs, and in any event the super-diseases, bioweapons, and other illnesses they're likely to face tend to be ones most people cannot become Immune to. In short – usually characters have to rely on finding a cure rather than preventing themselves (or their friends) from getting sick in the first place.

Generally speaking there are three ways to represent “curing disease” in *HERO System* terms.

Healing

The most obvious way to cure disease is to use Healing. To create a broad-spectrum curative power, the Healing needs some level of the *Variable Effect* Advantage so it can apply to more than one Characteristic. That way it can, for example, cure the CON, END, and BODY loss from inhalation anthrax. Depending on the value of the Advantage, a character may have to use Healing several times to counteract all of a disease's effects, or just one use may suffice.

Healing suffers from one drawback when it comes to curing disease: it can only replace Characteristic points that have already been lost. Most diseases work slowly, using Gradual Effect to simulate the slow acquisition of a lot of Drain. A Healing can replace any Characteristic points lost to the disease up until the point at which it's applied, but it doesn't stop the rest of the damage from accumulating or otherwise “counteract” the ongoing disease. To cure a disease fully with Healing, a character has to apply it to the sick person several times over the course of the illness.

If the GM doesn't like this approach, he can change things so Healing *can* counteract a disease fully. He simply rolls the full effect of the disease in advance so that he knows its “maximum damage.” A character with Healing can then apply Healing up to that full total, and when he equals or exceeds that total the disease ceases to have any effect.

Transform

Second, a character can buy a Major Transform – “person with a disease to person without that disease.” This has two effects. First, it completely eliminates the disease (so that it doesn't continue to affect the character). Second, by using the rules for “adding abilities” via Transform it can restore Characteristic points already lost to the disease. (Otherwise, the character simply has to regain those lost points normally using the fade rate for the Drain.) Alternately, at the GM's option a character could buy a Minor Transform that stops the disease from progressing but can never “heal” Characteristic points already lost to the disease.

The *Cure Illness* spell on page 246 of *The Fantasy Hero Grimoire* uses the Transform method. It seems to do the best job of simulating the broad-spectrum effect of the curative magics seen in most Fantasy games. In more “realistic” settings or genres, the Transform method may be too powerful or effective.

Aid

Third, a character could buy an Aid that only works to “counteract” diseases. The Aid would have a fade rate equal to the fade rate of the Drain, and a Limitation indicating that it only works on diseased persons. By artificially raising a diseased person's affected Characteristics, the Aid effectively neutralizes the disease. However, this probably isn't a cost-effective method compared to Healing or Transform, and like Healing it has to be applied multiple times to overcome the Gradual Effect damage accumulation. Thus, this method probably isn't a good choice for most games, though it may be appropriate for lower-powered campaigns.

Curing Specific Diseases

With any of the methods described above, there's no need to specify the type of disease a power can cure. Healing, Transform, and Aid just “correct” the effects of certain Drains, as indicated by the power's description (for example: Healing 3d6, any disease-reduced Characteristic at once; Major Transform 4d6 [person with a disease to person without that disease]). If a character wanted to have a power that could only cure a specific disease, or a specific category of diseases (such as one of the ones listed on the Life Support Table), he can represent that by applying an appropriate Limitation to the power.



VICTORIA
WOODHULL
QUOTES

Abolitionist:

“Denounce me for advocating freedom if you can, and I will bear your curse with a better resignation.”

Businesswoman:

“For a woman to consider a financial question was shuddered over as a profanity.”

Candidate: “I now announce myself as candidate for the Presidency. I anticipate criticism; but however unfavorable, I trust that my sincerity will not be called into question.”

Humanitarian: “It makes no difference who or what you are, old or young, black or white, pagan, Jew, or Christian, I want to love you all and be loved by you all, and I mean to have your love.”

Libertine: “I am a free lover. I have an inalienable, Constitutional, and natural right to love whom I may, to love as long or short a period as I can; to change that love every day if I please.”

Politician: “I ask the rights to pursue happiness by having a voice in that government to which I am accountable.”

Psychic: “From the very first moment,

You Gotta Have Character by Jason Walters

“People who do not stand upon principles and guide all their actions by them are always found contradicting and stultifying themselves.” — Victoria Woodhull

The daughter of scam artist parents who ran a traveling medicine show, Victoria Woodhull grew up telling fortunes, concocting patent “medicines,” and faith healing. Married at the tender age of 15 to an alcoholic and womanizer, her tale seemed fated to be a tragic one. Instead, a chance meeting with millionaire Cornelius Vanderbilt propelled her to Wall Street, where she and her sister Tennessee became the world’s first successful female stockbrokers. Using their newfound wealth, the two sisters launched an extremely controversial national newspaper. Known as *Woodhull & Claflin’s Weekly*, the paper advocated a wide variety of contentious positions including women’s suffrage, short skirts, spiritualism, free love, licensed prostitution, vegetarianism, and sex education. The sisters even went so far as to publish the first English language edition of Karl Marx’s *Communist Manifesto* in 1871.

By 1872, Victoria Woodhull was one of the best known, and most controversial, women in the United States. At the age of 34 she decided to run for president with black civil rights activist Frederick Douglass as her vice presidential candidate. Although conceived almost exclusively as a publicity stunt to promote the various causes she supported, Victoria’s campaign as a candidate for the little known Equal Rights Party generated incredible publicity – as well as considerable hostility, even from some sympathetic to her views. In the middle of the election, the sisters became embroiled in a feud with the well-respected Beecher family that landed them both in jail. The resulting lawsuits bankrupted Victoria, who fled to England and married a banker. She died a wealthy West Midlands Lady of the Manor at the age of 89.

Background/History: Victoria Claflin Woodhull was born in the small town of Homer, Ohio in 1838. The daughter of a one-eyed confidence man and a disturbed religious fanatic, she grew up in extraordinarily poor and desperate circumstances. The town villains, there was certainly no reason to suspect that any offspring produced by the Claflin family was destined for anything other than, at best, quiet misery – and, more likely, early death or imprisonment. Yet Victoria, along with her younger sister Tennessee, proved so extraordinary in appearance, intellect, and

character that the good people of Homer could only scratch their heads in wonderment.

One of the Claflin family’s “businesses” was the production of quack patent medicines made from a mixture of alcohol, cocaine, herbs, and grain alcohol. These tonics were rather understandably popular with a certain segment of the Ohio population and, with the law hot on Buck Claflin’s trail after an arson incident, the family hit the road as a traveling medicine show. Over time Victoria began manifesting signs of supernatural ability, so this too was added to the show. She told fortunes, hosted séances, and performed reputedly successful faith healings using magnets. This pleased her parents immensely, as their fortunes began to improve dramatically, but left Virginia desperate to escape her life as a glorified sideshow attraction. So at the tender age of 15 she “slipped her leash” by marrying a charming young doctor named Canning Woodhull, a man some 13 years her senior. Unfortunately, “doctor” Woodhull was not only a fraud and a quack, but also knew a good thing when he saw it: rather than taking her away, he actually *joined* the Claflin sideshow to cash in on the profits.

It soon turned out that Victoria had married rather poorly. Woodhull was a drunkard and a laudanum addict with a pension for womanizing. Though she stoically bore him two children (Byron and Zulu), at the first opportunity Victoria abandoned the good doctor and hooked up with her sister Tennessee, whom the family had sold into prostitution some time earlier (see Sidebar). They set themselves up as psychic sisters in New York City, conducting séances, giving “magnetic” healings, and making predictions for paying customers – not to mention turning the odd trick for extraordinarily well-heeled patrons. One of the wealthiest of these was the millionaire-philanthropist Cornelius Vanderbilt, who was so impressed with the sisters’ various abilities that he agreed to bankroll what was, in the eyes of many, an extremely dubious business enterprise. (It has been suggested that the old man not only found the girls entertaining, but the distress they caused New York’s “polite society” doubly so.)

In 1870 the brokerage of Woodhull, Claflin, & Company opened for business on Wall Street, making Victoria and Tennessee the first women stockbrokers in American history. Shrewd, lucky, and – at least in Victoria’s case – gifted with psychic abilities, they were extraordinarily successful at it, too. It was probably the latter that upset the newspaper reporters of the time:

making it as a broker has never been easy, and seeing two fairly disreputable women making a successful go of it must have been especially galling. The papers seized every opportunity to make lurid accusations about the two sisters, going so far as to publish sexualized drawings of them running their business half naked in lingerie. To make matters even more explosive, Victoria married a war hero by the name of Colonel Blood, who incidentally happened to be an excellent speechwriter. With his help, she became an incredibly popular reformist lecturer, delivering firebrand sermons on topics as diverse (and controversial) as free love, legalized prostitution, women's suffrage, racial equality, vegetarianism, spiritualism, the eight-hour workday, and abortion (which she was against).

Soon finding that the demand for her ideas far outstripped the limitations of the lecture circuit, she and Tennessee established a paper using the profits from their brokerage. Known as *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, it stayed in publication for the next six years, and became infamous for publishing controversial opinions. Most notoriously, the paper printed the first English version of Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto in its December 30, 1871 edition. The first issue rather shockingly announced that the publication's primary purpose was to support Victoria Claflin in a bid for the presidency of the United States! But, aside from that, there "was hardly a measure of social amelioration that it did not advocate brilliantly, and hardly a depth of depravity that it failed to touch." It had extremely effective writers – some of whom were intelligent scholars, others of which appeared to be deranged – but all of whom were *highly* entertaining. Victoria found that she was now not only wealthy, but also famous, and was embraced by much of the feminist movement of the time. Notably, however, Susan B. Anthony, who (pretty reasonably) felt that Victoria's tactics in pushing women's equality were unpredictable and opportunistic, distanced herself from the brash newcomer.

Matters began to unravel as the election of 1872 grew closer. Using her wealth, Victoria revived the often-violated corpse of New York's Equal Rights Party (see sidebar) as the vehicle for her spectacularly chaotic presidential bid. She never had any delusion of winning (and couldn't even get on the ballot in most places), but felt that the incredible publicity generated by her campaign would help the various causes she promoted. The party nominated black civil rights leader Fredrick Douglass as her vice-presidential running mate (an honor he sensibly declined, not that anyone noticed) and set about printing buttons, posters, and the like. Meanwhile, Victoria had been pursuing a torrid love affair with Theodore Tilton, one of the most imminent

journalists in America and a married man, while her sister rather cunningly used the *Weekly* to blackmail various married boyfriends she had ensnared over the years. At the same time that these nefarious goings on were going on, Tilton's wife was pursuing *another* affair with the incredibly famous and energetic protestant minister Henry Ward Beecher, whose sisters Catherine and Harriet (author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) were busily stirring up trouble for the Claflin girls, whom they despised and disapproved of. Under pressure from these two influential women, one landlord after another evicted Victoria and Tennessee, rather than face social stigma. It got so bad that the two sisters, despite their considerable wealth, had a hard time finding a hotel that would take them.

It's perhaps unsurprising that the whole messy thing publicly exploded and, when it did, it did so all over the pages of the *Weekly*. In a fit of rage, Victoria spread the details of the Beecher-Tilden affair across her front page for all to see, and was promptly thrown in jail by infamous United States Postmaster Anthony Comstock for distributing obscene material through the mail. (Victoria was actually imprisoned until after the election of '72 was over; just in case, one might suppose). This was an obvious violation of freedom of speech, even by Victorian standards. The scandal that resulted from this unprecedented airing of the dirty laundry of respectable New York society cannot be overstated; it was far worse than the Monica Lewinsky scandal of the 1990s. And it kept growing all the time. Beecher, who had nothing to do with his sisters' harassment of the Claflin girls, was basically a decent fellow and refused to sue Victoria and Tennessee for slander – so, eventually, Theodore Tilton sued him instead. Cornelius Vanderbilt died, depriving the sisters their most powerful patron, but also leaving a fortune of \$100 million to be hotly contested by his four children. Shortly thereafter, some bright young lawyer came to the horrifying conclusion that the infamous Claflin sisters, who had remained close to the old man right to the end, might be called in character witnesses to prove Vanderbilt's mental incompetence.

To this day no one is exactly certain what deal was cut to end this mess; but whatever was done was done very discreetly. Victoria and Tennessee were released from jail and departed for England with suitcases stuffed with cash (some believe in excess of \$500,000). Colonel Blood politely made himself scarce. With their newfound wealth, the two sisters established themselves as respectable members of the British upper class. (The Claflin's sister's infamous escapades were neither widely known, nor particularly understood, in Europe). Victoria married a wealthy banker named John Martin,

I seemed to know all the future without being able to give any expression in words."

Spiritualist: "I believe in Spiritualism; I advocate free love in the highest, purest sense, as the only cure for the damnation by which men corrupt God's most holy institution of sexual relations."

SPIRITUALISM

Spiritualism is a religious movement that began in New England in the 1840s. Its distinguishing feature is the belief that spirits of the dead can be contacted by the living through specially gifted persons known as Mediums. These spirits are believed to exist on a higher mystical plane than human beings, and are thus capable of providing guidance to the living on nearly any matter. They were contacted through various means including séances, trance states, the use of primitive Ouija boards known as planchettes, and visionary dreaming. The religion shares a number of similarities to American Indian shamanism, though spiritualists only speak to the spirits of dead humans and do not believe in nature spirits, and also to Christianity, though they do not believe in Heaven or Hell and

do not recognize the Bible as the primary source of spiritual knowledge.

Spiritualism arose from the “burned-over district” of New York State (so named because it was so heavily evangelized during the antebellum period that it had no more “fuel” (unconverted population) to “burn” (convert)) during the same period in which that once-pious region produced Mormonism, Shakerism, and the Seventh Day Adventists. It quickly developed strong ties to various reform movements advocating women’s rights, racial equality, and sexual liberation, as well as a strong following among radical Quakers.

Important figures within the movement included the Fox Sisters, Andrew Jackson Davis, and (of course) Victoria Woodhull. Noteworthy converts included the chemist William Crookes, biologist Alfred Russel Wallace, and the author Arthur Conan Doyle. Widespread but never particularly organized, most members of the spiritualist faith joined the Unitarian or Universalist churches after the First World War, though a small number went on to found the Spiritualist Church, which endures to this day.



while her sister married the Viscount of Montserrat. Victoria lived out the remainder of her days as a well-regarded West Midlands Lady of the Manor with what the locals considered a curious interest in matters both philosophical and literary. She died at the ripe old age of 89.

Personality/Motivation: Victoria Woodhull is a difficult, contradictory, and instinctively divisive person who has the misfortune of living during the intensely conformist period after which she was inadvertently named: the Victorian Age. Though many of her contemporaries good-naturedly insisted she was born “100 years before her time,” the fact is that Victoria holds views that would still be controversial had she lived a century later. Like her contemporary Susan B. Anthony, she was both a feminist *and* apposed to abortion, and it is unlikely that many 20th Century Americans would have found her Spiritualist views particularly palatable (though, perhaps somewhat amusingly, she was technically a Methodist).

It is hard to say whether or not Victoria’s contentious behavior springs from her beliefs, or her beliefs are simply an excuse for contentious behavior. In all likelihood it’s a mixture, each one combining with and complementing the other in a multifaceted heterodox swirl of controversy. Most of the time, her behavior is perfectly reserved and ladylike; but she has an aristocratic air about her, and gets haughty when angered. Like many creative and intelligent people, Victoria also has a great love of shocking and novel ideas for their own sake; which is why (for example) she can intellectually excuse quixotically advocating communism, spiritualism, and sound fiscal advice all at once. She greatly enjoys talking about philosophical matters, and has not unjustly been accused of being more interested in abstract ideas than practical matters. In spite of this, her abilities as an orator are considerable: when on stage, her speech becomes impassioned, her cheeks flush, and her eyes sparkle. It would be wrong to pigeonhole her as a parlor intellectual or ineffectual academic.

Woodhull has a wide circle of acquaintances, and many noteworthy people, such as reformer Laura Cuppy Smith, author Addie Ballou, and abolitionist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, consider her an ally. Yet she is probably not the best choice for a friend, as she values principles over personal loyalty, and will unhesitatingly turn on any non-family member who she feels has betrayed those principles. Although initially an associate of such memorable historical figures as Susan B. Anthony and Fredrick Douglas, Victoria has a knack for aggravating illustrious people that makes such friendships short-lived. It would be

fair to say that Victoria Woodhull is no “respector of persons.” She has no great love of authority figures and, for the most part, they return her antipathy a thousandfold. A mass of contradictions, she seems equally at home in company of prostitutes and Boston Brahmins, philosophers and field hands. The first successful female stockbroker in Wall Street history and a genuinely religious person, she is also responsible for the first printing of the anti-capitalist, anti-religious Communist Manifesto in English. In short, Victoria is unique, to say the least.

Quote: “Had I been ambitious to become the next president I should have proceeded very differently to accomplish it.”

Powers/Tactics: Although she hardly shouts it from the rooftops, Victoria Woodhull is a psychic. Her abilities are somewhat limited, and not always as useful as one might suppose, but they are real and the basis for some of her success in life, especially as a stockbroker. (Her mother has these same abilities but, without either the teachings of Spiritualism or Victoria’s determined personality, was slowly driven insane by them.) All of her powers are derived from her ability to communicate with, and receive guidance and assistance from, the world of the dead. Using *Spiritual Cartomancy* (the reading of Tarot cards guided by the unseen hands of spirits), she is able to predict general trends and events that influence the world of finance. She foresaw the Whiskey Ring scandal, the secretive backroom Compromise of 1877, and other political/economic events, and was able to advise her clientele accordingly. It may even be that her precognitive understanding of the failings and corruption of the United States’ Reconstruction Era political system is what drove her into politics in the first place.

Victoria is able to cure sickness and injury with a unique ability known *Spirit Guided Healing*. Using magnets as energy foci, she is able to locate and repair damaged portions of the human body by allowing unseen spirits’ “hands” to penetrate her patient’s flesh, knitting and massaging damaged tissue. Although she was rather well known for this ability as a teenager, Woodhull seldom speaks of it as an adult, preferring instead to use her unusual skills to quietly help the poor, rather than making a profit from them as she had earlier in life. She is also able to summon and speak with the spirits of the dead for guidance using an early form of the Ouija board known as a planchette. Through this medium, she is able to contact a variety of spirit guides to help her with her undertakings. For example, Demosthenes, the ancient Greek orator who practiced public speaking by placing pebbles in his mouth to improve his enunciation,

is her oratorical spirit guide, while Socrates, the philosopher who claimed that man has a moral responsibility to disobey a bad command, is her guide on moral issues.

Woodhull is a talented and forceful public speaker with an excellent understanding of the issues of her day. Well-known and affluent (at least until her tussle with the Beechers), she is as equally at home in a rowdy Irish tavern as a New England dinner party, which only serves to make her more celebrated in some circles and significantly less so in others. While her success as a politician and publisher is certainly open to debate, there can be no doubt that her actions are generally shrewd and deliberate – even if their consequences are not.

Campaign Use: Woodhull is exactly the sort of eccentric, exasperating, ambitious, and urbane woman one finds in America's cities during any period – with the added twist that she has legitimate psychic abilities and is famous, sort of like a Victorian-Era Shirley MacLaine. Like Andrew Jackson Davis, a previous subject of this column who Woodhull also knew personally, she is a strong believer in the eclectic faith of Spiritualism, and during her life became one of its most famous adherents (although probably not one of its most avid proponents). Although opposed to organized Christian religion and roundly condemned by many of the leading ministers of the day, Woodhull also practices many traditional Christian virtues: helping to feed the hungry, caring for the sick, and visiting prisoners in jail.

Thus, in a *Western Hero* or *Victorian Hero* campaign, Woodhull becomes either an attention-grabbing background character who lends an aura of historical legitimacy to the game, a spiritualist consultant capable of providing the PCs with specialized knowledge, or a combination of the two. She also has very real (and potentially quite dangerous) enemies whose attentions she may need to be protected – or even rescued – from. This translates well into other gaming genres as well. In a *Fantasy Hero* game, Victoria could easily become an outspoken and controversial Diviner whose eruptions become politically inconvenient for various powers-behind-the-throne. In a *Champions* or *Dark Champions* adventure, she can be re-imagined as a crusading mutant/activist who has inadvertently pitted herself against powerful hidden forces, such as VIPER, the IHA (Institute for Human Advancement), or the Mafia. In a *Star Hero* campaign using the *Terran Empire* setting, Woodhull could become Senator Safira Harmon of Earth, the crusading head of the liberal faction of the Imperial Senate – and someone definitely in need of a *lot* of protection!

Appearance: Victoria Woodhull is a stately, well-dressed woman of medium height. She has a pleasant looking, intelligent face and quick (some would say calculating) eyes capable of quickly sizing up those she meets. Her curly brown is worn short, which is considered somewhat scandalous. Considered a “thinking man’s” beauty by many, those who meet her often “testify fervently to the grace, dignity, and obvious good breeding of this lady,” which is extraordinarily amusing when one considers Victoria’s parentage.

Fashion conscious yet unconventional, Victoria will always be found wearing one of the three forms of feminine clothing of her day: the Day Dress (worn informally during breakfast), Promenade Dress (worn to her office or to dinner), and the Formal Dress, which she wears to public functions or when speaking. All three varieties of dress involve uncomfortable hoops and petticoats and, to the modern eye, are best distinguished from one another by the material used in their construction: cotton, wool, and silk respectively. Victoria doesn’t wear corsets because she (correctly) feels them to be responsible for a variety of women’s health problems. She also distains “long” dresses which drag along the floor picking up dust in favor of “short” dresses cut above the ankles. Her outfits are usually accented with slightly rakish hats – a pillbox hat with a peacock feather swooping down in front is her particular favorite.

Woodhull prefers to wear dark colors: purple is her favorite, though she often wears navy blue as well. Many of her detractors accuse her of wearing shameful outfits that bare her arms and shoulders, but this is patently untrue; all of her dresses are cut up to the neck or higher. She wears either simple jewelry – one brooch at the neck and a single diamond ring – or no jewelry whatsoever. When speaking in public, she often wears a fresh white tea rose (a symbol of purity) instead of a brooch. She speaks with a Midwestern accent and uses an inordinate amount of trilled R’s in her speech, though her voice has been described as “clear and melodious.”

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THE EQUAL RIGHTS PARTY

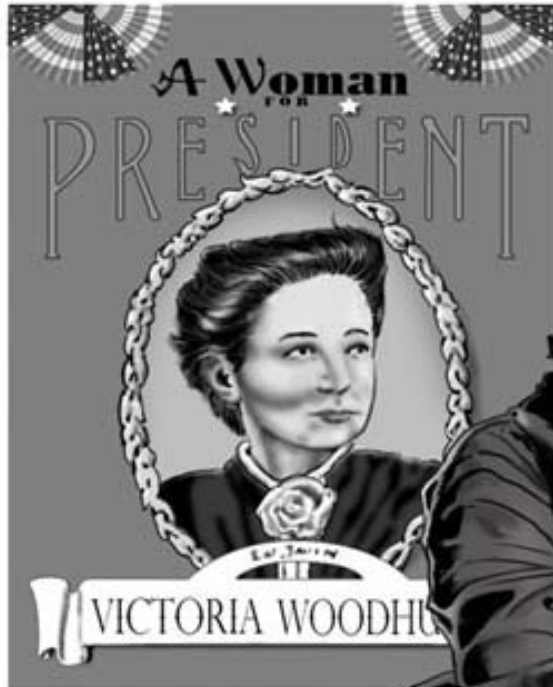
More of an empty shell available for habitation by the latest batch of eccentric New York radicals than a genuine political party, the Equal Rights Party began its life as a mechanization of the laissez-faire “Locofoco” faction of the Democratic Party in the early 1840s. It then became the political voice of landless upstate New York tenants after the civil disturbance that became known as the Anti-Rent War of 1839. Victoria Woodhull and her friends took it over for the 1872 presidential election, after which the more successful Belya Ann Lockwood used it to run for president in 1884 and 1888 on a similar platform. The party was also known as the National Equal Rights Party, the Antirenter Party, the People’s Party, the Cosmo-Political Party, and the National Radical Reformers. Although it died along with Lockwood’s presidential aspirations, the Equal Rights Party helped to inspire a number of successful New York State-only political parties such as the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the Working Families

Party, and the Right To Life Party, all of which use the tactic of supplying or withholding cross-nominations to the Democratic or Republican parties as a way of promoting their respective causes.

TENNESSEE CELESTE CLAFLIN

Though not as famous as her sister Victoria, Tennessee Claflin had an equally colorful life. Born with the misfortune of being extraordinarily good-looking, she was “turned out” by her criminal father as a prostitute while still a teenager. Tennessee then shrewdly worked her way up through the demimonde to become the mistress of the powerful millionaire-philanthropist Cornelius Vanderbilt, whom she talked into funding a Wall Street brokerage helmed by herself and her spiritualist sister. The firm became extremely successful, allowing the two sisters to not only pursue their love of radical causes, but set up a publishing empire as well. Tennessee in particular held several beliefs that were considered extreme even by her notorious sister. For example, she held the controversial opinion that women should serve in the military,

Victoria Woodhull



W





and was even elected Colonel of a colored National Guard Regiment.

After loosing her fortune in the fallout of the notorious election of 1872, Tennessee went on to marry Francis Cook, the Viscount of Montserrat, Portugal. Within months of their marriage, Queen Victoria made Cook a Baronet; and so, for the rest of her life, the one-time teenage prostitute was known as Lady Tennessee Cook, Viscountess of Montserrat.

VICTORIA WOODHULL PLOT SEEDS

Assassination:

Not satisfied by their financial and political ruin at the hands of Comstock, Henry Ward Beecher assembles a team of Civil War veterans to “take care” of Victoria, Tennessee, and Col. Blood one and for all! Tipped off to the plot by her psychic abilities, Victoria hires the PCs to protect her while she and her sister attempt to revive their fortunes, resulting in violent bedlam on the streets of New York City.

Compromise:

Alerted by the spirits to a coming backroom deal between Republicans and Democrats that will spell the end of civil rights for black people in Florida,

Louisiana, and South Carolina, Victoria Woodhull spends her remaining fortune to hire a crack squad of mercenaries to murder Roscoe Conkling, a Republican congressman. As Senator Conkling's train streaks south through a blinding snowstorm, the PCs make their move....

Commune: At the height of her wealth and influence in 1871, Victoria hires a team of idealistic former Union officers to assist the uprising of French socialists, republicans, and anarchists known as the Paris Commune. Traveling through a countryside ruined by the clash of Napoleonic and Prussian forces, the PCs must fight their way past deserters, bandits, and soldiers to sneak much needed supplies into the besieged city. Perhaps more importantly, as the forces of the national French army inexorably close in, will they be able to escape with their lives?



Victoria Woodhull

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
13	CON	6	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 12-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
12	COM	1	11-	

5	PD	3		Total: 5 PD (0 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 4 ED (0 rED)
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
5	REC	0		
26	END	0		
25	STUN	1		

Total Characteristic Cost: 43

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Leaping:	2"/4"
	Swimming:	2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
11	<i>Spiritualist Abilities:</i> Multipower, 40-point Reserve; Concentration (0 DCV Throughout, Totally Unaware, -1½), OAF (Expendable, Easy to Obtain, -1)	0
1u	1) <i>Spirit Guided Healing:</i> Healing BODY 4d6; Concentration (0 DCV Throughout, Totally Unaware, -1½), OAF (Magnets, -1), Others Only (-½)	4
1u	2) <i>Spiritual Cartomancy:</i> Precognitive Clairvoyance (Sight Group); Precognition/Retrocognition Only (-1), Concentration (0 DCV Throughout, Totally Unaware, -1½), OAF (Tarot Cards, -1), Vague and Unclear (-½)	4
1u	3) <i>Spirit Summoning:</i> Summon 47-point Ghosts and Spirits, Expanded Class of Beings Limited Group (+½), Specific Being (+1), Invisible Power Effects (Fully, Hide Effects, +2); Concentration (0 DCV Throughout, Totally Unaware, -1½), OAF (Planchette, -1)	4
15	Luck 3d6	

Perks

- 5 Money: Well Off
- 9 Reputation: Controversial Feminist Agitator, Political Activist, and Spiritualist (Large Group) 14-, +3/+3d6

Talents

- 9 *Spirit Speech:* Universal Translator 13-; Concentration (0 DCV, Totally Unaware, -¾), Only to Speak with Summoned Spirits (-½)

Skills

- 3 Acting 13-
- 3 Bribery 13-
- 3 Bureaucratics 13-
- 3 CK: New York 12-
- 3 Conversation 13-
- 3 High Society 13-
- 4 KS: Faith Healing/Magnetic Healing 13-
- 4 KS: Patent Medicines 13-
- 4 KS: Spiritualism 13-
- 3 Oratory 13-
- 3 Paramedics 12-
- 3 Persuasion 13-
- 3 PS: Politician/Activist 13-
- 3 PS: Publisher 12-
- 4 PS: Stockbroker 13-
- 3 Seduction 13-
- 3 Streetwise 13-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 107

Total Cost: 150

75+ Disadvantages

- 15 Psychological Limitation: Obsessive Showmanship (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Pushy and Opinionated (Common, Strong)
- 15 Reputation: Controversial and Disreputable Troublemaker, 11- (Extreme)
- 15 Social Limitation: Woman in Victorian Society (Frequently, Major)
- 15 Unluck: 3d6

Total Disadvantage Points: 150



In Praise of the Antihero

by Michael Wallwork

Some of the most memorable characters in literature, comics, and movies are neither true heroes, nor true villains. They are antiheroes, characters who fall into a grey area between right and wrong. Often well meaning, they fall short of being true heroes due to their questionable morals or the unsavory methods they employ. Their heyday was in the late 1980s and early 1990s, especially in comics, when antiheroes old and new were given a big push along with any hero who was considered “edgy” or who was viewed as pushing the limits of what it meant to be a hero. Lately, the antihero seems to be in decline as we move toward a cleaner, starker contrast between the “good guys” and the “bad guys.” This is unfortunate as the antihero, more so than the villain, helps us define heroism and provides the best measuring stick for all true heroes regardless of genre – comic books, movies, pulp fiction, and of course in gaming.

What Defines an Antihero?

One of the most overlooked aspects of the true hero is that he is good not just because he wants to be, though that is important, but because he knows *how* to be a hero. Many, if not most, antiheroes see themselves as heroic individuals. However, they fall short of being true heroes because they lack some necessary trait that true heroes possess, most often the ability to separate the ends they desire and the means used to achieve those ends. Thus, one form the antihero takes is that of an activist for a good cause who either cannot or will not accept the moral limits society imposes on the methods of those seeking a change. An eco-terrorist is a good example. On the one hand, the character wants to protect the environment, which is a good thing. But if the character achieves that end by blowing up buildings owned by companies he perceives as evil or tries to make “political statements” by killing executives of such companies, then that character cannot be considered a hero, no matter how much good they might do saving the environment. Characters who pursue one man crusades against crime also fit into this category if they routinely kill those they perceive to be guilty.

Similar to the character with a social cause is the individual with a scientific one. His work may be intended to benefit mankind; but his methods or results, if not both, are highly unethical. Dr. Frankenstein is a perfect example. In an effort to benefit mankind and learn how life works, he robs graves and constructs what becomes, quite literally, a monster. Any scientist who experiments on humans that are unwilling or unknowing participants could also fit into this

category as would any scientist knowingly doing dangerous research without proper safety precautions, provided that he is doing research that he intends to use to benefit mankind rather than for personal gain.

Occasionally, we run into individuals who are not capable of being good but want to be good or, at the very least, do not want to be evil. They are tragic characters whose very bodies (or minds) betray them and lead them into violent confrontations where they cannot help but hurt people, even though they do not want to or mean to. Frankenstein’s monster (especially the movie version) fits here very well. This is also the place for characters with weak wills who do not wish to do evil but who are seduced or overwhelmed by it. Their actions are often marked by indecision or regret, and such characters may even apologize to a hero at the same time they betray him or her.

Finally, we may also find in the antihero ranks people who are “on their own side.” These people may have a sense of duty, honor, or even morals, but who first and foremost are “looking out for number one.” The loveable thief or scoundrel would fit here as would many vengeful heroes. These characters tend to oppose a villain not because it is the right thing to do but because of some personal interest, whether it is survival, revenge, or an attempt to rescue a loved one. Such characters often have a very specific opponent and can be easily recruited to help against that one particular opponent but often can’t be bothered to help out in almost any other situation.

Antiheroes and Villains

It is important to note briefly the relationship between antiheroes and villains. Antiheroes occasionally work with villains because their mutual interests *in the short term* may coincide. Most often, this occurs when both antihero and villain choose the same target (though likely for different reasons). An antihero, for example, may elect to team up with one crime family in order to wipe out a more powerful syndicate. But once the job is finished, the antihero will probably sever the alliance and begin working against his partners.

Partnering with villains is possible not only because the antihero and villain may occasionally share a target but also because they share similar methods. Indeed, the methods of most antiheroes are not very different from most villains. Often, what separates the antihero from the villain is not his method but his motivation.

artwork by Darren Bulmer

The antihero is trying to do good whereas the villain's motivations are selfish or evil. Where the villain kills someone because it is convenient or even fun for them, the antihero kills people in the name of the greater good. And the antihero's greater good is a cause that society as a whole believes is good and right.

What Use is the Antihero?

So where do these characters fit into the gaming world? One possibility is that they can simply be a plot complication, leading to a three-way fight between antihero, the heroes, and the villain (whom the antihero is trying to kill). One scenario is to use the antihero as a way to give the hero a second (but not secondary) goal of preserving the villain's life. This increases the difficulty of the adventure as the heroes must now capture the villain *and* protect the villain from the antihero at the same time.

Second, and most importantly, antiheroes help the heroes and villains, but especially the heroes, define who they are and what it is that makes the hero a hero even more than the villains do. It is this function, more than any other, that makes the antihero valuable, not only in literature (of whatever type you like be it Shakespeare or comic books) but in gaming. The antihero makes for great storytelling (sometimes with surprising results), but he also gives the players/PCs a chance to measure and define themselves against the antihero because they often have similar goals. In fact, some of the best roleplaying opportunities may arise when the characters are given a chance to either help or oppose an antihero with similar goals but whose methods give the true heroes, the PCs, some reason to pause.

To continue the previous example of the three-way fight, the characters must now decide whether or not they *want* to protect the villain, even though the antihero is trying to kill him. However, for this to be a true moral choice, the PCs can't need the villain alive for any reason. So the villain can't have information they need, nor can they need him to bargain for someone else's life. Of course, saving the villain from an antihero who wants to act as judge and jury does not necessarily mean having to save the villain's life. With magic or super science in play, there are any number of things the antihero may wish to do to the villain besides kill him (imprisoning him, banishing him to a hostile dimension, irreversibly polymorphing the villain, and even rewriting the villain's mind with mental powers are all options).

Then too, maybe the antihero is trying to do something clearly good but is going about it in an illegal or dangerous way. For example, a scientific antihero might start stealing prototype technology for some noble purpose (perhaps he

got wind of a villain's plan and is trying to build a device to thwart it). Do the characters help the antihero finish what he started? What if they have to help the antihero steal something? What if the technology has more sinister applications? For example, what if it could be used to make a powerful weapon instead of whatever the antihero claims to want it for?

The possibilities are endless.

The Antihero as Player Character

The antihero as PC presents special problems. First and foremost, since he is not a true hero, he often does not get along well with those who are. Often, the antihero views the true heroes as being "too soft" and unwilling to make difficult sacrifices or choices to achieve their goals. This can cause definite problems with group dynamics, assuming he is ever accepted as part of the group in the first place. In fact, some characters with extremely high morals may be incapable of ever accepting the antihero as part of the group.

Second, there is a good chance that the antihero will become a wanted man at some point in the campaign, if he doesn't actually start out as one. PC heroes without significant reputations will find it hard to work with both the official forces and the antihero as official types will shy away from working with anyone associated with a wanted man and may even confront the heroes about bringing in their associate. Or perhaps the heroes will become wanted as well for harboring a fugitive. Obviously, the antihero himself has very little chance to working with the authorities since he often does not follow the laws which govern society in general, let alone the strict rules which official forces must follow in order to assemble a case which can stand up in court.

Third, the antihero's relationship with the press isn't much better than it is with the police. Antiheroes are much more vulnerable to smear campaigns and charges of uncontrolled vigilantism because the charges are more likely to be true as antiheroes often take shortcuts which the public would view as unethical under all but the direst circumstances. More heroic minded PCs may have similar problems with their relationship with the media if it becomes known that they are associating with an antihero. Such heroes are effectively considered to be endorsing the methods of the antihero and are therefore thought of as being guilty by association of anything the antihero does.

Finally, since the antihero often employs more violent methods in bringing down criminals, any villains the PCs encounter may elect to "take the kid gloves off" against the heroes either out of fear for their own safety or out of revenge for someone the antihero has

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previously injured. Such villains will go out of their way to do serious harm to the PCs and will use killing attacks much more freely.

Because of these problems, the antihero must be handled carefully as a Player Character, especially in classic four color Champions campaigns or other campaigns where morality is usually very clearly defined and the “good guys” and “bad guys” are generally obvious. In such campaigns, the antihero often gets considered an outright villain. Even in more gritty or realistic campaigns, the character must be placed in a group that can at least tolerate his attitude and methods. To the larger public though, the antihero may often be thought of as only slightly better (or even no better) than the villains he opposes. This dramatically changes both the tone of the campaign and the amount and type of help available to the PC group for the reasons mentioned above.

But regardless of whether the character is a PC or an NPC, inserting one or more antiheroes into a campaign gives the players a chance to really explore their characters, see what makes them tick, and show why they are who they are and what truly makes them heroes in a way that basic good vs. evil battles, enjoyable as they are, simply cannot.

Le Vert

Background: Jean Philippe Bonacieux was born in Quebec in 1975. His family emigrated to New York when he was seven. They bought a convenience store and settled down to a middle class life. When Bonacieux was in college, his parents told him they could no longer afford to pay for his tuition. An Environmental Protection Agency investigation had determined that the store used to be a gas station and his parents were responsible for part of the clean up bill - several hundred thousand dollars worth of the bill (enough to force them to close the store). Jean Philippe managed to get loans, and his father found a factory job. But the hardships created by having to close the store stuck with Jean Philippe. After taking a degree in environmental science, he got a job working for a supposedly “green” technology company. It wasn’t long before he found out that his employers were as dirty as anyone else. Disillusioned and angry, he stole some money and some technological equipment and disappeared. After using his stolen money to get set up a day trading account and to get some combat training, he created the persona of the environmental avenger Le Vert and went about punishing the companies that the EPA was letting slide where they nailed the “little guys” like his parents.

Personality/Motivation: Bonacieux is very bitter. He views all corporations as eminently corrupt and both unknowing and uncaring about the damage they do to the environment. In his eyes, they are necessary evils whose existence is only tolerated because they employ so many people. As a result, he tries to investigate each target and chooses only the worst polluters and most corrupt executives as recipients of his wrath. Once he has settled on a target, however, he is implacable and will not rest until the company has been crippled.

Bonacieux does have sympathy for the common workers of the companies he targets so he will avoid fighting night security guards if he can and will plant bombs and such at night when the staff is at its lowest. If necessary, he will make his best effort to evacuate a building to minimize loss of life before planting his bombs, but he will not trouble himself over executives or any “heroes” who interfere on behalf of the greedy corporation. Furthermore, he considers it regrettable that the workers may endure economic hardships while they look for new jobs, but all struggles require sacrifices to be made.

While he is all business in his costumed identity, without his mask Jean Philippe likes to take the part of the loveable French rogue, quoting *The Three Musketeers* and Maurice

Chevalier extensively, particularly when attempting to seduce women, though he does so with a quiet confidence of Chevalier rather than the boisterousness of a D’Artagnan so as to better pass himself off as a respectable gentleman.

Quote: “Zounds, Monsieur, do not force me to pummel you in the midst of my great work.”

Powers/Tactics: Le Vert is a diligent investigator, often taking a month or more to research his targets, learning all he can about them. By the time he takes action, he often knows more about the company than the board members do. This means he always has an escape route planned. If confronted by a superior force, he will throw his EMP bomb at the nearest light source or technological character and then flee. If forced to fight, he will keep his DCV as high as possible and concentrate on a single target at a time starting with mentalist, then whoever he thinks is easiest to take down.

Campaign Use: As a general rule, Le Vert will not Hunt heroes because he feels it distracts from his true purpose. If someone continually got in his way, he would not hesitate to hunt them down as methodically as he does his corporate targets. He is currently hunting Defender due to that hero’s consistent interference in Le Vert’s attempts against several technology companies.

Besides being a Hunter, Le Vert works best as a corporate saboteur. Ideally, he could target a company that one of the PCs owns or works for. Alternatively, Le Vert is an excellent plot complication for characters that need help from a company or scientific research facility. Finally, while he prefers to work alone, he has been known team up with other “environmentally friendly” supers. In particular, he has worked with Black Druid on a few occasions.

Le Vert is meant to be a standard level Champions character. To scale him down to street level, lower his SPD to 5 and reduce his DEX and Damage Classes to bring his attacks in line with the campaign limits. For more powerful campaigns, increase his SPD to 7, add more padding in his costume, and expand his Martial Arts to include the remaining Savate maneuvers and a WE: Blades.

Appearance: Jean Philippe is a dashing, dark-haired man of 31. He is about six feet tall, and a thin mustache helps accent his roguish good looks. He is always dressed in business casual, usually wearing a jewel toned shirt with the top two buttons open to show off his toned physique. His costume is forest green with white boots and gloves. The gloves and boots have gold trim to designate his rank as a master savateur.



Le Vert

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400kg; 4d6 HTH [2]
28	DEX	54	15-	OCV: 9/DCV: 9
24	CON	28	14-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
16	COM	3	12-	
				Total: 20 PD (8 rPD)
				Total: 20 ED (8 rED)
				Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
12	PD	8		
12	ED	8		
6	SPD	22		
10	REC	4		
70	END	11		
47	STUN	5		

Total Characteristic Cost: 197

Movement: Running: 14"/28"
 Leaping: 4"/8"
 Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
31	<i>EMP Grenade:</i> Dispel 12d6, All Electricity Powers Simultaneously (+2), Area Of Effect (One Hex +½), OAF (-1), 1 Charge (-2)	[1]
16	<i>Padded Costume:</i> Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-½)	0
16	<i>Fast:</i> Running +8" (14" Total)	1
3	<i>Night Vision Lenses:</i> Ultraviolet Perception; OIF (-½)	0
2	<i>Spy Camera:</i> Eidetic Memory, OAF (-1), Only Visual Images (-½)	0

Perks

- 1 Contact: Black Druid 8-
- 3 Money: Well Off

Skills

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4 <i>Coup de Pied Bas</i> (Low Kick)	+0	+2	9d6 Strike
4 <i>Coup de Pied Chasse</i> (Side Kick)	-2	+1	11d6 Strike
5 Direct (Jab/ Cross)	+1	+3	7d6 Strike
3 Footsweep	+2	-1	8d6 Strike, Target Falls
12	+3 Damage Classes (already added in)		

- 10 +2 with Hand-to-Hand Combat
- 3 Acrobatics 15-
- 3 Acting 13-
- 3 Breakfall 15-
- 3 Bugging 13-
- 3 Climbing 15-
- 5 Computer Programming 14-
- 3 Conversation 13-
- 10 Defense Maneuver I-IV
- 3 Demolitions 13-
- 3 Electronics 13-
- 3 KS: Business 13-
- 3 KS: Savate 13-
- 3 KS: Stock Market 13-
- 2 Language: English (Fluent, French is Native)
- 3 Lockpicking 15-
- 3 Mechanics 13-
- 4 PS: Private Investigator 14-
- 3 SS: Chemistry 13-
- 3 SS: Ecology 13-
- 3 Security Systems 13-
- 3 Seduction 13-
- 3 Stealth 15-
- 3 Streetwise 13-

Total Skills & Powers: 192

Total Cost: 389

200+ Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Feature: Style (Not Concealable, Large Group)
- 15 Hunted: Defender 11- (As Pow, Capture)
- 20 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Must Play the French Lover (Common, Moderate)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Protection of Innocents (Common Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Uncommon, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: Eco-terrorist 11-
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity [Jean Philippe Bonacieux] (Frequently, Major)
- 5 Unluck: 1d6
- 79 Experience Points

Total Disadvantages: 389

Pyre

Background/History: Gabrielle Johnson was a graduate student studying physics at MIT when the lab she was in was set fire by a stray shot from Firewing during a battle with the Champions. The building quickly went up in flames and Gabrielle was immolated. But for some reason her experiment interacted with the flames and she survived. Instead of dying, she was granted fire powers of her own. At the time, she didn't realize it and rushed out of the building, heedless to her new powers. Unfortunately, one of her friends saw Gabrielle apparently on fire and, after taking off his coat to help smother the flames, rushed to Gabrielle's aid. Gabrielle's friend died in her arms as Gabrielle's fire shield burned her friend to death in seconds. Horrified, she fled and has spent the last few years running from everyone and everything. She now spends her time wandering the deserts of the southwestern United States where there is very little life and little that can be hurt by her touch.

Personality/Motivation: Gabrielle is very lonely. She has very little contact with human beings anymore. The few times she does come into contact with humans it is usually either a police agency trying to capture her or supervillains such as VIPER with even worse intentions. Gabrielle hates her existence and wishes to be left alone to die, except that her body has changed to make a natural death very difficult. Even in the middle of the desert, she cannot die of natural causes and no predator can get through her damage shield to hurt her. She would do almost anything for someone who could remove her powers.

Quote: "LEAVE... ME... ALONE!"
(punctuated by a fireball)

Powers/Tactics: Gabrielle was never a fighter and has little formal training. She also wants to die. So her tactics are very elemental. Basically, she just floats a few hexes up and blasts everything in sight. Since on some level she is hoping someone will finally get a good shot in and kill her in one of these skirmishes, she always presents a good target and will only run away if she is severely injured or in danger of being captured.

Campaign Use: Gabrielle is a tragic lost soul. She is also a wanted criminal. Since she has killed several officers trying to bring her in, the characters could make an attempt to bring her in as a wanted felon. Of course, finding her in the desert won't be easy. Alternatively, one of the characters may figure out what happened to her and try to find her and to help her. The characters could also encounter her as a "hired gun" – either because VIPER finally captured her or because a villain convinced her that he can cure her condition if she will just do a few "favors" for him (whether the villain is lying or not is entirely up to the GM).

Pyre is built for a standard level Champions game. For a lower level game, reduce her SPD to 4 and lower her attack powers, PD, and ED to fit in with the campaign limits. For higher level games, increase her SPD and DEX to the campaign average and increase the damage her attacks do. You might also consider making some of her defenses Resistant and adding an NND attack.

Appearance: Gabrielle is a tall young woman (about 5'9") in her late-20s with an athletic build. Originally, she was a classic beauty with long black hair, green eyes, and aquiline features. Now, she is enveloped in constant orange flames that do little to hide her proportions though it is hard to make out details. Somehow, the flame circles where her eyes should be seem to look haunted. Her hair is now a mane of yellow flames that flow out behind her.

Pyre



DIGITAL HERO #42

Pyre

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200kg ;3d6 HTH [1]
22	DEX	36	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
30	CON	40	15-	
24	BODY	28	14-	
18	INT	8	12-	PER Roll: 12-
8	EGO	-4	11-	ECV: 3
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
16	COM	3	12-	
25	PD	22		Total: 25 PD (0 rPD)
35	ED	29		Total: 35 ED (0 rED)
5	SPD	18		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
12	REC	6		
90	END	15		
47	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 211

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Leaping:	3"/6"
	Swimming:	2"/4"
	Flight:	15"/30"

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Living Flame Powers:</i> Elemental Control, 60-point Powers	0
130	1) <i>Fire Shield:</i> RKA 4d6, Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½), Persistent (+½), Always On (-½)	0
30	2) <i>Fire Blast:</i> RKA 4d6	6
105	3) <i>Fireball:</i> EB 12d6, Area of Effect (6" Radius, +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END, +¼)	6
20	4) <i>Immunity to Fire:</i> Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75%, Only Works Against Fire (-½)	0
30	<i>Fiery Flight:</i> Flight 15"	1
18	<i>Fiery Form:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing, Need Not Sleep, Need Not Eat, Safe in Intense Heat)	0

Skills

3	+1 with Living Flame Powers
3	Computer Programming 13-
2	Language: French (Fluent Conversation)
3	SS: Physics 13-
3	Stealth 13-
2	Survival (Desert) 13-

Total Skills & Powers: 379

Total Cost: 590

200+ Disadvantages

20	Distinctive Feature: Flame Body (Not Concealable, Major Reaction)
20	Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
20	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow; NCI, Enslave)
20	Physical Limitation: Cannot Touch Another Human Being (All the Time, Greatly)
15	Psychological Limitation: Passively Suicidal (Common, Strong)
10	Reputation: Violent Killer, 8- (Extreme)
20	Susceptibility: 2d6 per Phase from Total Immersion in Water (Uncommon)
40	Vulnerability: 2x STUN and BODY from Ice/Cold Attacks (Common)
225	Experience Points

Total Disadvantages: 590

Dr. Sven Scharten

Background/History: Sven Scharten was a brilliant young doctor in Norway in 1939 when the Nazis took over and began “recruiting” people to help them. Scharten actually volunteered to conduct war time medical experiments as it gave him a chance to conduct research he would otherwise not have been able to do legally. He spent the war conducting Frankenstein-like experiments in concentration camps. After the war, Dr. Scharten was wanted for war crimes but escaped to Asia and eventually made his way into Vietnam where he continued his experiments. When the Vietnam War reached its peak in the mid-1960s, he decided that the war, while providing a constant supply of bodies, was dangerous to his work as the constant fighting often disrupted his experiments, so he moved to the United States and settled around Chicago. For the last forty years, Scharten has been in hiding around Chicago, continuing his experiments – which have met with some success.

Personality/Motivation: Doctor Scharten is a very charismatic man who has spent a lifetime studying men in all his forms. He has seen men at their best and especially at their worst. His manner is ingratiating, at times even subservient, but he knows exactly what he is doing at all times and only appears to subsume his ego when it suits his purpose. Whenever he is in a position of superiority his true nature shows, and he will be arrogant, even condescending to anyone he considers an inferior intellect (which is basically everyone).

Scharten has never been close to other human beings. He has considered himself above them in many aspects and deliberately separated himself from human society. The only thing that truly matters to him is his life’s work. As a child, he was fascinated by the story of *Frankenstein*, and it has served as the macabre inspiration for his entire life. Like Dr. Frankenstein, Scharten is desperately searching for the secret of eternal life. His time is running out, and despite spending a lifetime on his search, he is no further along in his research than the literary character ever got. Doctor Scharten’s ego almost demands that he go down in history as a great scientist, and he is growing increasingly desperate in his research, taking chances that he would not have considered in the past. This further adds to his mental instability. The doctor is a tortured soul who is paranoid that the government will eventually find him and try him for war crimes before he can complete his experiments. Adding to his mental problems is that his experiments often require him to practice vivisection (dissection of live individuals). If confronted with the facts,

Dr. Scharten will insist that the greater good of his ultimate goal is worth the sacrifice of a few human “rejects.” Still, despite his best efforts to convince himself that his work is moral and for the benefit of mankind, Scharten has not lost his humanity as much as he claims to have, and he is haunted by the pain he inflicts on his victims, often suffering terrible nightmares that can only be quelled by taking large draughts of sleeping medication which knock him out and prevent him from dreaming.

Quote: “Science tells man the mind of God, and it is our duty to unravel God’s secrets at all costs.”

Powers/Tactics: Dr. Scharten is an elderly man who is essentially a non-combatant. If cornered, he will order his golems to attack, and then attempt to flee himself. His golems also serve as lab assistants, mostly for moving machinery and overpowering unwilling subjects. Lately, Scharten has even taken one or two with him on rainy nights to abduct homeless people or streetwalkers who have no one to protect them. It is important to note that he would never abduct anyone he thought was a useful member of society. If at all possible, he will only abduct criminals for his experiments or, failing to find a criminal, someone who he does not see as a useful member of society (such as a homeless person). He will never knowingly abduct a police officer, not even a dirty cop, because he would be too scared of the intense investigation that would surely follow.

Campaign Use: Dr. Scharten is not a combat oriented character. He is a mad scientist who acquires bodies (both living and dead) through his contacts. Thus, the most likely scenarios for using Dr. Scharten involve disappearing bodies. Perhaps one of the characters has street contacts and notices a rash of missing people (either homeless people or streetwalkers). Alternatively, the characters could be investigating a murder when the body goes missing from the morgue. Investigating the disappearance of the body eventually leads them to Dr. Scharten. Finally, due to his desperation, Scharten may hire out his expertise as a pharmacologist to a villain or another antihero. In exchange for producing various “truth serums” to aid in interrogation, the villain or antihero agrees to let Scharten keep the body after the interrogation is over.

Scharten is a street level character who is not meant to ever enter combat himself. For a full fledged Champions campaign increase his SPD to 3 and his Running to 8” to improve his chances to run away. To hold off the heroes better, simply increase the number and base points of his golem Followers.

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Appearance: Doctor Scharten is an elderly man of slightly below average height with a good constitution and a slight build. He generally looks all of his 94 years and has developed a slight hump on his upper back from so much time spent bending over his operating tables. His skin is pale, almost translucent. His features are classic Scandinavian, especially his round face. His once blonde hair has long since fallen out, leaving him completely bald. When going out on the town, he normally wears a disguise.

Dr. Sven Scharten



Dr. Sven Scharten

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
13	DEX	9	12-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
14	CON	16	12-	
13	BODY	12	12-	
28	INT	18	15-	PER Roll: 15-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
3	PD	1		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	0		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
6	REC	2		
30	END	1		
28	STUN	3		

Total Characteristics Cost: 76

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
 Leaping: 2"/4"
 Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost Perks

- 4 Contact: City Morgue Technician 13-
- 4 Contact: Hospital Morgue Technician 13-
- 3 Contact: Street Pimp 12-
- 50 Followers: Golem Servants (4 200-point golems)
- 5 Money: Well Off

Skills

- 3 Acting 12-
- 2 AK: Bavaria 11-
- 3 AK: Chicago Area 15-
- 3 Bribery 12-
- 3 Computer Programming 15-
- 3 Disguise 12-
- 3 Electronics 12-
- 5 Forensic Medicine 16-
- 3 Inventor 15-
- 3 Language: English (Fluent, Norwegian is Native)
- 3 Language: French (Fluent)
- 3 Language: German (Fluent)
- 3 Language: Latin (Fluent)
- 3 Mechanics 15-
- 3 PS: Doctor 15-
- 3 Streetwise 12-
- 3 Scientist
- 3 1) SS: Anthropology 16-
- 3 2) SS: Biochemistry 16-
- 3 3) SS: Biology 16-
- 3 4) SS: Genetics 16-
- 3 5) SS: Medicine 16-
- 3 6) SS: Organic Chemistry 16-
- 3 7) SS: Pharmacology 16-

Total Skills & Powers: 139

Total Cost: 215

75+ Disadvantages

- 10 Age: 60+ (Real Age 94)
- 5 Distinctive Feature: Nazi Tattoo (Easily Concealed)
- 20 Hunted: US Government 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Paranoid (Very Common, Strong)
- 85 Experience Points

Total Disadvantages: 215



Cybersystems

 by Bob Greenwade

Cybersystems: An Expansion of Terran Empire Cybernetics

The latter half of the twenty-first century saw a prodigious rise in cybernetic science on Earth. While Humans still hold the cultural connotations of despair and tyranny that came with the same period, other species are less reluctant to use cybernetics – some, particularly the Somon (see *Terran Empire*, page 97) have far exceeded anything Humans have done.

While the cybernetic systems listed here (as well as on pages 131-132 of *Terran Empire* and pages 33-35 of *Spacer's Toolkit*) should be adequate for most cyborgs, nearly any gadget can be converted into a cybernetic system by replacing the *Focus* Limitation with *Restrainable* at the $-\frac{1}{4}$ level. In certain cases the *Physical Manifestation* Limitation may also be appropriate.

CYBORG DISADVANTAGES

Besides any special powers, a cyborg may have some of his normal abilities affected by “cybernetic restraints.” This is represented as a Physical Limitation to the effect that the normal ability is affected as though it was Restrainable at the $-\frac{1}{4}$ level. This limitation occurs Infrequently; the level of impairment is the same as if it was permanent. Thus, a single artificial eye would be Slightly Impairing, while both eyes would be Fully Impairing (as would both arms or both legs).

Also, many cyborgs may take a Distinctive Feature to reflect others' ability to tell that he's part machine. The *Detectable Cyborg* Distinctive Feature is worth 5 points (Concealable, Major Reaction, Uncommonly-Used Senses, Not Distinctive in Some Societies); with this the character can be identified with a simple cybernetics detector and may suffer some prejudice, but won't have to worry about things on worlds such as Venwordien, Somon, or Malva where such things are more commonplace. This assumes that the character's cybernetic parts are either hidden or covered by normal-looking skin; if not, the character gets the *Obvious Cyborg* Distinctive Feature for 10 points (Concealable, Major Reaction, Commonly-Used Senses, Not Distinctive In Some Societies).

Cyberweapons

Cybernetic weapons systems, colloquially called “cyberweapons” or “Weapon Arms,” are generally restricted to military and other “official” personnel. When they do occur they are almost always built into the recipient's forearm – most frequently replacing the hand altogether (resulting in a Physical Limitation), but often supplementing it. Occasionally the weapon is built to replace the hand only when it's in use (just add a $-\frac{1}{2}$ Limitation *Replaces Hand When in Use* to any of these devices) – though this is only possible if the entire arm is a cybernetic replacement.

Most of these weapons are too large to have more than one installed on the same arm, limiting most cyborgs to two. There are exceptions, most of them noted in the text here (though not always explicitly); if the question should come up, the GM should use common sense.

In any event, having a cyberweapon almost always requires the Distinctive Feature *Obvious Cyborg* (Not Concealable, Noticed And Recognized; 15 points).

As noted on page 35 of *Spacer's Toolkit*, having a cyberweapon installed costs 500 credits in addition to the full listed Character Point and monetary cost.

MELEE CYBERWEAPONS

Most melee cyberweapons date back to Earth's late 21st century, when cybernetics and extreme violence became symptom's of humanity's general malaise.

BUZZSAW HAND

ATRI: 8

Price: 3,000 credits, or more

Description: This weapon, essentially a small circular saw, most often attaches to the back of a cyborg's hand.

Game Information: *HKA 2d6, Autofire (3 shots; $+\frac{1}{4}$), Armor Piercing ($+\frac{1}{2}$) (52 Active Points); No STR Bonus ($-\frac{1}{2}$), Restrainable ($-\frac{1}{4}$), Real Weapon ($-\frac{1}{4}$). Total cost: 26 points.*

CYBERNETIC ANIMALS

Though it was quite the fad in the later years of Earth's 21st Century, installing cybernetic parts on animals is not as easy as it might seem — and in some cases it's not nearly as wise as some people think. For one thing, cybernetic energy weapons on animals are almost universally considered a bad idea, given the unpredictable nature of both (“This is precisely the reason they don't normally give bazookas to dogs”).

This is not to say that such cybernetic systems are *always* bad. If a system enhances the animal's natural senses, movement, or other abilities, then the adaptation process can be relatively quick. It's not at all uncommon for a pet or service animal to have a cybernetic limb or sensory organ following an injury.

CHAINSAW HAND**ATRI:** 8**Price:** 4,200 credits, or more

Description: This is a huge, razor-sharp chainsaw – often with a diamond-bladed chain – in the form of a sword. It is almost always a complete replacement for the cyborg's hand, though one that can be easily switched for a normal hand.

Game Information: *HKA 2d6+1 (up to 4½d6 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½), Penetrating (+½) (70 Active Points); Lockout (cannot use the same hand in any normal way, requiring a Full Phase to switch and for that purpose treating this as a Persistent Power; -½), Restrainable (-¼), Real Weapon (-¼). Total cost: 35 points.*

MACE HAND**ATRI:** 8**Price:** 2,700 credits, or more

Description: Though not able to slice through armor as easily as a chainsaw, this weapon offers more raw power.

Game Information: *HKA 3d6 (up to 6d6 w/STR) (45 Active Points); Lockout (cannot use the same hand in any normal way, requiring a Full Phase to switch and for that purpose treating this as a Persistent Power; -½), Restrainable (-¼), Real Weapon (-¼). Total cost: 22 points.*

PILEDRIVER HAND**ATRI:** 8**Price:** 1,800 credits, or more

Description: This weapon mounts in a cyborg's arm, and augments his punching power by thrusting his fist forward on impact.

Game Information: *HA +6d6 (30 Active Points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½), Restrainable (-¼), Real Weapon (-¼). Total cost: 15 points.*

RANGED CYBERWEAPONS**MARK II CYBER LASER****ATRI:** 9**Price:** 2,200 credits, or more.

Description: One of the earliest energy-based cyberweapons, the Mark II Cyber Laser is a compact, efficient weapon.

Game Information: *RKA 2d6, Power Can Draw END from Character or END Reserve (+¼) (37 Active Points); Restrainable (-¼), Blocked By Smoke Or Steam (-¼), Real Weapon (-¼). Total cost: 21 points.*

MARK III CYBER LASER**ATRI:** 10**Price:** 3,000 credits, or more

Description: A larger, more advanced version of the Mark II Cyber Laser, the Mark III can be quite a formidable weapon.

Game Information: *RKA 2½d6, Power Can Draw END from Character or END Reserve (+¼) (50 Active Points); Restrainable (-¼), Blocked By Smoke Or Steam (-¼), Real Weapon (-¼). Total cost: 28 points.*

MARK III-A CYBER LASER**ATRI:** 11**Price:** 4,200 credits, or more

Description: A special enhancement of the Mark III, the Mark III-A can shoot up to five shots in a single burst.

Game Information: *RKA 2½d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), Power Can Draw END from Character or END Reserve (+¼) (70 Active Points); Restrainable (-¼), Blocked By Smoke Or Steam (-¼), Real Weapon (-¼). Total cost: 40 points.*

MARK IV CYBER LASER**ATRI:** 11**Price:** 3,700 credits, or more

Description: The largest and most powerful cybernetic laser during the Terran Empire period (except for a handful of custom-built models), this system takes up so much of a person's forearm that it often can only be installed into a complete limb replacement.

Game Information: *RKA 3d6+1, Power Can Draw END from Character or END Reserve (+¼) (62 Active Points); Restrainable (-¼), Blocked By Smoke Or Steam (-¼), Real Weapon (-¼). Total cost: 35 points.*

CYBER PLASMA RIFLE**ATRI:** 11**Price:** 4,800 credits, or more

Description: No species other than Humans have built – or even would attempt to build – a cybernetic version of a plasma rifle. This is a scaled-down version of the M49 plasma rifle (*Terran Empire*, page 141), mounted on the subject's forearm.

Game Information: *EB 9d6, Autofire (2 shots; +¼), Explosion (+½), 16 Charges (+0) (79 Active Points); Restrainable (-¼), Limited Range (27"; -¼), Real Weapon (-¼). Total cost: 45 points.*

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CYBER BLASTER

ATRI: 11

Price: 3,800 credits, or more

Description: Following the popularity of the MIP-162 ion pistol (*Terran Empire*, page 142), cyberneticists rushed to build a safe and practical cybernetic ion blaster. This was the result.

Game Information: *Multipower, 62-point reserve, 30 Charges for entire reserve (+1/4); all Restrainable (-1/4), Real Weapon (-1/4), Limited Range (60"; -1/4) (total cost 44 points) plus slot 1: RKA 3d6, Autofire (2 shots; +1/4); Restrainable (-1/4), Real Weapon (-1/4), Limited Range (60"; -1/4) (total cost 4) plus EB 10d6, Autofire (2 shots; +1/4); Restrainable (-1/4), Real Weapon (-1/4), Limited Range (60"; -1/4) (total cost 4 points). Total cost: 52 points.*

CYBER GAMMA WEAPON

ATRI: 11

Price: 3,000 credits, or more

Description: Based roughly on the GR-01 Gamma Rifle and GP-03 Gamma Pistol (see *Spacer's Toolkit*, page 15), the GC-02 Cyber Gamma Weapon mounts within a cyborg's forearm. If the arm is a total replacement, it may even be totally concealed within the arm.

Game Information: *Energy Blast 5d6, NND (defense is ED Force Field; +1), 16 Charges (+0) (50 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4), Real Weapon (-1/4), Limited Range (100" in atmosphere, 750" in vacuum; -1/4). Total cost: 28 points.*

CYBER STUNNER

ATRI: 9

Price: 4,800 credits, or more

Description: Based on the sonic stunner (*Spacer's Toolkit*, page 17), the cyber stunner uses carefully-modulated infrasound and ultrasound to cause targets to pass out.

Game Information: *Energy Blast 8d6, NND (defense is Hearing Group Flash Defense; +1) (80 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4), Real Weapon (-1/4), Limited Range (40"; -1/4). Total cost: 46 points.*

CYBER FLAMER

ATRI: 9

Price: 5,500 credits, or more

Description: Based on the hand flamer (*Spacer's Toolkit*, page 17), the cyber flamer is a small but incredibly powerful flame thrower, capable of projecting blasts of flame in a cone 20 meters on a side.

Game Information: *RKA 3d6, Area Of Effect (10" Cone; +1) (90 Active Points); 10 Charges (-1/4), Restrainable (-1/4), Real Weapon (-1/4), No Range (-1/2). Total cost: 40 points.*

FLYING FIST

ATRI: 8

Price: 5,700 credits

Description: A character with this system can launch his fist like a missile. Magnetic beams in the cybernetic forearm bring it back so the character can re-attach it, though during the return trip it can be attacked as an OAF.

Game Information: *Energy Blast 8d6, Double Knockback (+3/4) (70 Active Points); OAF (-1), Lockout (cannot use right hand until Charge is recovered; -1/2), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1/4) (total cost 19 points) plus Telekinesis (10 STR) (15 Active Points); OIF (-1/2), Only To Retrieve Flying Fist (-1) (total cost 6 points). Total cost: 25 points.*

Defenses

ENHANCED ARMORSKIN

ATRI: 11

Price: (900 credits) or more.

Description: Though illegal to install in most areas (under the same laws that restrict the use of high-powered force fields; see page 146 of *Terran Empire*), once installed it cannot legally be taken away. It is also difficult to distinguish from conventional Armorskin (page 132 of *Terran Empire*) short of actually trying to penetrate it.

Some patients, in order to save money and trouble, have this enhanced form of armor placed only around their heads and torsos, with or without conventional Armorskin covering their limbs.

Game Information:

Full Enhanced Armorskin: *Armor (8 PD/4 ED). Total cost: 18 points.*

Partial Enhanced Armorskin: *Armor (8 PD/4 ED) (18 Active Points); Sectional Defenses (Only covers Hit Locations 3-5 and 9-13; -1). Total cost: 9 points.*

Hybrid Enhanced Armorskin: *Armor (3 PD/1 ED) (total cost 6 points) plus Armor (5 PD/3 ED) (12 Active Points); Sectional Defenses (Only covers Hit Locations 3-5 and 9-13; -1) (total cost 6 points). Total cost: 12 points.*

PAIN SHUNTER

ATRI: 10

Price: 6,000 credits, or more

Description: This cerebral implant stops pain from being noticed by the brain, or by the body's autonomous systems. The complexities of the nervous system require that each one of these be custom-built for the recipient.

Game Information: *Physical, Energy, and Mental Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50% (90 Active Points); STUN Only (-1/2), Restrainable (-1/4). Total cost: 51 points.*

Sensory Systems

GLOBAL POSITIONING IMPLANT

ATRI: 8

Price: 150 credits

Description: This implant allows the subject to tell his precise location on any planet with a global positioning system.

Game Information: *Detect Exact Position On Planet With GPS Satellite System (INT + 5) (Radio Sense Group) (15 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4). Total cost: 12 points.*

LATERAL LINE SENSOR

ATRI: 8

Price: 1,000-3,700 credits or more

Description: This device allows a land-based, air-breathing individual, such as a Human or Fex, to sense electrical pulses like many aquatic and amphibious animals. There are several models, with varying degrees of sophistication; more advanced versions can even be used for communication.

Game Information:

Type 1 Lateral Line Sensor: Detect Electrical Pulses, Increased Arc of Perception (360 Degrees), Sense (10 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4). Total cost: 8 points.

Type 2 Lateral Line Sensor: Detect Electrical Pulses, Increased Arc of Perception (360 Degrees), Discriminatory, Sense (15 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4). Total cost: 12 points.

Type 3 Lateral Line Sensor: Detect Electrical Pulses, Increased Arc of Perception (360 Degrees), Discriminatory, Sense, Targeting (25 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4). Total cost: 20 points.

Type 4 Lateral Line Sensor: Detect Electrical Pulses, Increased Arc of Perception (360 Degrees), Discriminatory, Analyze, Sense, Targeting (30 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4). Total cost: 24 points.

Type 5 Lateral Line Sensor: Detect Electrical Pulses, Increased Arc of Perception (360 Degrees), Discriminatory, Analyze, Sense, Targeting, Transmit (32 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4). Total cost: 26 points.

Type 6 Lateral Line Sensor: Detect Electrical Pulses, Increased Arc of Perception (360 Degrees), Discriminatory, Analyze, Range, Sense, Targeting, Transmit (37 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4). Total cost: 30 points.

SENSORY COPROCESSOR

ATRI: 10

Price: 1,500 credits, or more

Description: This special computer processor is a relative of the most popular processor used to control the sensory systems in robots and androids. When cybernetically interfaced with an organic sensory system, it enables the user to notice and discern things more clearly.

Game Information:

Type 1 Sensory Coprocessor: +4 with all Sense Groups (12 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4).

Total cost: 10 points.

Type 2 Sensory Coprocessor: +6 with all Sense Groups (18 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4).

Total cost: 14 points.

Type 3 Sensory Coprocessor: +8 with all Sense Groups (24 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4).

Total cost: 19 points.

Cybervoice

As with any other body system, cybernetic vocal chords (and other artificial speech systems) are available for those who have lost theirs through disease or injury. While a typical cybervoice is equally capable to the original, some have “optional enhancements,” as shown below.

CHAMELEON VOICE

ATRI: 9

Price: varies.

Description: A character with this implant allows the character to alter his voice at will. The basic device can only be used to duplicate another’s voice if the character has the *Mimicry Skill*; later versions have that ability built in. Even those devices can only change the texture of the individual’s voice; things such as pace, cadence, accent, and so forth are the character’s own responsibility.

This cannot be used to change the sound of the character’s footsteps, heartbeat, or other audible qualities.

Game Information:

Model I: *Shape Shift (Hearing Group, any humanoid vocal pattern), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (22 Active Points); Voice Only (-1/2), Restrainable (Only by means other than Grabs and Entangles; -1/4). Total cost: 12 points.*

Model II: *Shape Shift (Hearing Group, any humanoid vocal pattern), Imitation, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (37 Active Points); Voice Only (-1/2), Restrainable (Only by means other than Grabs and Entangles; -1/4). Total cost: 21 points.*

Model III: *Shape Shift (Hearing Group, any humanoid vocal pattern), Imitation, Instant Change, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (45 Active Points); Voice Only (-1/2), Restrainable (Only by means other than Grabs and Entangles; -1/4). Total cost: 26 points.*

Model IV: *Shape Shift (Hearing Group, any humanoid vocal pattern), Cellular, Imitation, Instant Change, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (60 Active Points); Voice Only (-1/2), Restrainable (Only by means other than Grabs and Entangles; -1/4). Total cost: 34 points.*

EMBEDDED MESSENGER

ATRI: 9

Price: 2,000 credits, or more

Description: Based on an ability of some Rigellians, this system allows the character to hide a secret message in his speech audible to only one specific person. It requires a *Ventriloquism* roll to hide the message, and a *Cryptography* roll to make it intelligible to the individual. An observer who is aware, or at least suspicious, that the message is being sent in this way may attempt a *PER Roll* against either roll (whichever is made by less) to perceive the message.

Game Information: *Embedded Message: Hearing Group Images 1” radius, -3 to PER Rolls, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (21 Active Points); Single Target Only (-1), Requires A Cryptography Roll And A Ventriloquism Roll (RSR Skill is subject to Skill vs. Skill contests; -1), Incantations (Requires Incantations throughout; -1/2), Restrainable (Only by means other than Grabs and Entangles; -1/4). Total cost: 6 points.*

POWER VOICE

ATRI: 8

Price: 120 credits, or more.

Description: This artificial voice allows the character to speak more loudly and more clearly than normal.

Game Information: *Hearing Group Images 1” radius, +2 to PER Rolls, Reduced Endurance (1/2 END; +1/4); Restrainable (Only by means other than Grabs and Entangles; -1/4), No Range (-1/2), Only To Amplify Voice (-1). Total cost: 5 points.*

VERTIGO VOICE

ATRI: 11

Price: 10,000 credits, or more.

Description: With this implant the character can scream with such a volume and pitch that those standing near him begin to lose consciousness. Its expense (as well as the fact that it rarely does enough to actually Stun a target) keeps it from being widely used.

Game Information: *Energy Blast 2 1/2d6, Personal Immunity (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (1/2 END; +1/4), Explosion (+1/2), AVLD (Hearing Flash Defense; +1 1/2) (45 Active Points); No Range (-1/2), Restrainable (Only by means other than Grabs and Entangles; -1/4), Incantations (-1/4). Total cost: 22 points.*

Physical Enhancements

MANUAL EXTENSOR

ATRI: 9

Price: 300 credits, or more.

Description: An individual with this enhancement can separate his forearms from the rest of his arms by up to four meters using mechanical extensions.

Game Information: *Stretching 2", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (15 Active Points); Always Direct (-1/4), Limited Body Parts (arms; -1/4), No Noncombat Stretching (-1/4), Range Modifier Applies (-1/4). Total cost: 7 points.*

ORGAN REDUNDANCY

ATRI: 8

Price: 600 credits, or more.

Description: A cyborg whose internal organs have been replaced may choose to have more than one system for various organs. This would make him hardier and healthier in general, but most of all it would make him much more difficult to kill – after all, a shot through the heart is less likely to be fatal when there's another heart to take over the work.

Game Information: *+5 BODY (10 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4) (total cost 8 points); plus +10 BODY (20 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4), Only To Extend Point Of Death (-1 1/2) (total cost 7 points). Total cost: 8 + 7 = 15 points.*

SUPPLEMENTAL ARMS

ATRI: 8

Price: 400 credits, or more.

Description: Occasionally, an individual with two arms (whether perfectly healthy normal arms or cybernetic replacements) may desire two more. These cybernetic arms are built to match the capabilities of the owner's existing arms (though enhanced versions are also available; see page 131 of *Terran Empire* for details).

Few vertebrate species are able to handle more than two additional arms, if not for the load on the spine then simply as a consideration of available space – though it has been done (GM's permission would be required).

Game Information: *Extra Limbs (2) (5 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4). Total cost: 4 points.*

SWIMWARE

ATRI: 9

Price: 750 credits, or more.

Description: An extension of limb replacements (*Terran Empire*, page 131) and muscle enhancements (*Spacer's Toolkit*, page 35) – though it can be installed on its own – this allows the character to swim much more quickly than normal.

Game Information: *Swimming +5", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (7 Active Points); Restrainable (-1/4). Total cost: 6 points.*

Other Cyberware

CYBERTOOLS

ATRI: 9

Price: Varies

Description: This grouping of cybernetic systems correspond, at least in principle, with the Engineer's Toolbox (see page 36 of *Spacer's Toolkit*). A cyborg may have any or all of the tools shown. Most are installed in a cybernetic hand or forearm.

Where these tools have direct counterparts in the Engineer's Toolbox, the effects may be cumulative or not depending on the GM's judgement and common sense.

Game Information:

Cost Cybertools

- 3 *Cyber Conduits*: +2 to Electronics, Restrainable (-1/4)
- 3 *Cyber Lockpick*: +2 to Lockpicking, Restrainable (-1/4)
- 3 *Cyber Mini-Computer*: +2 to Computer Programming, Restrainable (-1/4)
- 3 *Cyber Security Override*: +2 to Security Systems, Restrainable (-1/4)
- 3 *Cyber Spanners*: +2 to Mechanics, Restrainable (-1/4)
- 3 *Cyber System Interface*: +2 to Systems Operations, Restrainable (-1/4)
- 3 *Cyber Weaponsmith Tools*: +2 to Weaponsmith, Restrainable (-1/4)

For ATRI levels higher than 9, each Skill takes an additional +2 to the Skill Roll. The cost for each tool is thus 6 points (for +4) at ATRI 10, 10 points (for +6) at ATRI 11, 13 points (for +8) at ATRI 12, or 16 points (for +10) at ATRI 13. (Malvans, the only ATRI 14 society in the galaxy, does not use such things as these.)

GRAVITY MANIPULATOR

ATRI: 10

Price: 820 credits.

Description: This device allows the user to create a gravity bubble, with which he can manipulate objects (including volumes of liquid) at a short distance.

Game Information: *Telekinesis (10 STR), Affects Porous, Reduced Endurance (1/2 END; +1/4) (41 Active Points); Affects Whole Object (-1/4), Restrainable (Only by means other than Grabs and Entangles; -1/4), Limited Range (2"); -1/4). Total Cost: 23 points.*

INTERNAL BATTERY PACK

ATRI: 7

Price: 800 credits, or more

Description: Some cybersystems (such as many of the weapons shown here, or the Jumplegs or Trauma Compensator on pages 34-35 of *Spacer's Toolkit*) require power to operate. While such systems may be built to burn calories from the cyborg's own body, it's usually easier to power them with an electrical battery. The model shown here draws its power slowly and harmlessly from the cyborg's own biological electrical field; a different type plugs directly into an electrical recharge unit – simply replace the *Personal REC* Limitation with *Can Only Recharge When Connected To An Electrical Power Source*, for the same -1/2 Limitation value.

Game Information: *Endurance Reserve (200 END, 10 REC; powers cybernetic weapons) (40 Active Points); Restrainable (Only by means other than Grabs and Entangles; -1/4); Personal REC (-1/2). Total cost: 22 points.*

PERSONAL FLIGHT MODULE

ATRI: 11

Price: 400 credits, or more.

Description: Similar to a flight pack (see *Terran Empire*, page 152), this combines a built-in antigravity module with small thrusters. The thrusters can be mounted anywhere on the individual's body, though most opt for the lower legs and the shoulders.

Game Information: *Flight 10" (20 Active Points); Restrainable Only by means other than Grabs and Entangles; -1/4). Total cost: 16 points.*

STUART MCFEE PLOT SEEDS

One of the scientists who installed McFee's internal processors was a politically radical nomad Zurite (see *Terran Empire*, page 26) who secretly included a mental override chip with special instructions. As one of Stuart's jobs brings him within range of a senior Ackálian official, he suddenly goes berserk and tries to assassinate her. Whether this attempt succeeds, and how the ensuing investigation leads to the Zurites, is up to the GM.

An overzealous ISP officer becomes obsessed with tracking down McFee, and will let nothing stand in his way. His course of action includes intensely interrogating anyone who has crossed McFee's path, particularly other cyborgs. This naturally includes the PCs.

In tracking McFee, the PCs are led to Emerald (see *Terran Empire*, page 70), where he's joined a group of Benedictine monks, most of whom are also cyborgs. His conversion seems sincere... but is it really, or is he just faking to avoid extradition?



Stuart McFee

Background/History: Stuart McFee never really expected to be anything but a simple technician, maintaining an assembly line at a robotics factory on his native world of Paragon. He was young and bright, but not particularly ambitious; he could have been very happy working that simple job for all his life.

Unfortunately, he was also fairly greedy. Mostly he'd just pilfer a part or two, never taking anything big or easily missed. But then there came a chance for big money....

He was offered a bribe by one of his company's competitors. It was a lot of money – well into the five-digit range – and all he had to do was loosen one mechanical part so his line would shut down for two hours. It sounded simple enough.

What he didn't know was that the slowdown was supposed to be a cover for other, even less scrupulous operatives to plant a bomb. And it was just Stuart's luck that he'd be in the room when the bomb went off.

It wasn't just the concussive force, flame, and shrapnel from the bomb itself. That much alone knocked Stuart into a wall, destroyed both his eyes and his right ear, and nearly shredded his arms. But on top of it all the wall he impacted collapsed, and the ceiling fell down on him – including heavy equipment from the floor above, reducing his legs to pulp.

The doctors were barely able to save his life. The usual remedy for lost body parts on Paragon was vat-grown replacement organs, but his injuries were so extensive that artificial parts were used instead. His health insurance paid for him to have basic cybernetic limbs, eyes, and internal organs installed on his body.

And that, as far as the company was concerned, was the end of it. The bomb had forced the plant to close down. Stuart's role in the incident was never discovered, but he was still out of a job.

Bitter at how he'd been duped, he used a part of the money he'd gotten from the competitor to have his cybernetic systems "upgraded." When asked for a reason, he simply said that since he was out of a job he was using some money from a windfall to prepare for a new career as a bodyguard and security agent – which, on the whole, was true enough. What he didn't say was that his first mission would be personal: he would exact revenge on the people who hired and then betrayed him.

Fortunately nobody was seriously hurt. The laser shot Stuart sent into the complex' power plant brought the entire facility to a halt, and there was a wait of nearly twenty minutes before the inevitable explosion destroyed the building and seriously damaged all those nearby.

This time Stuart was identified as the perpetrator, or at least as a "person of interest" in the case. He was forced to go on the run. He hitched a ride with an unscrupulous Mon'dabi shipper – a smuggler, actually – and ended up on Venwordien IV. Today, from there he hires himself out as a mercenary to whomever will pay his fee.

Personality/Motivation: Money is Stuart's main motivation. Even if it wasn't for his natural sense of avarice, he has himself in a position where he needs money to pay for the maintenance on his cybernetic parts.

Though reasonably intelligent, Stuart is not highly imaginative. He doesn't tend to make big plans, preferring to leave that to his employers. He just goes in, does what he's told, collects his pay, and moves on.

He does have a bit of a vengeful streak. If someone crosses him, he'll try to repay in kind at the first opportunity. He realizes that some people just have a job to do that puts them at odds with him, and he's okay with that, but anything underhanded or otherwise uncalled for will earn his wrath.

Quote: "Do that again, and I'll smash your head!"

Powers/Tactics: Stuart McFee is a cyborg with several enhancements. He's notably stronger and faster than before (though still within normal Human range), and has several sensory enhancements and internal coprocessors. He also has two powerful weapons: a piledriver arm with which he can hit preternaturally hard, and a built-in laser weapon.

His cybernetics also represent his biggest physical weakness. An EMP weapon can not only cancel out his cybernetic enhancements, but leave him crippled and blind until his systems can be restarted.

As a tactician, Stuart tends to be typically unimaginative. He mainly just follows instructions, usually consisting of guarding something such as a valuable object or the entrance to a base though sometimes he acts as hired muscle in other ways. When attacking, he usually takes cover and lets loose with his laser weapon, saving the piledriver for those occasions when an opponent closes with him or when he needs to do something like smash through a wall.

Campaign Use: Stuart is basic mercenary muscle, available to provide some extra power for a more masterful opponent. Besides his cybernetic abilities, he can also provide basic engineering support, at least as a low-level maintenance person.

Stuart sets aside about a third of his income (and most of his Experience Points) toward

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enhancing his cybernetics. He's currently considering some form of Armorskin, or possibly a force field generator, though something like a personal flight module would be great too.

Despite his vengeful streak, Stuart is not likely to Hunt anyone on an ongoing basis. He might try once or twice to exact revenge, but after a while he'll decide either that his target has had enough or that it just isn't worth all the trouble. If someone really ticks him off – which can be done by stealing from him, making him into a fool, humiliating him, or causing him serious injury – he'll do whatever he can to return the injury in kind. Since he's not too imaginative, this will generally take the form of direct frontal assaults at just the wrong moment, though he could hire someone to plan something more subtle.

To make Stuart more powerful, increase his DEX, give him some Combat Skill Levels and/or Martial Arts ability, and possibly add a trauma compensator (*Spacer's Toolkit*, page 35) to his cybernetics. You could also give him a pain shunter if he's to take on an entire group of PCs. If he's overpowered, take away his piledriver hand and replace his laser with something less powerful.

Appearance: Stuart is a mainline Human in his early thirties, with mixed ancestry dominated by African and European stock. His skin has a smooth coffee-and-cream complexion, and his hair is black and tightly curled, which he wears short. His eyes, though both are cybernetic, are the same deep brown of his original organic eyes.

It's not immediately apparent that Stuart is a cyborg. Only someone with a sensor set to detect such things, or with an appropriate *Analyze Skill*, can tell he's a cyborg unless he's using his laser weapon or piledriver arm.

When on the job, Stuart wears what his employer deems appropriate. Left to his own choice, this consists of a tank top, loose-fitting trousers, sturdy running shoes, and a Harmon City Defenders baseball cap. On his own time, his clothing is somewhat flashier, with brightly-colored suits, low-cut shirts, and gold jewelry.

Stuart McFee



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Stuart McFee

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
15+5	STR	5	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH [3]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
11+5	BODY	2	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 12-/14-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
3	PD	0		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	0		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
27+5	STUN	1		

Total Characteristic Cost: 41

Movement:

Running:	9"/18"
Leaping:	14"/28"
Swimming:	2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
21	<i>Mark II Cyber Laser:</i> RKA 2d6, Power Can Draw END from Character or END Reserve (+1/4); Restrained (Only by Means Other than Grabs and Entangles, -1/4), Blocked by Smoke or Steam (-1/4), Real Weapon (-1/4)	4
18	<i>Piledriver Hand:</i> HA 6d6 (10d6 with STR), Power Can Draw END from Character or END Reserve (+1/4); HA (-1/2), Restrained (-1/4), Real Weapon (-1/4)	4
4	<i>Artificial Limbs:</i> +5 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); No Figured Characteristics (-1/2), Restrained (-1/4)	0
8	<i>Organ Redundancy System:</i> +5 BODY; Restrained (-1/4)	0
7	<i>Organ Redundancy System:</i> +10 BODY; Only to Extend Point of Death (-1/2), Restrained (-1/4)	0
3	<i>Internal Oxygen Supply (Intox):</i> Life Support (Extended Breathing: 1 END per 20 Minutes); Restrained (-1/4)	0
5	<i>Flare Compensation:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (6 points); Restrained (-1/4)	0
5	<i>Artificial Legs:</i> Running +3" (9" Total); Restrained (-1/4)	1
15	<i>Jumplegs:</i> Leaping +10" (14" Total), Accurate, Power Can Draw END from Character or END Reserve (+1/4); Restrained (-1/4)	2
3	<i>Sight Enhancement:</i> +2 PER with Sight Group; Restrained (-1/4)	0
3	<i>Enhanced Hearing:</i> +2 PER with Hearing Group; Restrained (-1/4)	0
4	<i>UV Vision:</i> Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group); Restrained (-1/4)	0

12	<i>Global Positioning Implant:</i> Detect Exact Position on Planet With GPS Satellite System 17- (Radio Group); Restrained (-1/4)	0
22	<i>Internal Battery Pack:</i> Endurance Reserve (200 END); Restrained (-1/4) plus Endurance Reserve (10 REC); Personal REC (-1/2), Restrained (-1/4)	0

Talents

2	Absolute Range Sense; Restrained (-1/4)
2	Absolute Time Sense; Restrained (-1/4)
7	Ambidexterity (Full); Restrained (-1/4)
2	Bump of Direction; Restrained (-1/4)
4	Eidetic Memory; Restrained (-1/4)
2	Lightning Calculator; Restrained (-1/4)
2	Lightsleep; Restrained (-1/4)
2	Perfect Pitch; Restrained (-1/4)

Skills

3	Analyze Cybernetics 12-
3	Breakfall 12-
3	Demolitions 12-
3	Electronics 12-
3	Hoist 12-
3	Mechanics 12-
3	PS: Maintenance Engineer 12-
3	Security Systems 12-
4	Systems Operation (Communications Systems, Environmental Systems) 12-
3	Teamwork 12-
2	Weaponsmith (Energy Weapons) 12-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 186

Total Cost: 227

75+ Disadvantages

5	Distinctive Features: Detectable Cyborg (Concealable, Major, Uncommon Senses, Not Distinctive In Some Cultures)
20	Hunted: Imperial Security Police 8- (Mo Pow, NCI)
15	Physical Limitation: Restrained Arms, Legs, and Eyes (Infrequently, Fully)
15	Psychological Limitation: Greedy (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Common, Moderate)
10	Rivalry: Other Cyborg Mercenaries (Professional, Mo Pow, Seek to Outdo, Rival Aware)
77	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 227



The Art of the Interview

by Bob Greenwade

The *HERO System* has two good Skills – Conversation and Interrogation – for extracting information from targets who are actively trying to withhold that information. However, the system currently assumes that an attempt to get information that the target is willing to convey automatically succeeds.

While that assumption is generally true, it's not always quite that simple. Memories fade, perceptions become confused, and any number of things can happen. Police at the scene of a robbery can talk to ten eyewitnesses and get twelve different stories with fifteen different suspect descriptions (and sometimes even differing numbers of suspects). Victims of violent assaults – particularly sexual assault – may have emotional difficulty in remembering details.

Getting an accurate story from a cooperative – or at least willing – subject is the function of the *Interviewing Skill*. Had such a Skill appeared in *The Ultimate Skill*, it might have looked something like this.

Interviewing

Type: Interaction Skill (roll: 9 + (PRE/5) or less)

Cost: 3 Character Points for a base roll, +1 to the roll per +2 Character Points

This Interaction Skill enables a character to extract information from a willing target. The Skill is not needed for the basics of a report; however, it can be useful for testing the accuracy of the target's memory, or for helping the target remember forgotten details. The character knows what questions to ask, what tone of voice to adopt, when to push and when to back off, and other aspects of helping a witness make a thorough and accurate report.

Though cooperating, the subject may be emotionally distraught, traumatized, or just plain forgetful, and good use of this Skill can help bring the right information out. A character with this Skill can also detect when a subject is exaggerating, coloring his statement with prejudice or preconceptions, or lying outright.

An unscrupulous interviewer could use this Skill to manipulate the target's memory, especially with Persuasion as a Complementary Skill (or, more often, vice versa). This doesn't have to be a conscious, deliberate effort; if the interviewer is convinced of a particular story (whether because of incomplete evidence, personal prejudices, or something else), he may persuade the target of that story over the actual truth. In a game, this should only happen when the GM feels it advances the needs of the story,

or when the PCs do it deliberately; in the latter case Persuasion would be the primary Skill, and Interviewing would be complementary.

In many cases Conversation may be used as a Complementary Skill. For example, the subject of an interview may leave hints in his speech about some interesting or important detail that might otherwise be missed; Conversation could help the character detect those hints. Deduction may also serve the same Complementary function.

The function of Seduction to allow the character to gain trust and friendship may help witnesses to relax, making it a good Complementary Skill.

Other Skills may also be Complementary, depending on the type of interview being conducted (as described below).

USING INTERVIEWING

There are many people that a character may be called upon to interview. The most obvious, of course, are crime victims and any witnesses at the scene. Informants, witnesses acquainted with the victim or the suspect, experts, consultants, and many others are also potential interview subjects. The subject of an interview can depend somewhat on the subject of the investigation and the occupation of the interviewer.

Police usually start with the victim and any direct witnesses. Then, depending on what they get from them and what else they need, they may move on to the victim's family, friends, coworkers, service providers, and others, including data banks.

Private investigators (including reporters and attorneys) investigating criminal matters don't often talk directly to the victim or accuser, especially when building a criminal defense. They may talk to any other people to whom police investigators talk.

In a missing persons case, the first person interviewed is typically whoever brings the matter to the investigator's attention. From there the investigation moves to the missing person's family, friends, and so forth.

Fugitive searches and "skip traces" (the scope of bounty hunters) are very similar to missing persons. However, they start with the family, friends, data banks, and similar resources, having somewhat less to start with than in a regular missing persons investigation.

METHODS OF INTERVIEWING

When preparing for an interview, the detective should become as familiar as possible with the case – especially any unpublicized details – and the background of the interview subject. The background information should include at least the person's name, address, age, place of birth, race, occupation, place of employment, and any past problems with police or other legal troubles.

Often, detectives cannot control the location or environment of an interview. The best place is a private office or (for police or some private investigators) a specially-furnished interview room with no telephones or other distractions. However, many interviews must take place outdoors, in a bustling place of business, or some similarly uncontrollable area.

In a typically well-conducted interview, the detective starts by putting the subject at ease, talking about the above background details and hopefully finding a rapport or common ground.

NOBODY'S PERFECT

The techniques and procedures given here represent the ideal rule set. Despite the imperative tone of much of the text, these rules are frequently violated – and not always out of corruption, incompetence, or arrogance. Very often the prevailing conditions are budget, training, inexperience, public and political pressure, and simple unwitting ignorance.

Thus, in games set in or near the modern day, the PCs will typically be highly-trained professionals while NPC law enforcement officials are just regular folks with a badge who are doing the best they can with what little they have. Certainly there are plenty who are corrupt or incompetent, but unless the GM wants to present a dystopic view of society these should be the exception rather than the rule.

The Casual Interview: This is the technique used most often by newspaper reporters, police taking statements, and most other types of investigator under everyday circumstances. It's a very basic question-and-answer format, openly telling the subject what the interviewer wants to know and letting the subject answer freely. Occasionally the PC may need to prompt the subject for a particular detail, but the interview mostly proceeds casually. This makes the casual interview the easiest to role-play.

In most cases a casual interview may proceed without the need for any Skill Roll; the GM may even allow PCs to do this without needing the Skill, or to take this much of Interviewing as an Everyman Skill. A Skill Roll becomes necessary when the subject, usually without meaning to, skips over a potentially important detail. The GM may ask a PC with this Skill to make an Interviewing Roll to see if he catches the absence of that detail, and follows up on it.

More than nearly any other, this form of Interviewing makes use of Conversation as a Complementary Skill.

The base time for a casual interview is 5 minutes.

The Diversionary Interview: Witnesses under extreme trauma are much more delicate than other witnesses. With a violent crime – most specifically murder, rape, kidnapping, and other violent assaults – the investigator must be careful to reveal nothing about the case that might influence the witness' memory. This is especially important with victims.

In these cases, the use of lineups, catalogs of facial features, and similar methods usually does more harm than good. The events are sealed into the subject's memory, but the trauma creates psychological defenses, making the memory hard to get to. Similar images only confuse matters.

With a diversionary interview, the interviewer and subject casually discuss topics of the subject's interest, especially if they have little or no relevance to the thrust of the interview, inserting indirect questions about the suspect every several minutes or so when the subject is relaxed. These are phrased in a present tense, referring to generalities of shape and movement rather than the incident specifically. This allows the subject to remember the face, movement, or other details without the recollection being emotionally connected to the trauma, or at least with a greatly weakened emotional connection.

Because of its nature, the base time for a diversionary interview is quite long, usually on the order of 6 hours. Severely traumatized victims, such as those who have been brutally tortured over an extended period of time, can take as long as a week or even more for a complete interview.

For this type of interview, Conversation, Deduction, and SS: Psychology may all be Complementary Skills.

THE EVOLVING FACE OF THE INTERVIEW

As of this writing, forensic artist Jeanne Boylan is the only notable investigator to regularly use the diversionary interview method. While her work over the past quarter-century has led to the rapid fade of the “hard interview” method, her exact technique is difficult to duplicate. Still, police are quickly learning that a confrontational approach, particularly with an already-traumatized victim or witness, is counterproductive.

More on Ms. Boylan’s techniques can be found in *Portraits of Guilt*.

The “Hard” Interview: Unfortunately, many investigators prefer a confrontational approach to witness interviews. This is counterproductive to gaining the witness’ cooperation, but has become “the way things are done,” and any other method – especially the diversionary method described above – is a considered waste of time.

Some detectives even apply interrogation techniques to interviews. While good for dealing with suspects, these methods generally backfire with witnesses. Goodwill is lost, witness’ memories are contaminated, and investigations are frequently prolonged.

The worst offenders, while questioning a witness, “correct” the witness’ story. Sometimes even composite sketches have been modified from witness accounts to fit police assumptions. Though this is highly illegal, in most cases neither the investigators nor their superiors believe that anything is wrong.

To be fair, the problem comes from universally applying one method to all cases. “Hard” interviews may be appropriate in some cases, such as with false or reluctant witnesses (described below). In such cases Interrogation and Persuasion may be used as Complementary Skills to further success.

The line between a “Hard” interview and Interrogation (the “Standard” level, for those with *The Ultimate Skill*) can be very fine. A failed roll may require the character to make an EGO Roll to keep from slipping into that mode (even if he doesn’t have the *Interrogation* Skill; see page 18 of *The Ultimate Skill* for details on untrained Skill use). If the character badly fails his Interviewing roll, he may slip into Interrogation without a chance to resist it with EGO.

Despite its inherent problems, this was a surprisingly common method used by police until at least the 1980s. In most games taking place before that time, and many taking place since, police investigators – including PCs – would take this approach.

Hypnosis: Sometimes when a witness or victim is having difficulty remembering things, police will turn to hypnosis to enhance the memory.

There are two major hurdles with hypnosis. For one, once a witness is hypnotized most jurisdictions will not allow his testimony in court. The second problem is the reason for the first, and is an even bigger problem: a subject in a hypnotic state is *extremely* susceptible to suggestion, so unless the hypnotist is well trained, very experienced, and *extremely* careful, it’s much easier to put false memories in than to draw accurate ones out. In short, while PS: Hypnotist (or any similar Background Skill) becomes a Complementary Skill when this technique is used, failing the PS: Hypnotist roll is the same as “failing badly” with Interviewing – the subject comes away with false memories.

An unscrupulous hypnotist could deliberately plant false memories into a subject. There are no publicly-recorded cases of this, though in a literary setting such as a game it can make for an interesting complication – especially if the hypnotist committed the crime being investigated. (Doing this requires a successful PS: Hypnotist roll. If there are observers, Acting is the needed Skill to disguise what he’s doing, though it can be opposed with either Deduction or Interviewing in a Skill Versus Skill contest. In all cases Persuasion is Complementary for the hypnotist.)

Similar problems arise with sodium thiopental, sometimes called sodium pentothal because of its original brand name, Pentothal®. This is the most popular so-called “truth serum,” though sodium amytal and seconal are also popular. In literature a subject given these drugs compulsively gives a truthful answer to any question. In reality these are simply barbiturate drugs whose use as an interrogation tool is even more questionable than hypnosis; the most they do is lower the target’s inhibitions. Their only reliable use is as surgical anesthetics (or sometimes as recreational drugs).

Because of these risks, most police agencies only turn to hypnosis when all other avenues of investigation reach a dead end.

Lineups: The lineup of possible suspects is a classic method of police interviewing.

Typically a lineup gathers the suspect with four or five other people of similar physical description and lines them up against a wall. The witness, usually accompanied by two police officers, an assistant district attorney, and the suspect’s attorney, is asked to pick the suspect out from the group.

While this is relatively simple for the witness, for the police it can be harder than it sounds, particularly in gathering other people matching the suspect’s description. Often such

people just aren't available. (Occasionally police don't even try; a suspect may be the only dark-haired man in the group, or several inches shorter or taller than the others.)

Instead of finding the alternates themselves, some police battle the above problem by letting the suspect and his attorney choose the others in the lineup. This reduces or eliminates the possibility of unfair bias.

In a way, this blurs the line between a witness interview and a suspect interrogation. Sometimes a voice is more memorable than a face, and the members of the lineup are asked to speak a certain phrase. This may be a phrase remembered by the witness, a similar phrase, a phrase with certain key words, or something completely unrelated. (Sometimes this works better than expected; on at least two occasions a suspect has blurted out that the requested phrase was inaccurate.)

The base time for a Lineup is 1 Turn, though witnesses are usually encouraged to take their time so durations of 1 Minute or even 5 Minutes aren't uncommon. The Roll is usually unnecessary, except perhaps as a Complementary Skill to help the subject's own memory. However, if the Interviewing Roll fails badly, it can mean that the character let slip a leading remark, tainting the subject's memory.

Photo Lineups: This is a useful method when investigators don't have a suspect description, when more than one person is suspected, or when their suspect is not in custody. The witness is shown a group of photos (usually six) and asked to pick out the right person.

It's not necessary for the subjects of the photos to look alike, especially when the police have a potential suspect (or group of them) identified by some means other than a physical description. However, its potential for abuse is at least equal to that of a regular line-up; police using photo lineups should be careful to not make the suspect's picture stand out from the others in any way.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS IN INTERVIEWING

There are certain circumstances where a detective faces special problems when conducting an interview.

Children: Children – and even teens – are much more pliable than adults. They're easier to intimidate, dominate, and guide to where an adults wants, even unintentionally. Small children in particular may try to say what they think the adult wants rather than the honest truth. Certainly not all children are like this, but the tendency is higher.

The adult in question may be the interviewer but usually isn't. More often, a parent or other adult, usually with the best of intentions, will

discuss the events with the child before an investigator can conduct the interview, thus contaminating the child's recollection.

In many areas, when a person under a certain age (usually 18) is interviewed by the police, the police must have another adult present to represent the child's interests. Depending on the child's age and other circumstances, this person is a parent, guardian, attorney, psychologist, or school counselor. Some areas have child advocates who step in when those people are unavailable, especially when the usual advocate is suspected of victimizing the child.

An interviewer should remember that children are more easily traumatized than adults. The diversionary interview technique, if the interviewer knows it, should usually be employed, especially if the child has had a traumatic experience.

Foreign Nationals: In many foreign countries, police are feared. In Latin America, much of Africa, the former Soviet Union and other former Eastern Bloc countries, and Communist countries in the Far East police can be brutal and barbaric by American standards. This is by far the exception rather than the rule in most of Latin America and Africa, and police have reformed considerably in Eastern Europe, but it takes only a few bad policemen to give the entire force a bad name, and that damage can linger for years. Even the American-born children and grandchildren can have a lingering mistrust of police, and their ethnic communities become very insular.

For private investigators, reporters, and other non-police interviewers, there may be less mistrust on the basis of being police, but cultural insulation is still a problem.

An interviewer who is part of the ethnic group will have an easier time. If none is available, then at least speaking the language can help. In many cultures an honest attempt at speaking the language is regarded as a step toward belonging, and people do open up more in their most comfortable language.

A detective can also help the general situation by fostering a relationship between himself and the ethnic community. If the people in the community – any community, not just ethnic ones – know him and recognize his good character, they'll be much more likely to cooperate.

Another barrier with foreign nationals, and sometimes even with American-born subjects in tight-knit ethnic communities, is language. Interviewing is virtually impossible (short of some *very* creative gestures and drawings) without a language in common. If the character and subject have only "basic conversation" in a

COMMUNITY CONTACT

An investigator may become a popular figure in a small community by taking the community as an Organization Contact (see page 80 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*). This is not the same as having a positive Reputation in the neighborhood, though that can help (as a sort of "Complementary Skill" to the Contact roll).

USING FALSE WITNESSES

The GM shouldn't use false witnesses blithely. Overuse will obscure the plot of the story and frustrate the players. However, they can serve important roles within the story when used correctly.

A false witness could unwittingly lead the investigators in the right direction. For example, suppose a woman comes to the police with a false charge of rape. Investigators may discover that the rape never happened (maybe she's a virgin), but the examination of the accused person reveals a pattern of travel that closely matches that of a trail of corpses, making him a suspect in a previously-identified serial killer spree.

A false witness can also occupy the PCs while they're waiting for forensic test results, or while the actual perpetrator plans his next crime. This could be an adventure in itself, a lesson in handling certain situations, a foreshadowing of a future case, or simply a distraction.

common language, this creates a penalty of -2 (if one of them has higher fluency) or -3 (if both are at the basic level) to the Interviewing roll. If the common level is "fluent conversation," the penalty is -1. Any higher level of fluency in a common language yields no penalty.

False Witnesses: Nearly every investigation – especially high-profile cases – will have its share of people coming forward with false information as victims, witnesses, or even perpetrators. In general, these people fall into four categories: those seeking publicity, those with a grudge against the accused, those who are compulsive or delusional, and those who are simply mistaken.

Publicity-seeking false witnesses are rare except in well-publicized cases, most commonly missing persons, fugitive hunts, or serial killings. Phony "psychics," emotionally disturbed persons, and the occasional overzealous reporter are common examples.

The most dangerous kind of false witness is the individual (or, even worse, group) with a grudge against the accused. These are most common in sex crimes, but also occur with assault, robbery, and other crimes. The witness usually claims to have witnessed the crime, occasionally with additional details; or to be the victim of another incident in which the accused was easily identified. False accusers sometimes invent crimes that never happened.

A subset of this is the friend of the accused. This person tries to give reason for investigators to overlook the accused, such as an alibi, a medical inability, or something similar. The suspect may be either innocent or guilty; the point is the witness' attempt to protect the suspect.

Compulsive or delusional witnesses may be the easiest to recognize, or the most difficult. Often the person actually believes what he's saying, even if there are obvious inconsistencies. (One person insisted on her report that she heard trespassers outside her bedroom window one winter night despite the total lack of footprints in the snow the next morning.) These sorts of mental problems account for the bulk of voluntary false confessions in criminal cases.

The most common type, and usually the hardest to identify, is the honestly mistaken witness. This may include exaggerations of lesser crimes, misinterpretations of innocent actions, or unintentional misidentification. The report may be tainted, however unintentionally, by ill will between the witness and the accused person; or the witness may have been intoxicated, sleep-deprived, subjected to a head injury, or otherwise impaired at the time of the offense.

Except for this last type, a false witness' story generally follows published accounts. Thus, the strongest defense against them is to withhold key details on the case from the public. An informant who knows some of these details is probably telling the truth, while one who doesn't know them, or gets some wrong, is probably false. Investigator should also check the witness' background for criminal history, history of mental illness, conflicts with the accused person, and similar factors.

In most cases, particularly with honestly mistaken witnesses, the investigator should handle the matter with tact. Even a claim that seems outlandish should be given at least a cursory examination, since outlandish things do sometimes happen. Anything done to alienate the person could eliminate him as a future source of useful information.

In game terms, a false witness can be detected with an Interviewing Roll, with Conversation and Deduction as potential Complementary Skills. If the witness is trying to use Persuasion to push his story, then the character may use Interviewing in a Skill Versus Skill contest.

The Mentally Ill: Witness suffering from mental illness (which, for purposes of this discussion, includes drug addiction and developmental disabilities) are an immediate problem for detectives. The witness' perception of the world around him, both at the time of the crime and at the time of the interview, is colored by his illness.

The worst mentally-ill witnesses are those who suffer delusions or hallucinations. Unless the illness is particularly mild, this person's information is practically unusable. The information may be completely accurate, but it's incredibly difficult to tell for certain, and without very strong corroborating evidence the information will be excluded from a trial.

Nonetheless, even the severely mentally ill (other than those prone to delusions and hallucinations) often understand things better than most people think. The key to getting the right information from them is not to draw them out into the real world, but to attempt to enter theirs. Despite the usual media images, mentally ill people tend to be good, honest people, at least within the realm of their own realities.

If a witness has only mild mental illness such as most anxiety disorders, the hard part is not getting a reliable statement but in keeping the witness focused enough to give the statement at all. A witness with an anxiety disorder is even easily alienated by tough-talking interviewers, not to mention memory contamination, than the average witness.

Usually only a basic understanding and empathy is needed to get past the mental barriers. A psychologist or psychiatrist may be needed for the more severe cases, but someone with just a few hours of attentive training can handle the rest.

Even so, dealing with the mentally ill usually increases the time needed for Interviewing, usually by one step down the time chart (1 Hour for a typical interview).

Depending on the severity of the subject's mental illness, it may impose a penalty of -1 to -4 to Interviewing. If the character has SS: Abnormal Psychology or a related Background Skill, then that Skill may be used as a Complementary Skill to offset that penalty.

Multiple Witnesses: Where more than one witness has information on the same matter, they generally should *not* be interviewed together, nor should they be allowed to discuss their recollections. This is an extremely important point, but one all too often forgotten by inexperienced investigators.

If possible, multiple witnesses should be quickly separated to keep them from comparing stories and inadvertently (or intentionally) contaminating their memories. This isn't difficult with only two direct witnesses, since one can wait while the other is interviewed, or when the interviews are done in a controlled environment such as a police station. With three or more witnesses in an uncontrolled environment, some creativity may be needed.

Occasionally interviewing multiple witnesses as a group may be acceptable, but these are rare cases and must *always* take place after individual interviews. Most exceptions to this last rule are found in fiction stories, usually when a detective must find out quickly what all victims of a serial or mass crime have in common.

If a character attempts to Interview multiple witnesses at the same time, he suffers a penalty of -1 for every $\times 2$ persons in the group. If the roll fails by the amount of the penalty or less, it means that one of the witnesses' false impression has "rubbed off" on one or more others.

Reluctant Witnesses: Some people, though honest citizens, may be reluctant to talk to investigators. Some fear involvement, possibly from unfamiliarity with police methods or because they fear arrest for some past offense. Some blame the victim for the crime at least as much as the perpetrator. Some fear the attention and publicity that can result from cooperating with investigators. Some fear reprisals from the perpetrator. Some harbor general bad feelings toward the police, private investigators, or the press. Some just don't think the matter is any of their business. Some don't want to be inconvenienced by involvement, especially if it court testimony might be required of them.

When these cases arise, the detective must overcome this reluctance. Sometimes methods more relevant to Interrogation may be used, albeit with a gentler twist; on other occasions a little Persuasion may be all that's needed. (Either of these two Skills may be used as Complementary Skills in this situation.) In extreme cases, police detectives can threaten to charge the witness with either the crime under investigation, or impeding the investigation.

Sometimes the reluctance is caused not by the investigation, but by a personality conflict with a specific investigator. It might be a general conflict, or it might stem from differences in race or gender. In this case, a change of interviewer is the simplest and most reliable solution.

Women: As sexist as it may seem to say so, female interview subjects really do present their own problems in an investigation. The root of the problem is not the women themselves, of course, but the differences between male and female psychology, and the delicate nature of many crimes against women.

Ideally, an interview of a woman should be conducted by a female interviewer, or a team of two including at least one female. This will minimize gender bias, and make the subject feel more at ease. This is especially true if the subject is a victim, and most especially a rape victim. If no female interviewer is available, there should at least be a female witness within hearing.

Sometimes, such as when intimate topics (such as most sex crimes) are under discussion, it's best to have just one interviewer. Police use a two-way mirror and hidden microphone to let others observe the interview, and many private investigators use a similar tactic. Also, in these cases the technique of diversionary interview (above) is often the best tactic to take.

DETECTING LIES

When someone is lying, the character may use his Interviewing to resist Persuasion. In most cases this should only be used when the character is actually interviewing the subject, or actively involved in the interview. Otherwise the character should use a straight INT or EGO Roll (without the benefit of any Skill Levels), depending on whether the lying individual is using logical or emotional appeals. Deduction may be used as a Complementary Skill to Interviewing for this purpose.

Naturally there are cases where no Skill of any kind is needed to detect a lie. If a witness comes forward claiming to have seen a murder victim beaten with a tire iron, and investigators know for a fact that the murder weapon was a baseball bat, then there's no need to roll; the witness is obviously not telling the truth. Interviewing might still be able to determine whether the witness is actually lying or merely mistaken in some way (the bat looked like a tire iron from her angle, someone else planted a false memory, she actually saw a completely different incident, and so forth).

Equipment

Interviewing doesn't involve equipment; it's a purely personal Skill. A relaxing environment can be helpful, however.

INTERVIEW ROOMS

Traditionally, police interview rooms have been sterile, tense places with bare walls and minimal furnishings. This reinforces the natural desire of most people to give as little information to the police as they can and get out.

However, a more recent school of thought is transforming these rooms into a more "business-like" look. Pleasant colors, comfortable furnishings, attractive decorations, and other features make interviewees – and interrogation subjects – feel more at ease and ready to talk.

If the character is using an interview room decorated with this principle, this may provide a +1 or +2 bonus to his Interviewing roll, depending on the nature of the interview. The GM may also provide a similar bonus to Conversation and Interrogation.

RECORDING

The practice of recording interviews, long practiced by news reporters, is gaining as a practice among police and private investigators. The primary function of this is to secure evidence as to what was actually said during the interview; an interviewer's written notes are usually incomplete, and may add the interviewer's own bias and perceptions to those of the witness (this isn't even accounting for unscrupulous interviewers who might deliberately put words into the witness' mouths).

In game terms, a recorded interview can also serve a function with this Skill. A character may review the recording and, with a successful Skill Roll, find comments or other hints that could lead to further questions in a later interview. The character may do this even if he wasn't the one who gave the original interview, though in this case he'd have to make his Interviewing Roll by more than the original interviewer did.

Powers and Interviewing

Telepathy that successfully reaches the EGO + 20 level to read into the target's memory can eliminate the need for Interviewing. On the other hand, a successful Interviewing roll may make the use of Telepathy for gathering information easier, bringing memories to surface thoughts (or, if missed by -1 or -2, to "deep, hidden thoughts"). Telepathy could also be the basis for an Interviewing-based "super-skill."

Where psychic mind-control and illusion-casting exist, witnesses may come forward under the influence of such powers. Investigators should remember this and be ready to examine the motives of someone who would alter a witness' memory. These usually match real-world motives for planting physical evidence: overzealous investigators wanting an easy conviction against an "obviously" guilty suspect, criminals trying to frame a rival or nemesis, and the like.

When dealing with these witnesses, the GM should have a way for PCs to detect the cause of the falsehood. Psychic manipulation can leave mental traces; illusions can be detected through advanced imaging equipment and electronic sensors; shape-changers, even with the *Cellular Adder* on Shape Shift, might still leave behind some identifying trace.

Consequences of Failure

If a character fails a typical Interviewing roll, the target usually is simply unable to recall or describe the sought-after information. If the target is recalling a false or mistaken memory, the error goes undetected.

If the character fails the roll badly (by 4 or more), the target may generate a “false memory,” mix up the memory with a similar incident, inadvertently add false details, become too confused to give even basic information, or suffer other problems. Depending on the type of interview being conducted, a badly failed roll could result in the alienation of the subject, making further interviews more difficult. In truly extreme cases the interviewer could accidentally feed misinformation to the target.

Depending on the circumstances and dramatic needs, a badly failed roll may have a variety of other consequences, including some of those for Conversation (see page 143 of *The Ultimate Skill*).

Base Times

Using Interviewing takes time, since it requires conversation. For most purposes a base time is 20 minutes, though as discussed earlier certain categories (specifically, those with traumatized witnesses) can take longer.

Subdividing Interviewing

In most games, Interviewing has a sufficiently limited scope that it doesn't need subdividing. *The Ultimate Skill* even regards it as a part of Conversation (though with the assumption that the target wants to keep the sought-after information secret), and often the GM will be content to leave it that way.

Conversely, in games where interviewing various sorts of cooperative witnesses is a common part of the game, the GM may divide it into categories. The accompanying text box lists recommended categories for Interviewing; the first category costs 2 Character Points, and each further category costs +1 Character Point. Each +1 to the Skill still costs +2 points.

The categories are sufficiently overlapped that the GM may allow a character with one or more categories of Interviewing to have an automatic Familiarity (8- roll) with all other categories.

Interviewing by Genre

Most forms of Interviewing works the same in all genres, though many divisions and techniques (such as diversionary interviews and special methods for children) are relatively modern developments.

DARK CHAMPIONS

Interviewing is most useful in *Dark Champions*, with its emphasis on modern-day crimefighting. It's also the genre in which the GM is most likely to want to subdivide the Skill, especially if the PCs are law enforcement specialists such as a police sex-crimes squad or a serial killer task force.

NEAR-FUTURE

In near-future campaigns, interviewers may develop even more techniques. Players and GMs are invited to be creative, devising any reasonable “new ideas.”

PULP

In the Pulp era, and particularly in pulp fiction, many police and “hard-boiled” detectives tended to use the “Hard” Interviewing technique almost exclusively. This would certainly be true of most NPC detectives, though PC detectives would certainly be free to use most of the other listed techniques.

Since the technique of diversionary interviewing was not invented until the 1990s, it should not be available to Pulp-era characters.

Also, while hypnosis was used occasionally as an interviewing technique, the extreme susceptibility of hypnotized individuals to suggestion was not recognized. The GM can handle this by either ignoring it if he's keeping to genre conventions, or using it against the PCs if he's going for a more realistic portrayal of the time.

SCIENCE FICTION, SUPERHEROES

In a game where alien civilizations are common, the GM may determine penalties for Interviewing someone from a species or culture other than the character's own in addition to the already-described problems of dealing with foreign nationals. If the Skill is subdivided as described above, Aliens may be its own category.

Advanced abilities in disguise, shape-changing, holographic projection, android duplicates, and many other abilities and technologies prevalent in superhero and science-fiction settings can also alter perceptions. A person could even witness (or be victim of) a crime, then unwittingly travel to a different dimension or timeline where the crime didn't happen or was committed by someone else.

The “new techniques” mentioned for near-future games should also be applicable to these games. In particular, alien societies could have their own interviewing techniques that alien and Human PCs alike would be able to learn – or, in the case of aliens who are very different from us, techniques usable only on their own kind.

INTERVIEWING CATEGORIES

Casual Interview
Children
Diversionary Interview
Domestic Abuse Victims
Expert Eyewitness
Mentally Ill
Persuasive Interview
Sexual Assault Victims
Violent Crime Victims

How to Set an Italian Campaign

by Christian Bencivenni and Federico Perugini

Why setting a campaign in Italy? It is a good question which needs a detailed answer. Every time a GM decides to create a new setting to play with any roleplaying system, he must consider some fundamental points. The scenery where the players move their characters must be structured enough not to appear trivial – it must have a deepness allowing a minimum variation in the details from adventure to adventure, it must be interesting for players and keep them active during the game, and, of course, it must be as realistic as the campaign allows it. There are a lot of ingredients to be determined in order to obtain a good playground for players and the ability of the GM to blend them wisely enough for a good final result.

Going back to the first question, Italy has all the elements to pique interest and entertain at the same time. As most people know it has a very long and troubled history, studded with epic moments, famous persons, and situations of worldwide influence. For centuries it was the center of the known world and today it is, at least geographically speaking, the center of Europe. It suffered and inflicted cultural contaminations. It is a passageway from and to the old continent, Africa, and the Middle East. It was the fatherland for great men, the base of empires, the ground of battles, and the victim of invasions. Regardless the type of campaign the GM is organizing, Italy offers the fundamentals both to organize a suitable scenery (as an exotic place of passage or as a background for characters) and as main place for the campaign. Italy's historical evolution is long enough to allow divergences of a topic. This article aims to briefly list the basic topologies for a setting with Italy as background, considering both well-known canvases and some clarifying examples.

Genre

Now we will briefly analyze the different possibilities. Every campaign is identifiable by a predominant genre determining the feeling of the campaign itself. Beside player's choices, an espionage campaign set nowadays will have a different cliché and mechanics than a historical fantasy placed in the Dark Ages or an exodus through space in a sci-fi saga. Of course combination of genres is always possible but the background guidelines will determine the exact kind of adventures the players will meet. The most famous genre types are:

FANTASY

If the background is not completely an idea of the GM, then Italian ground allows a wide range of possibilities for fantasy settings (in the main sense of the word). It is possible to have crude and realistic cloak and dagger stories set in the Dark Ages or more lighthearted ones in the flavor of Dumas' "The Three Musketeers." Even if the classic D&D style setting is not exactly translatable (no elves, dwarves, or goblins, you know...) magic had instead a central role in those years. It was not, of course, the spectacular magic of Tolkien's mages but a more subtle and elaborate one, dealing with herbalism and poisons. A world filled with superstition, possession spells, and exorcisms. One of the classics of this genre is the movie "The Name of the Rose" (directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud, based on the book wrote by Umberto Eco) where Reason and Esoterism fight each other between the walls of a monastery. Another element full of appeal and with different possible interpretations is the historical period of the crusades in Palestine. Many of the original expeditions started from Italy or had Italy as mandatory passageway.

HORROR

The horror genre in Italy has some international fans. An entire movie branch was born in Italy in the '70s and brought up a supernatural and mysterious view of the country. Directors like Mario Bava and Dario Argento transferred urban fears and superstitions in a visual language immediately assimilable. The origin of Italian cities itself is stamped with the blood of thousands people from a wide variety of countries, who lost their lives during many wars. From Scandinavian barbarians Longobards which plundered the Roman Empire, to Huns, Saracens, and Turks to previous civilizations like the Etruscans, entire pantheons of deities journeyed through these lands, living in the mouths and hearts of their devoted. Mythological beings and unspeakable nightmares could have rambled here, leaving a sign of their presence, or waiting better times to come back. Undead bloodthirsty creatures could have dwelt in the Roman consul's houses, hidden behind anonymity, conspiring in shadows to conquer the entire known world.

ESPIONAGE

Even if the international influence of Italy does not seem to be of great importance it's not true that an acclimatization of this kind is unusable. Inside the Italian territory there are two recognized independent states: the San Marino republic and the Vatican. In the same way as Switzerland, at Italy's northern border, they are globally recognized as high level security places where discretion is a prerogative. During the Second World War they were a shelter for fugitives (Vatican) and a secure place for properties (Switzerland and San Marino). Besides being a good ground for intrigue and conspiracies, a lot of historical secrets can be resolved here. What about the top secret documents Churchill was searching for in Italy at the end of the war? What dark secrets did the Borgia family (well known for venoms and magic practice) hide? What prophecies would be revealed after a visit in the Vatican secret chambers?

SUPERHEROIC

A setting of this type covers a variety of possibilities, from international organizations of super spies born to resolve impossible missions in a European context, to masked vigilantes fighting the underground mafia families, to a real Champions style campaign in four color. The possibilities are limitless: a team of metahumans with a secret base under the Coliseum, a terrorist organization resembling a new reborn Roman Empire, a masked vigilante living the glamor and lazy fashion world in Milan by day and fighting drug dealers by night.

SCIENCE FICTION

It is obvious that a wide breathing space opera would not have any reason to be tied to a single country. Nevertheless, Italy possesses peculiarities and shades also in this kind of setting. Starting from the cyberpunk genre that could have an optimal land for a post-industrial Italy with corporative organizations in the rich industrial northern cities (near the federal Europe) and close tribal agglomerates type in the south (near Africa and the Middle East). We can also consider variations of the steampunk genre generally settled in the 19th Century, and in particular in the Victorian London of Conan Doyle and H.G. Wells, but that could find interesting cues on Italian ground. Indeed some great theorists and inventors were born here (Galileo Galilei, Leonardo da Vinci, and Enrico Fermi).

Setting

Once the genre has been defined, a Temporal Positioning is necessary, a precise historical moment where the scene is carried out (of course, in the case of a time travel Sci-fi campaign you would need some more attention). The combination of Genre and Period open a high range of possibilities. Some examples could be a supernatural horror campaign placed during the return from crusades in the Middle Ages, or a spy-story set in the immediate future where secret agents equipped with futuristic technologies blanket international conspiracies. The categorization of the periods can be subdivided in easy understandable macro-classes:

HISTORICAL

Italy history is one of the most determining aspects in everyday life. It can "be lived" and "be breathed" simply walking between the centuries old roads or watching distant spires on old cathedrals. Moreover the history of the country covers such a long temporal span that clues can be found for every requirement. Like in a previous example if the powerful Roman Empire conquered all the known world, being the crucible of a maleficent organization of blood thirsty vampires, their actions could had repercussions on the world as today we know it. Maybe they have even planned in detail the rise of the Empire, and its fall has been the loss of balance in opposite direction, trough the work of one "blood-suckers" hunters organization. In a wide breath campaign their actions could have involved some of the more important events, like the conquest of Constantinople, the Saint Inquisition, and the First World War But these are only some examples. Numerous *Critical Points* can be found during which history of humanity has been decided by little men or single events, involving a meaningful impact on the normal timeline. The more interesting periods were the centuries of the Roman Empire domination (obviously), the successive barbaric invasions (Attila and the Huns, the Longobards, the Goths), the marine dominion of the Sea Republics (Genoa and Venice), the Middle Ages (the end of the world waited for year 1000), the travel of Columbus to America, the Italian Renaissance, the First World war and the Second World war.

CONTEMPORARY

Meaning with "contemporary" the period from the end of the second great world war until ours days, Italy proposes a series of interesting cues. Although the Cold War in the after war has mainly influenced more centred countries like Germany, Poland, Russia, USA, and England, Italy had a fundamental role in the equilibrium

between the participants. Divided, for its nature, between various thought philosophies it hosted secret encounters, mediations, hidden travels, and negotiations of spies, ambassadors, and politicians of both the western and the eastern worlds. Once again, its position of "passage" has made it chosen both as neutral ground and as battlefield. Some extremist political formations (as the Red Brigades) have formed in this period, with the '60s and '70s years become famous with the bad name of Years of Lead. During this period the Italian police enforcements collaborated with the intelligence agencies of other countries in order to fight crime. In more recent times the organized gangsterism evolved adding the already present Mafia (a generic term that sadly reunites different families and clans with different scopes and localizations), others organizations like the Russian and Chinese Mafias. The recent "War to the terrorism" has seen Italy as one of the few countries involved in the marshalling of troops, even if with logistic and civilian support scopes only.

FUTURE

The future is, for its nature, uncertain. Although we can made some previsions on the way the things will evolve changing the worldwide equilibrium. Today Italy is part of the European Community, is one of the firsts favorable state members to the unique currency (the Euro), and promoter of a European federalism. Italy could be a good cultural center, beyond a religious one, for the presence of the Vatican. The Agenzia Spaziale Europea or ESA (European Space Agency) is an international organization founded in 1975 in charge to coordinate the space plans of the seventeen European countries, and could be the fulcrum of a futuristic campaign in a Star Trek Federation style. Therefore the recent difficulties between the Islamic and catholic cultures could render Italy a front line in an apocalyptic future, where a clash between religions has become unavoidable and one new planetary war is fought with hyper technological weapons like enormous battle mecha and latent psionics.

ALTERNATIVE

For alternative we mean all the variations on the topic of the previous types. This definition covers an immense range of aspects, for example the alternative realities where the course of history had been modified by unexpected or too fast changes. For example if the Axis had won the Second World War, today Italy would be the strongest ally of Germany, as one of the few countries loyal to Hitler. In another context an historical setting placed during XV century could be twisted with the arrival of an alien civilization that projects the pre-industrial society in a new

complete different age, with country fragmented in lordships and vassals, and the sky full of spaceships. Of course there are other possibilities beyond temporal lines, for example in this category also fall "mixed" campaigns with elements of various categories. This is the case of typical Dark Champion settings or in the style of The Call of Cthulhu ones.

Italian History

We will now list the fundamental points of Italian history subdividing it in "hot spots" that comprise historical periods of various lengths. For everyone you will find one or more cues, subdivided in:

Historical Fact: really succeeded anecdotes and facts.

Legends and Traditions: legends tied to mythology and Italian culture.

Campaign Ideas: ideas and cues in order to begin works with Italian settings.

PREHISTORY (300,000 BC - 1000 BC)

Since prehistoric times the Italian territory has accommodated various populations, coming in great part from Africa and Asia, allocated in the coastal areas. In the Palaeolithic, with ices expansion, the peninsula offered a shelter to the inhabitants escaping from the inner zones of Europe. Is undoubted the presence of the Neanderthal man (approximately 300.000-100.000 years ago), and in Saint Bernardino's cove is verified human presence from the Pleistocene (approximately 250.000 -120.000 years ago). Altogether the populations that lived in this territory, before the creation of Rome, comes generally identified with the name of Genti Italiche (Italic People); between these the Etruschi (Etruscan) was one of the more important culture. They populated the Italian centre region known as Etruria, from the first millennium BC, but their origin is uncertain. They were known as the People of the Sea, they were allies of the Carthaginians along with they fought violent battles in the Mediterranean Sea. They carried great innovations as the use of the arc in the building art. Also their political system and trades were more advanced then others. They were organized in state-cities governed at first by the "Lucumone", a shaman king, and then by magistrates. In the VI century BC, in the apex of their power, they yielded territories to the cities of the Magna Greece and then become definitively submitted by the growing roman power.

Legends and Traditions: In the Etruscan culture had particular importance the legend of Tacete. He was a child, but wiser than an old man, and appeared miraculously near Tarquinia, from a furrow traced by the plow of a peasant. The child taught to Etruscans, collected around

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him to listen his knowledge, the magical sciences and died at the end of the same day. Its instructions were at first hand on orally, therefore collected in the "Tagetic Books".

FOUNDATION OF ROME (1000 BC - 100 AD)

Founded approximately eight hundred years before Christ, in the period between the 753 BC and 509 BC Rome civilization knew one first phase of expansion and unification, furthermore completed in the period of the republic. The Roman Republic (Res Publica Romana) was the State formed by the city of Rome and its conquered territories in the period comprised between the 509 BC and 27 BC, when its shape of government was an oligarchic republic. After the victory in the Punic wars against Carthage in the III century BC also the main Mediterranean islands were under the control of Rome. In the first century BC Rome dominated the Mediterranean Sea but as a result of some inner fights, the evolution from republic to empire was soon completed. Government of the territories controlled by Rome was characterized by the respect of the local cultures and economic development, also thanks to the realization of great infrastructures. In year 100 BC Gaius Julius Caesar arose; he will be general and dictator of Rome signing the end of the Republic and the beginning of the Empire.

Historical Fact: When he was still young, during a journey to Rodi (Rhodes) for philosophic studies, Caesar was kidnapped by pirates. He convinced them to ask a much higher ransom, increasing therefore his prestige in Rome. After his liberation he organized a fleet and then captured the pirates, condemned them to death by crucifixion.

Historical Fact: Caesar was assassinated in the Theatre of Pompey, during the Ides of March (15 March) of the year 44 BC. He was stabbed by a group of plotters whom wanted to preserve the republic from his monarchic ambitions. Between the plotters there was Brutus, unlike his natural son.

Legends and Traditions: according to the legend, Rome was founded by Romulus and Remus in the VIII century BC. It is narrated that Amulius crowned himself king of Alba Longa (Long Dawn) dethroning his brother Numitor. In order to avoid the birth of legitimate heirs he forced Rea Silvia, the daughter of Numitor, to become a "vestale" (a sort of priestess). But Rea Silvia was possessed with force by Mars, the God of War, in a sacred forest. She had two twins from the union: Romulus and Remus. For order of the uncle the sons were divided from the mother to being killed, but the servant in charge did not have heart to make such act. He entrusted them to the fate placing them in a hamper, then

left it to slide on the waters of the Tevere River. A lone female wolf came down from mountains to the river to drink, was attracted by the wails of the two children, taking and nursing them. The two brothers grew and came to acquaintance of their noble origins and the usurpation of Amulius. Amulius was then killed and Numitor returned king of Alba Longa. Obtained the king's permission, Romulus and Remus reach the Tevere in order to found a new city where live.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE (29 – 476 AD)

In the year 64 AD, under the reign of Nero a frightful fire lasted seven days and seven nights (but it's said that it resumed newly, raging for others 3 days,) nearly destroyed the entire city. In the IV century AD the empire knew the beginning of a long series of barbaric invasions conducted by the Visigoths, Huns, and Ostrogoths. In order to resist the impact of these events, the empire was subdivided into the West Roman Empire, with a very short life, and the East Roman Empire (or Byzantine Empire), that resisted for an additional millennium.

Historical Fact: Attila the Hun invaded Italy fascinated by the idea of Rome in chains. He was stopped by the Pope who asked to have a meet alone with him, during his travel of conquest. Nobody knows what was said but after some hours of talk, Attila withdrew his forces.

Historical Fact: The legend wants that the fire that destroyed almost completely the city of Rome has been hung from the mad emperor Nero. The historians think instead that it could have been hung by a group of reactionaries. Assessed fact is that, for exculpate himself, the emperor indicted and condemned the Christian faithful.

Campaign Idea: An organization of supernatural undead beings could use the precarious condition of the Empire in order to infiltrate itself between the row of the powerful governors, conspiring against the Empire itself. The famous fire attributed to Nero could be instead the hopeless attempt to free the world from these beings, made by a small group of vampire hunters. Once discovered, the organization left Rome to its destiny, moving itself towards Constantinople and other European regions like Rumania and Bulgaria. The Vlad family origins began here.

MIDDLE AGES (5TH CENTURY – 15TH CENTURY)

After the loss of political unit, as consequence of the end of Rome control, in V century AD, the invasions and inner fights continued bringing to the formation of small principalities and reigns, often victims of the expansionistic aims of foreign powers. The only

power in a conserving and continuing position for the Latin culture was the Church State, able to counteract new invasions, like the Longobard one. It also had the power to stop influence of other European powers, like France, the Byzantine Empire, and the Sacred Roman Empire. In the XI century there was the Normans invasion when they succeeded to develop a strong control of the territory.

Historical Fact: The Normans, like also the Longobards, was of Viking origins and although they were much adaptable they also carried in Italy the legends of Odin, Thor and other divinities before being converted to Christianity.

Historical Fact: Approaching to the 1000 year populations of every country were convinced of the end of the world. It is narrated of strange individuals that rode the roads, mysterious facts, and dragons giving battle in the sky.

Campaign Idea: It is well known that with the expiring of important dates, like the first millennium, the suggestions and superstitions have an important role. It would be interesting to discover that hidden forces were indeed in motion in order to really provoke the apocalypse, probably hindered from a rival organization of few heroes disowned by history.

RENAISSANCE (16TH CENTURY – 17TH CENTURY)

In the XI century there was an increasing autonomy of the center-north Italian cities that was the premise for the resumption of the commerce, craftsmanship, and a new époque of economic and cultural prosperity. It lasted until the XVI century and carried to the great intellectual and artistic development of the Renaissance. In order to defend their own autonomy from the Empire (in the North) and Arabic invasions (in the south,) the Commons began to constitute Leagues. The enduring of the clashes between Empire and Church carried the nobles and the cities to a subdivision into two alignments: the Guelfi (for the Church side) and Ghibellines (for the Germanic empire side). Another phenomenon that joined together politic and religion were the Crusades, pushed from both the will of contrast towards the crescent Muslim power and the need of a commercial expansion with the east.

Historical Fact: In this period the Capitani di Ventura (captains of fortune) became very important. They were nobles, aristocrats, and common people that decided to live a military life organizing real mercenary companies with a rigid moral code. The most famous one was Giovanni from the Black Bands, a sort of celebrity of the age.

Historical Fact: Giovanni De Medici founded the greatest European bank composed of

three hundred companies and more than ten thousand laborers.

FOREIGN DOMINATION (17TH CENTURY – 18TH CENTURY)

In the XVII century most of the Italian states were defeated and conquered by foreign invaders, such as Spain in the south and Austria in the north. One of the consequences of these dominations was the enslavement of the territories and the application of strong taxes. Moreover, Italy suffered the movement of the sea commerce from the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic one, and the block of cultural development. All this brought to the result of the beginning of a slow decline. In this situation of economic and social crisis, the French Revolution ignited the hopes for a return to independence, aspirations that came disappointed from the substantial subjugation to France after the Napoleonic Campaigns. The restoration saw also the end of the last independent realities, like Venice conquered by Austria and the Liguria by the Reign of Sardinia.

Historical Fact: In the XVII century the plague made thousands of dead. Only in Venice were more than fifty thousand deaths. In these years Edgar A. Poe set, just in Venice, its famous short novel "The Red Death."

Historical Fact: This is the historical period of two important personages. Giacomo Casanova, great lover, well-read, counterfeiter and also spy for the inquisition. And also Alessandro Di Cagliostro, adventurer, freemason and alchemist.

Campaign Idea: Cagliostro spent his life traveling around Europe using various identities, declaring himself a nobleman, a doctor, or a juggler. He tricked many persons, making a lot of money, especially with the sale of an elixir donating the eternal youth. Sometimes he asserted of having hundred years, of being member of the Knights of Malta, an Egyptian freemason, having walked for the Galilea with Jesus, to have studied the alchemy, and to have uncovered the secret of legendary philosophical stone. Sure they were inventions but what if they were not?

RESURGENCE (18TH CENTURY – 1861 AD)

After the Napoleonic Campaigns a series of independence wars against the Empire have begun, helped also by the external support of France. Decisive were the guide of Camillo Benso, count of Cavour, (as the executive of the Sabauda Reign) and the Second Italian independence war. With the shipment of the Thousand (a not well armed army but with an excellent general: Giuseppe Garibaldi) to the south, the great part of the peninsula succeeded in the unification under the Savoia Reign. 1861

saw the proclamation of the Reign of Italy. In the 1870 Rome also came annexed to the Reign, with the beginning of a fracture between Italian state and Church, concluded with the Lateran Pacts in 1929 year.

Historical Fact: Giuseppe Garibaldi was one of the more important historical characters of the period. Born in Italy, he fought in South America for independence of Uruguay. Returned in Italy with Anita, his wife, he earned the general rank guiding an expedition of little more than a thousand men (volunteers with little experience) conquering most of the territories still dominated by foreigners. Many of Garibaldi's men wore a red shirt and took the name "the Thousand."

Historical Fact: It comes founded the Carboneria, a secret society that promotes the liberation of Italy from the foreigners. Its adepts called themselves "Buoni Cugini" (Good Cousins), they obey to a ritual during which they receive a book to instruct themselves about the fellowship and a dagger for defense. Their protector was Saint Teobaldo, a woodcutter that hunted wild animals in the forests. Their motto was "Free the forest from the wolves."

REIGN OF ITALY (1861 – 1946 AD)

The beginning of the Reign saw Italy engaged in a series of wars for colonial expansion in Libya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and later also in China with the Revolt of the Boxer. In the First World War Italy initially remained neutral, then come down to the flank of Allies on 23 May 1915. By the end of the war, Italy completed its regional planning acquiring some Austrians territories in the northeast of the country. With the dissatisfaction for economic and social difficulties of the post-war period, in the year 1922 Italy assisted to the climb to power of the Fascismo (Fascism), that relegated the role of the royal Savoia family to aspects of pure form. In 1926-27 Albania passed under the Italian dominion. In 1940 Italy allied with the Nazi Germany in the Second World War against France and United Kingdom, declaring war along the Japanese empire in the 1941 to United States of America and Soviet Union. By continuation of the allied invasion in Sicily during year 1943, there was the fall of the Fascism and the alignment of Italy to flank of allies against the Germany and fascist veterans of the Italian Social Republic. In the April of the 1945 the Nazi-fascist forces were defeated.

Historical Fact: During the Second World War Benito Mussolini was one of the most tightened friends of the fuhrer. When the end seemed near, Mussolini sent an envoy in Germany to have elucidations from Hitler about one "new generations of weapons" that would had to change the fates of the war. In a

transcription comes clear the phrase: "May God forgive me the last five minutes of war". According to the historians the Reich scientists were near to the creation of one working atomic bomb.

Legends and Traditions: In more than an occasion Mussolini made reference to an innovative weapon called "Death ray," devised from the scientist Guglielmo Marconi, inventor of the radio. The ray would have the power to extinguish and to destroy every mechanical or electronic apparatus causing major damage to humans. In spite of strong refutations by the scientist the weapon could indeed have existed but for moral minds Marconi did not deliver it to the fascist regimen. In an interview he said "My inventions are in order to save humanity, not to destroy it."

Historical Fact: Few weeks after the end of the conflicts the English Premier Winston Churchill arrived in Italy for a "vacation." He remained for two weeks in Mussolini's villa, few hundreds meters from the place where the Duce was executed.

Legends and Traditions: According to some theories Churchill was searching secret documents that could have had enormous impact into the order of the post-war world, or secret information that Hitler had entrusted to the Italian friend.

Campaign Idea: When towards the end of world-wide conflict the situation fell to end, many of the German resources were employed in Italy with many tactical emplacements. There are several legends regarding to the interest of the Third Reich in occult practices and black magic. Italy also has varied legends of endowed relics of supernatural powers. We can imagine a planned search conducted by the Axis forces for a particular one, usable against England or the United States at the end of a magical ceremony. The invasion of great part of Italy could therefore be a collateral effect of this quest.

ITALIAN REPUBLIC (1946 AD – TODAY)

In 1946 year an institutional referendum sanctioned the end of the monarchy and the birth of the republic. The new constitution entered in vigor on 1 January 1948. In 1956 Italy joined the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and in 1955 it came admitted to the United Nations. Year 1957 saw the birth of the European Economic Community, the first step towards the realization of the European Union. 1968 saw Italy transform itself on the social plan and the rising of radical movements, above all the communist ones. They were made of young people and laborers and carried deep modifications to the custom, the mentality, and the school system. In the '70s some of those movements degenerated in the red terrorism,

accompanied from the black one. In the year 1992 began the processes for corruption (the so-called pool of "Mani Pulite" (Clean Hands) or "Tangentopoli"). Were involved all the government parties and that destroyed their inner structure. In the derived political chaos from the disintegration of the previous order was consolidated the principle of the bipolarism and the alternation between the governments of the two alignments of Centrosinistra and Centrodestra.

Campaign Idea: A modern setting previews one complicated net of connections between the political and economical world in the North and the hidden Mafia in the South. Rich entrepreneurs living the jet set of the fashion shows in Milan involved in the narcotic and weapons traffic, with the support of political men. In additions the recent involvement of the Italian military forces to peace missions in foreign country allows the inclusion of war scenes.

Geography

Italy has a mainly vertical development, from the Alps at north and arriving in Mediterranean at south. It possesses two greater islands, Sicily and Sardinia, and another mountain chain, besides the Alps, the Dolomiti. Italy is divided in twenty regions and possesses a central government. With a troubled history the cultural and tradition differences are obvious from region to region. The dialects also are much various, in some cases even from city to city of the same region. The climate, moderated, is often rigid in the north and decidedly more warmth in the south, without too differences. Few of the Italian cities have been founded in recent ages, everywhere renaissance and medieval or even roman testimonies can be found. Therefore Italy possesses cities and towns hiding ancient tales and ready to reveal mysteries....

ROMA (ROME)

Italian Capital City, with around 3 millions habitants. It was the "centre of the world" for centuries first with the Roman Empire and after with the birth and expansion of Christianity. Today Rome is a famous city, with monuments at every street corner and is the centre of political power and of the Italian government. Here you can find the principals housings for Law institutions, Secret Services and almost all the governmental organizations. Rome also contains the Vatican, an autonomous state, fulcrum of the Catholic Church.

Campaign Idea: During the Roman Empire the Spy-Story genre is very adaptable. In fact Rome was so protected at the center of the Empire to not know for centuries real threats. The life was full of comforts and funs. With the

Coliseum and the Maximum Circus attending thousands of persons for the famous fights between gladiators, Rome was the apex of cultural and technological development. The Roman Senate however was much known for palace intrigues that cost the life of many senators and even some emperors. During the barbaric invasions the situation fell into chaos. They all want a piece of Rome and the city knows the defeat and the pillage. Adventures or campaigns with a very dark atmospheres or historical-fantasy finds in these years a perfect setting. How many arcane acquaintances the Empire had accumulated in the course of the centuries? And now what they have made? They are stolen or saved by mysterious individuals?

Campaign Idea: Thanks to the presence of the Church Rome remain during the course of the centuries the fulcrum of the European Culture. The Vatican's Museums contain many acquired things from the Church in the course of two millennia of history, but secret sections really exist. There are guarded manuscripts and documents thought not shareable with the rest of the world. Its emissaries could be still today active in order to move invisibles threads actions to hide specific events. What if the Sacred Inquisition were not passing, but instead evolved? The Vatican could possess an Emergency Assistance Force apt to check demonic manifestations (as an example the above cited organization of vampires) or to investigate on strange phenomena and dark legacies (as the Apocalypse of John of which the Church may have a more complete version).

Campaign Idea: Finally, as Italian capital City Rome could be the center for the most varied governmental organizations, like the "Legion", a group of supers under the directed control of the Police (with a secret base in the underground of the city), and takes part on all the Italian territory in collaboration with other similar groups of other European countries.

VENEZIA (VENICE)

Venice was founded around year 400 AD when numerous Venetian region inhabitants choose to live on the islands of the Venice lagoon in order to escape the barbaric invasions. The new city, in so strict connection with the sea, conquered very soon prestige and richness thanks to commercial exchanges that seen the city as one of the dominant protagonists. Venice was one of the four maritime republics that dominated sea trading from 900 to 1400 AD. Its influence was not limited to the sea; its ambassadors reached every European nation and with the travels of Marco Polo even China (known as Chatai). After loosing importance with the discovery of the Americas, Venice keeps its independence until the conquests made

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by Napoleone Bonaparte. Today Venice is an Italian jewel, a place like not others with its canals (most famous the Canal Grande, Great Canal) and a labyrinthine net of small streets, called "Calli". The lack of building space brings the Venetians architects to minimize the unused spaces and build the houses at very short distance one to another. Walking in the alleys you can breathe an unreal and magic atmosphere, especially during the cold winter nights, when the touristy hordes are just a summer dream. Venice carnival is very famous around the world, lacking the spectacle of other events (like Rio's carnival) but having a more artistic and mysterious feeling and some memorable characters like the silent Domino.

Campaign Idea: During the age of the Sea Republics, Venice competed with Genoa, Amalfi and Pisa for the dominion of the Mediterranean Sea (and not only). Other then the war fleets many mercenary groups supported the several cities completing actions of sabotage or piracy, a perfect background for a dense setting about naval battles, boardings, cloaks and daggers with a more Fantasy flavour then the successive pirates age.

Campaign Idea: Today Venice is, above all in the summery period, a millions tourists goal. But between its alleys, in the houses filled of history and mystery (some have the sad hunger of being cursed) could move creatures and shadows perfect for a horror campaign. During night the same city structure transform itself in a tangled maze of roads closed over passants and hiding ancient atrocities committed in the name of marine divinities now forgotten. Venice could also be the base for groups of nightmare investigators, or dark brotherhoods. Who are the mysterious individuals dressed in domino costumes going around during cold winter nights?

Campaign Idea: Venice has a large problem... the water! If this element is indispensable for its survival often it becomes a problem when high tide invades the city during the more rainy periods. A group of superhuman terrorists could take advantage of this weakness threatening to sink the city. A rescue mission could perhaps cause still more damages, with fights and chases searching the explosives devices placed by criminals in the main islands.

NAPOLI (NAPLES)

The city of the sun, one of the most populous Italian cities. Although Naples is often associated to crime and in particular to the racket of Camorra, it possesses since the Roman Empire, one of the richest and articulated history. Tourist goal during the roman empire (the emperors had a holidays house here), knew after the fall of Rome the dominion of many foreign

populations, that we prefer to jump in order to avoid to fill up pages and pages... it's enough to know that Naples had, in the centuries previous the unification of Italy, very few periods of peace. It passed of hand in hand for directed concession or conquests. From a such situation many criminal organizations borne here and have bases or points of reference in the city. Today Naples is a tourist and cultural center (with six university athenaeums), an important harbour and one industrial city. Under Naples there are tens of kilometers of tunnels and water reservoirs. This underground world, developed mainly during the Greek-Roman period, still today accommodates various catacombs and places of cult for the Neapolitans, religious and superstitious.

Campaign Idea: Naples is often a city in war. Numerous bands of delinquents, tied the Mafia, Camorra and many other groups that unfortunately operate in the south of Italy, fights each others by the roads, with the police forces always ready to contrast them. Although the city wants to exit from this situation, crime often is seen like a truth that cannot be escaped. The poverty of some quarters pushes many young to these groups, attracting them with easy gains. In this situation a Dark Champions campaign finds an ideal ground. From groups of vigilantes making justice by themselves fighting the several mafia families, to superheroes patrolling the roads ready to take part against criminals upgrade? Every possible scenery is feasible. A group could have a secret base in the underworld of Naples, dividing it with the criminals who often use the galleries for secure movements.

Campaign Idea: Bagnoli is an industrial quarter of Naples abandoned during '90s. Today it is unfortunately a degraded and abandoned zone very adaptable to Cyberpunk adventures. Between hangars, industries and warehouses the quarter could easily accommodate bands of bikers. In a close future it can be one of the most populous and notorious zones of the city, a metal heart in perennial tension with the near residential quarters.

Main Italian Organizations

The Italian Government: The Italian state is represented from the President of the Republic with a much reduced power, more than other than guarantor of the constitutionality of the laws. The legislative function is entrusted to the parliament, divided in Room and Senate. Every law must pass from both before being approved. Today the government of Italy is contended between two poles (Right and Left), but Italy always has been famous for the myriad of small parties present in parliament.

Carabinieri: The Carabinieri (Carabiniere at single person) are a military police force and make part Armed Forces along with Army, Navy and Aeronautics. They place side by side the Police in the control, repression and prevention of the Crime, taking care moreover of the Italian embassies. As a military force, the Carabinieri are a police force who can take part also on foreign territory. It is famous the cavalry division but today it has a mostly representative importance. The Carabinieri are present everywhere with many special squads, such as a very mysterious n Intelligence agency. This is a good military force well adaptable for eventual government groups.

Police: The Italian Police Force (or State Police) is one of the armed forces with a main centre in Rome and a Questura (the Police headquarter) in all important cities. Often its tasks are overlapped to those of the Carabinieri and there is a tight collaboration between the two forces in order to avoid conflicts. However a sure rivalry is perceptible, above all between the low ranks. The members of both ranks call each other "Cugini" (Cousins) to underline the few differences of scopes.

Financial Police: The "Fiamme Gialle" (Yellow flames, the name remembers the symbol on the uniform of these officials) are a police force with financial and economic tasks. They often concur to fight organized crime when tied to swindles, frauds and in a generalized manner to the economy.

Italian Army: The Italian military is formed of Army, Navy, Aeronautics and Police officers. Important to notice that for its Constitution Italy repudiates the war and therefore the Italian Army cannot participate actively to war operations, but only to the peacekeeping.

SISMI: Servizi per le Informazioni e la Sicurezza Militare - Services for the Information and the Military emergency. The Italian Military Intelligence agency.

DIA: Direzione Investigativa Antimafia – Counter-Mafia Investigative Direction. In a country with many problems from the Mafia is unthinkable to not have an investigative force in

contraposition to the organized crime. This is a multi forces department and comprises representatives from Police, Carabinieri and Financial Police. Very active, it must often face with few means a lot of great problems involving entire regions.



Migrating from d20

by David McGuire

This is an article about change and transition, and about you, the GM, the player, coming in cold from your old system – maybe d20, maybe something else – and giving up a bunch of old assumptions and preconceived notions about how to think in terms of the game. Instead, see that this is a game that you can get to work on *your* terms.

Change – it happens to everyone eventually; whether you finally designed a great story arc that just will not work in your current system, or you’ve been struggling to build a character specific to a genre that your current game won’t let you do without heavy rules manipulation. You built something that did not fit into a prior paradigm and struggled mightily to shove that square piece into the round hole of your current (or former) gaming system.

Change – an all new rules set, with all new mechanics. HERO contains a lingo unique to itself, whereas many other games, including video games, share a more common language, including “hit points,” and “spells,” and “armor class.” Understanding how HERO interprets and explains things became my key to enjoying the system and using it effectively. But that requires a little more time and a little more help than your average out-of-the-box game.

For me, the very first thing I did – before almost anything else – was look for the familiar. I flipped through the rules, searching desperately for the ‘feel’ of d20. I wanted the inherent simplicity of the system, which allowed for a decent amount of flexibility but never compromised its core principle: roll a d20 to do just about anything, and stay within the lines. That, of course, presented a huge problem, because HERO has no predefined guidelines; only suggestions of how to simulate different genres. Of course, other than the occasional campaign of *Vampire* by White Wolf or *Shadowrun: 2nd Edition* by FASA back in the day, the bulk of my gaming for the last five years, and many years before that, had been *Dungeons & Dragons*, now known as the d20 system.

So of course, without realizing it, I attempted to play “Dungeons & Dragons” using the HERO rules. I should also note here that the very first piece of advice I got from the boards pointed out the flaw in this thinking: “Don’t try and play d20 in HERO. Use HERO to play HERO.” That provided the most startling revelation of all; I really wasn’t in Kansas anymore. I had remained so firmly entrenched in my old thinking, though, that it would take a while before I began the long process of learning a whole new game.

So why did I do it? Why go through the effort? The rules text is 592 pages long – a number oft cited by the HERO community as an inside joke. That one book contains all of the rules needed to play the game, in any setting. Conventional gaming offers you a setting, and then attempts to construct rules to support it. HERO, by contrast, offers you a set of rules, and then offers you various settings to play it in.

Every other Tuesday for our group is game night, and one of those first Tuesday evenings when we began discussing making the system change, I sat in my Official GM Chair™, with my feet propped up on my low-coffee table that I GM from, with a steaming mug of java beside me. I spent the first hour or so leafing through the text, glancing at the art. I was looking for something but I didn’t know what that something was. Finally, I realized the question that had been brewing the whole time and asked for the whole room to hear:

“Where are the freaking hit points?”

There was a long, hard pause as everyone stared over at me. They looked at each other, and Chris’ mouth started to twitch at the corners a bit before busting out in laughter – as though given a cue, both Jason & Beau immediately joined in. They were laughing at me! AT ME! Just before I got so red in the face I would pop, Jason, a long time friend of mine and advocate of the system – who had been playing it long before I ever heard of it, piped up and said:

“We don’t use those, Dave. Now we have STUN and BODY.”

That didn’t bode well. The words made sense but I had nothing to connect them too. I felt like the new kid in school: everyone knows everyone else, and here I am, sitting at my desk, nose in an alien textbook without even an apple for the teacher.

But it serves as a great example of the change in thinking – HERO, as the text points out, simulates dramatic action. In great action stories, the hero is often knocked down, and knocked out, but never dies. The core of the system is dramatic simulation, which means that there have to be rules that allow dramatic action. Enter STUN and BODY.

BODY takes the place of Hit Points as most people understand them; getting to zero means the clock starts running and death can’t be too far off. STUN, on the other hand, represents a new concept for most people. Through STUN it becomes simple to build non-lethal weapons, to give new types of dramatic descriptions, including “he’s badly bruised and weaving, but starts to get to his feet...” I get excited any time a game puts a new tool in the hands of the

INTRODUCTION

“I don’t believe how much perspective on this I’ve lost,” I said to Ilene the other day. “I mean, here I am writing this article for people who are going to go through what I went through, but I can’t find the voice for it. How do I tell someone, ‘this is both the best, and the most challenging step in gaming you’ll take in a long time’ and then show them that it isn’t nearly as painful as they think it’s going to be?”

She put her book down and said, “Well, what about all your board posts? You explain this stuff all the time, right?”

“I do, yes, but it’s to people who have asked specific questions. They’re tight, condensed answers and this topic is... well, it’s huge. That, and they’re either familiar with the system and looking for clarification, or they’re totally new and asking introductory questions. Either way I have a guidepost, a starting place to help them from.” I finally realized what was slowing me down. “I’m intimidated by own idea,” I said, chuckling nervously.

“I don’t want people to read this and wonder how they’ll manage the new game. I want them to read this and

see that it's *manageable*," I stressed that last part heavily, and I heard it in my voice when I did it, "and that's the most important part of all. I believe HERO is the best gaming system out there, and making the transition is tough, but one hundred percent worth it."

"So start from there! Tell people what you tell me – about design, about how it lets you tell your stories, about how you learn more about the system all the time by using it." Suddenly, I had found my article.

players and the GM. For me, being able to knock characters out without coming close to killing them represented a dramatic shift in my story telling.

That only scratches the surface, though, considering that I also spent a lot of time wondering how to turn enough negative STUN into BODY damage. That kind of thinking comes straight out of the old model, though. In HERO, if you only wanted to deal BODY damage, you could adjust the rules to do so, but the bridge between the two ideas – Hit Points versus BODY and STUN is this: Hit Points don't properly represent dramatic action; instead they represent durability and a general toughness. In a videogame the immediacy does not translate well; they become a mechanic, instead of the ability to keep fighting despite injury. In *Vampire* and *Shadowrun*, taking damage meant losing the ability to fight effectively.

HERO offers a compromise, without all of the stat tracking. Take enough STUN in a single shot, and you're going to have to spend some time regaining your wits. Think of moments in film where a hero got knocked silly by a grenade blast – he spends a few moments getting back to his feet; doing this in a hit point based system requires willing players and a creative GM. HERO does this automatically; instead of struggling with descriptive text and then arguing over whether or not someone is "really stunned" based on a rules decision, they simply take the STUN damage and roleplay the results.

Changing from a hit point based system to HERO provided me with a new tool to tell my stories; now I could rock the ship, hit someone in the head with a yard arm, and they would be stunned, instead of losing hit points to a poor die roll. Instead of doing math to determine "subdual damage" in the d20 system, I roll one set of dice to determine STUN and BODY. All of that took me about two weeks to puzzle through, and I had only just begun. More importantly, though, I had taken that key step forward – I grasped that. I then asked Jason:

"Okay dude. Where do we go from here? Should we tackle what's in and what's out? What about combat? And where's..." I flipped to the index, which surprised me. The index, I mean – it's downright comprehensive, and probably one of the best features in HERO books. "Where's the spell list?"

Jason sighed and shook his head. "Well, I see we have a long way to go. Let's start at the beginning."

Tangible and obvious evidence that again I was treading unfamiliar ground jumped out early: there is no spell list. There are books and books of spells and powers out there, but the core rules don't contain those. The core rules

allow you to express those ideas in game terms. There is no defined out-of-the-box magic system that tells you how "magic works," because in the language of HERO, magic is a special effect – not an effect in and of itself.

Change – it sometimes hits you in the back of the head.

"Okay, so in plain English, I want to blast a guy with ... I dunno, the ubiquitous Fireball." I looked around for a stage director. "Can I get a Fireball over here? Anywhere?" Jason laughed. I was starting to loosen up and it showed.

"I think we can manage that. I'll handle the mechanics, let's go ahead and cast the spell. If you're thinking of the old d20 Fireball, you probably don't have to roll to hit anyone," and I nodded affirmation, "but in HERO," he said, "you always roll to determine if you hit, even for 'easy' shots. So let's pick up some dice and see what happens."

Suddenly I was on familiar ground. I picked up a twenty sided die.

"Okay, what am I rolling here?"

"Not that." Jason pushed three six sided dice over to me. I looked at them apprehensively. I glanced back up at Jason, who much like a boy with a new pet, encouraged me to pick the dice up and roll them. I was waiting for the scene in *The Lady and the Tramp* where he'd nudge the meatball across the plate.

"These are the only dice we use in HERO, three six sided dice, to cover most 'attempt' rolls – whenever you're doing something, you roll those, and then more or fewer dice for damage, generally speaking."

I continued to stare at them. I picked them up – until that day I had played GURPS once and had only ever used six sided dice for *Fireball* damage or to play *Parcheesi*. I hadn't even played *Yahtzee* as a kid, and here I am with three dice in my hand and being told that it's going to do what I want. I didn't buy it.

"Okay, lemme see the book real quick..." Jason said as he flipped to a sample sheet, and scribbled some notes down on a piece of paper. What followed was a long break down of the combat mechanics, which boiled down to this: Much like any other game, you have skill in combat abilities, and your opponent has skills that allow him to get out of the way. The first part I had down already! Hitting people used different words, but the same basic principle! Fantastic!

I rolled the dice and they came up three, three, and two. Jason's eyes popped a bit before smiling and nodding – I felt rather dejected, seeing as eight isn't the greatest solution available. I was hoping for something half-way decent. Problem was I didn't know I had just scored my very first hit in HERO, on my very first roll.

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“Okay, hitting people and doing almost anything other than damage, we roll low.

Damage, we roll high. Nice roll by the way.”

“So... wait, so my eight isn't total garbage?” I looked down at the dice again. I hit! I hit something! And it started to click. The ideas, the mechanics, started to click. Rolling low hits people. I had successfully initiated combat in the game. I had taken another step forward.

That only hinted at my total consternation, though. As we worked through more mechanics, I found a handy chart in the text explaining, quite simply, that HERO uses a bell curve to determine outcomes – not a flat line, as a single die would provide. Because of that, it becomes much easier to determine how a fight, or a situation, should flow and how difficult a task you, as the GM have assigned. Or as a player, have had assigned.

For instance, if you wanted to pick a lock, you would check your score for the Lockpicking skill – we'll say you have to roll under a twelve (in game notation, it would read 12-, but we're not focused on that right now). However, that number on a bell curve is around seventy percent; completely different from the sixty percent that it would be a single d20 roll.

What this really does is eliminate a great deal of the guess work involved because the possible solutions are more constant; if you want people to succeed, the bell curve tells you roughly what their chances are, because you don't *assign a target number* – in HERO, the character's skill level acts as the target in most cases. In the scenario of picking a lock, the character checks his score and rolls under it – if the lock is tougher, then you would assign a penalty to push it down, which isn't a straight apples to apples change. It shifts the bell curve, so a -3 to a skill roll represents a dramatic change, rather than a flat '15%.'

That change is as much about character design as it is about mechanics; instead of having a bonus to perform a skill based on a target number, each character knows the level of their talent, because they know where the numbers will likely fall should the dice get rolled.

“So you hit the guy, and you roll damage,” more mechanics followed here, including a few minutes spent looking up “Explosion” in the main text. Jason jotted down a few more notes before forging on, and more dice were rolled as the evening continued.

These are just two pieces of a much larger puzzle – the total transition from one system to another involves the breaking down of many concepts and ideas, and then putting them back in a framework that's easy to grasp. Hopefully this has given you some insight into how I began that process, and will help get you started as well. In this article I covered two concepts that

gave me trouble early on – the mechanics of rolling dice in HERO and why they work differently, and one of the core idea changes from the dramatic design of hit points, to the more dramatically appropriate BODY and STUN. Getting those two ideas down really opened up a wide variety of possibilities for my story telling, and hopefully they can do the same for you.

I currently run a HERO campaign set in a heavily modified *STAR Hero* setting with a blending of *Dark Champions*. The campaign I put on hold is an epic sword & sorcery fantasy campaign that caused me to switch systems. In my next article I'll go into detail how some of those changes were made mechanically, and talk about some of the 'core assumptions' of level-based system vs. point based systems. Good luck and good gaming.



The Peanut Gallery by Brian Boyko

Membership: About fifty supervillains located in major metropolitan areas in the United States and Canada, with a rotating leadership clique that usually contains a personable and charismatic leader who calls himself “Fuego” and a reclusive financial genius and computer hacker known only as “Mr. Fiscal.”

Background/History: Chris Einjolht, who was, for about 3 minutes, a.k.a. “Captain Electro,” manifested electrical superpowers at a time in his life he was too stupid to figure out a smart thing to do with them. He planned every detail of the jewelry store heist down to the last millisecond. Of course, this was a plan with all the complexity of “zap in through the phone wires, disable the alarm, grab the jewelry, and zap out.” Truthfully, he didn’t even know what he was going to do with the jewels; he just did it for the thrill.

Einjolht made two mistakes. 1) He forgot that when he traveled on electrical lines, he only took himself and his clothing – not objects – like, say, a sack of loot – he carried. 2) The jewelry store he picked was owned by a close friend of superhero Diamond Cutter.

It was a first offense, Einjolht didn’t put up a fight when Diamond Cutter apprehended him, and his lawyer got him a good plea-bargain, which meant that his stay in Stronghold was relatively short. While the fates of other “alpha-level” supervillains didn’t scare him straight, it did scare him. Most of the other supervillains were just disorganized, doing something phenomenally stupid and getting caught.

In prison, there’s a hierarchy. Crooks always consider themselves better than the violent criminals, the violent criminals consider themselves better than the murderers, and the murderers consider themselves better than the mass-murderers. Einjolht made a few contacts at that prison with other “stupid crooks” like him.

To his credit, Einjolht did try to go straight when he got out, but with his criminal record the only job he could find that paid him (barely) enough to live on was a soul-sucking telemarketing job. He did look for other legitimate work where he could use his powers, but very few construction teams needed a living arc-welder when the non-living kind worked just as well. ‘Sides, are you really going to trust the electric villain guy when you spend all day working on metal scaffolding?

Depressed and resigned, he had given up hope of finding other work, when work found him.

Benson, Twillger & Watkins, a large accounting firm, gave him an offer for a one-time job that required his unique skills; he was assured that it was totally above board. What they wanted him to do was to use an electro-magnetic pulse to wipe out all the data on a server farm “for security reasons” before the servers were “donated to schools.”

The accounting suits left Einjolht to his work, but before Dave could wipe the data, he got a call on the cell phone he carried.

The voice, calling itself “Mr. Fiscal,” explained that the accounting firm was attempting to get him to destroy evidence that the accounting firm was aiding Fortune 100 company VeriEnTex in hiding manipulated and over-inflated stock prices – and that they were using Einjolht, a known supervillain, as a fall-guy to explain why so much evidence was missing. The good news was that Mr. Fiscal could download the data through Electro’s cell phone to an off-site server he had set up in advance. Chris played along, stalling on the phone until Mr. Fiscal had dumped the data. When Mr. Fiscal signaled an all clear, Einjolht dutifully wiped the data, shook hands with the accountants, and collected a nice check, to boot.

He wasn’t sure how to get out of the trap that BT&W set up for him; he was very relieved when Mr. Fiscal called him about two hours later.

Mr. Fiscal thanked Einjolht for his help; explained that the evidence would quickly find its way to the SEC. If Einjolht wanted, he could be named as the source of the information; this might redeem him in the eyes of the world.

“Or,” Mr. Fiscal said, “you could just profit from the information, and become filthy rich.”

For a reason Chris has never really figured out, Mr. Fiscal stuck with him, and although Fiscal is by far still the superior financier, Dave has learned quite a bit from his reclusive financial mentor. Besides, white collar crime paid much better; with much less risk.

But sitting at your computer all day, watching money grow can be somewhat boring – and, let’s face it: When you’ve got superpowers, you’ve just *got* to use them.

Einjolht created a new costume and a new identity: Fuego. Never mind that “Fuego” didn’t actually make a whole lot of sense, considering that he had neither fire-powers nor a fire-motif. He was Fuego because, dammit, “Fuego” sounds cool!

“Fuego” soon adopted dual roles. Einjolht, despite his criminal proclivities, doesn’t like to see people hurt – at least, not physically hurt – and if there’s a crisis that could use a bit of

superpowered help to resolve, Fuego helps out the best way he can – usually by ensuring that the civilians are out of harm’s way as the “real” heroes battle it out. Hell, he’ll even throw a punch or two – or more likely, a bolt of lightning – in a fight if the fate of the city/planet/universe/whatever is at stake.

This built up a pretty solid reputation of “Fuego” as one of the good guys – even those superheroes who figured out that the guy was a crook – and wanted to put him away – had to admit that Millennium City, with its high “threat ratio” was better off with “Fuego” in it, helping to save lives, then locked up in Stronghold.

Miss T – a super-strong cross-dresser who turned to crime in his teens after being thrown out on the street by his parents – was the first supervillain from Fuego’s short time in Stronghold who came looking for a job. Knowing how tough it was to find good paying jobs with criminal records, Einjolht obliged. While Einjolht wasn’t looking to start a criminal syndicate at first, the syndicate sort of grew around him as more people from Stronghold heard that “Fuego made it big” and was hiring. Eventually, Fuego accepted the role of syndicate leader – so long as it only included crooks and not more “hardened” criminals. Besides, it does help to have friends in low places – and high places – and, well, hell, it never hurts to have too many friends.

No one can remember who first used the term “The Peanut Gallery” but the name quickly stuck and by 2003, the group was doubling in size every year. With increased size came increased economies of scale and a more effective criminal enterprise. By 2006, the “Peanut Gallery” is at the sweet spot where they are too powerful to be threatened by small-time crooks and gangs, too small to be of concern to major threats such as VIPER and Dr. Destroyer, and too useful to police looking for leads on violent crimes committed by non-Gallery members or superheroes who need some extra firepower to take down really dangerous threats to be rounded up in the paddy wagon.

Sure, they prefer non-violent crimes and maybe other hardened criminals see the members, individually, as “soft,” but no one sees the organization, as a whole, as a pushover. They may be the “Diet Coke of Evil” but they’re very, very good at it.

Organization and Structure: There are two main kinds of people in the Peanut Gallery: Good people who do bad things for money, and bad people who do good things... also for money.

The Peanut Gallery acts a little bit like a mafia family, a bit like a farm co-op, a bit like a corporation, and a whole lot like a social club. Its

primary responsibility is to provide “jobs” – legitimate or not – for crooks, ex-crooks, reforming crooks, wannabe crooks, and people who are “not quite sure they’d want to be crooks full time but I need the money to get past this crunch and maybe I could do it ‘just this once.’” Most of the villains in the rank and file have some sort of superpower or ability that makes them unique to the organization, although they’ve taken on more than a few Normals who have been – or have the potential to be – useful.

Each member of the Peanut Gallery pays dues – this is roughly 20%, gross, off the top, on all crimes committed, plus up to 30% in “service fees” if the Peanut Gallery’s resources (detailed below) are used. Even if it’s something simple like lookout duty, someone’s got to do it – and that person does get paid.

On the other hand, each member of the Peanut Gallery is expected to spend a certain time of the year “on-call for emergencies” – if the city’s in danger and the heroes can’t handle it, you go out and you do what you can to protect the life and limb of the citizenry.

If you can’t adhere to the Gallery’s rules, part of the Peanut Gallery’s membership is being subject to their punishments – the most common punishment is taking a pay cut. In particularly hard cases, you can get temporarily “suspended” from the Gallery – and forced to fend for yourself without the Gallery’s support.

If you screw up so badly that the Gallery wants you out of their hair, they usually know enough about you to get you into trouble with the cops, the heroes, the military... while the Gallery as a whole condemns violence, more than one person who played fast and loose with the rules found themselves in a frame-up resulting in a long stay in Stronghold, or worse; a close-up view of red-stained pavement, courtesy of whatever local gang or mob the Gallery is manipulating this week.

As for the benefits of the Peanut Gallery, they are quite numerous. First, the Gallery will set-up jobs – both criminal and legitimate. They will provide appropriate firepower and backup – it almost always helps to have more men on a job or a technological, magical, techno-magical, or just plain awesome piece of equipment to get the job done. They launder money, fence goods, and pay off cops.

Paying off cops sometimes means the standard unmarked bills in a brown paper bag; but that’s certainly not the preferred method. “Cash drops” are only for the cops who are hands-down corrupt and demand money – and those types of cops tend to be “temporary” problems as Internal Affairs officers are eventually tipped off to their deeds. More likely, the payoff comes in a form that’s more palatable to the average cop – a lead on a particularly

thorny case, the weaknesses of non-Gallery supervillains, and such. The Gallery is particularly effective with cops who try to be family men, a good word from an influential person to get a kid into college or even phony “merit-based scholarships” through both front organizations and influenced legitimate charities can eliminate one of a family cop’s biggest financial burdens.

More than one case in Millennium City has been cracked by the cops relying on the Peanut Gallery to ransack a place without a warrant or wiretap without cause and then obtaining that evidence through a third-party; doing an end-run, if you will, around the Fourth Amendment. “Sure,” many cops think, “the guy is probably a thief, but since he can do what I can’t, I’ll gladly accept a thief’s help if it means finding the kidnapped little girl.”

They even have their own banking program; if a member in good standing puts their ill-gotten gains in their “bank,” Fuego and Mr. Fiscal reinvest it. The interest rate pays a hell of a lot better than a savings account, a bit better than a certificate of deposit, and you don’t have to worry about the IRS or banks worrying about how a known scumbag ends up with all that money. They allow you to withdraw up to 50% of your savings immediately and 100% in 4 weeks. They don’t give out loans but they are more than willing to give out cash advances to members, which are paid back by increasing the cut the Gallery takes from each job until the advance is paid off.

And they provide possibly the best financial security a crook can get. They provide a stipend for you and your family if you’re injured on a job and unable to “work.” If arrested, they provide you with the best in legal defense and, if need be, “illegal defense” like jury tampering. They provide a retirement pension in the form of a 401(k) fund, or if you’re the type of villain to prefer it, gold bars and diamonds hidden in a safe. They will even provide family benefits if, God forbid, a villain is actually killed in the line of duty – either on a criminal escapade or fighting off the world-shattering menace of the month.

For teens looking to make a start in the world of supervillainy, the Gallery can offer incentives like on-the-job training, a “mentor” program (“We don’t like to use the word ‘sidekick’ here,”), the ability to visit exotic locations, meet interesting people (and rob them,) and money for college (up to \$100,000 for undergraduate and \$200,000 for graduate school). Fuego’s influence extends to a number of influential people; and doing well in the mentor program might even influence your chances of being accepted to the college of your

choice – except Dartmouth. For some reason, Mr. Fiscal hates Dartmouth.

And finally, if a particular villain has too much heat, the Gallery can provide new supervillain identities and costumes for a modest fee. Indeed, more than one superhero, tired of the long hours, hazardous conditions, and low pay, has come into the Gallery’s fold and took on a new super-identity to start a life of crime.

Perhaps most importantly is the intangibility and social life that the Peanut Gallery can offer; the life of a supervillain – especially a low-powered supervillain more concerned with paying his bills and avoiding the cops than with trying to take over the world, can be a stressful one. The Gallery allows you to unwind and talk with people who understand, network for information, learn from one another, and make friends.

Doctrine: The Gallery is a society designed for the mutual benefit of supervillains and supervillains’ wallets. They offer villains who heroes wouldn’t otherwise waste a second punch on a way to fight effectively, stay in the game, and make some money. In order to do that, the Gallery establishes a bunch of ground rules.

First, Gallery members have to act, sometimes, like superheroes. Unpaid. This is a combination of Fuego’s real empathy, business acumen, and practical PR considerations. First, it’s hard to justify putting people in prison when those people may be all that stands between a monster and annihilation of the city. Second, you can’t rob what’s been destroyed.

They also can’t act like remorseless violent monsters either – no unnecessary violence and absolutely no killing under any circumstances. The minute the Gallery gets a rep for violent crime is the minute that heroes and cops alike will turn on the Gallery. That makes it much, much harder to do business. If you have to tangle with a superhero, capturing is okay, but torturing or killing isn’t. Fighting is okay, but fighting in a populated area means collateral damage and the possibility of someone – other than the hero – getting seriously hurt.

And victim selection is paramount. Rarely do they ever commit crimes which affect the poor or the middle class. They’ll never take a life-altering sum of money from someone and they’ll usually leave items of sentimental value behind. They tend to target large businesses and corporations – not only is that where the money really is, but because a corporation is only a “person” under a law, harm to actual people is kept to a minimum.

PR and public perception is such a big part of the criminal organization that members are expected to *act* even more heroic than the

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superheroes they fight; even if it is just an act, even if it is only in public.

There are a number of other rules regarding giving away a secret location, giving away secret identities, breaking items ‘on loan’ from the Gallery, etc. Many of these come down to a time, place, and manner question; if the freeze-ray got broken in a fight with Captain Goodness, that’s forgivable. If you were using it to keep the food in your refrigerator cool during the blackout, that’s a problem. Criminals with hard drug addictions aren’t members in good standing, although the Gallery has been known to spring for rehab if an otherwise Gallery-worthy villain asks for help. So-called “softer” drugs (like alcohol, marijuana, and sometimes ecstasy) are only a problem when you use on the job or they affect the villain’s ability to perform that job. By and large, however, the Gallery stays out of the drug industry. Not only is it bad PR, but the competition’s so fierce and the profit margins so low that it doesn’t make financial sense for them to enter the field.

All these miscellaneous guidelines can be summed up with the two Peanut Gallery Golden Rules. 1) Use your common sense. 2) If you don’t have common sense, get the hell out of the Gallery.

The Gallery has a good thing going. They will not let anyone screw it up by being stupid.

Group Relations: In addition to Fuego and Mr. Fiscal, there usually three or four other supervillains who usually have a bit of experience on their side and have proven their worth to the organization sitting at the top of the hierarchy, although these other positions change periodically as members get delayed, captured, take personal days, tire of the responsibility, or move on to start crime syndicates of their own in other cities. While the Gallery is roughly egalitarian, this top rank – or the “Captains” – tend to decide policy as a whole for the entire Gallery.

Each captain – including Fuego and Mr. Fiscal – take their cut only from the jobs they personally supervise. The Captains work independently but coordinate their crimes to make sure that there are few conflicts in schedule or objective. A Captain will make about half as much on any particular job as a field-counterpart for their prep and cleanup services, however, they prep and cleanup many more jobs at once than any particular field-criminal will go on. Besides, Captains make the bulk of their money not from the cut of the crime but rather from reinvesting the stolen money into legitimate investments.

The Captains do end up going out into the field on particularly important, or personally interesting, jobs. Then they usually take a larger

cut. In those cases, the Captain usually takes the role of supervisor or team leader, making sure the job goes smoothly and making sure that inexperienced team members learn on the job.

The rotating Captains policy means that there is achievable room for advancement in the Gallery. In order to prevent a breeding of dissent, the Captains do tend to take suggestions – and take them seriously – from the rest of the Gallery. But when they decide policy, the law has been laid down.

The Gallery is set up – at least from the view of its members – as an honestly benevolent organization. If you’re a member in good standing, you’re not going get whacked, leg-broken, or the like. They will honestly give you your fair share without screwing you over. Inside the organization, it’s all carrots, no sticks. But being outside of the organization is its own stick. The Gallery deals with internal problems – and enforces discipline – by taking away the carrots – carrots such as legal support in the case of arrest, easy jobs, and the safety that comes in numbers. Because the Peanut Gallery takes in C-list villains (what UNTIL classifies as “Alpha Threats”) they tend not to be able to make it far without the Gallery before they piss off someone bigger or meaner; whether that’s a gangbanger, a Mafiosi, a cop with an itchy trigger finger, or perhaps the least worrisome threat, a superhero.

As for external threats, there have been cases where a short-sighted gang has tried to push around a “whacko in a costume.” If you mess with a member of the Gallery, however, the entire Gallery comes at you – and it usually comes at you sideways.

Tactics: Despite the variety of stun-rays, magic swords, and bola guns in the arsenal, public perception is the most important weapon the Gallery possesses. Cops often rely on the Gallery for tips leading people to rapists and murderers – or even rely on the Gallery for tracking them down and tying them up. The motive, as mentioned earlier is not always altruistic – pointing cops and heroes in the direction of your competition is always good for business.

They invest in communities, funding libraries, schools, and contributing to charities – usually through an “anonymous donor” for legal purposes, but with more than a bit of a wink and a nod so that people know where the money’s really coming from. Fuego himself enjoys playing the role of helpful ambassador to police organizations and heroic superteams, and will go to great lengths to convince someone that the Gallery is benign, if not beneficial.

Most of their crimes steal from corporations; not individuals or small business owners. Mr. Fiscal can even calculate how much a business can afford to lose without anyone losing their

job. (Causing people to lose a raise, or initiating a hiring freeze, however, does not upset their fickle criminal sensibilities.)

They always plan out their criminal exploits and almost always have at least two ways they can cash in on a raid – for example, if criminals X and Y botch a bank robbery at night and are defeated by the security system, Captain Z shifts a few numbers around and quickly invests in the company that made that security system as the price bubbles and then quickly sells it. If the bank robbery succeeds, he short sells the bank’s reinsurance company. No raid is a failure if it makes the Gallery money – and yes, criminals X and Y do get a cut of the money Captain Z earned whether or not the raid was successful.

In any outing by the group, there are often primary and secondary objectives; sometimes much subtler than one would expect.

Pickpocketing someone might be to get their money, it might also be to get DNA samples for cloning, or simply to make that person late for work and delay the close of a business deal.

They also love to defy expectations. One trick is to steal all but one of the parts of a device – shrink ray, doomsday machine, whatever McGuffin can be assembled with parts – as the heroes are misdirected, staking out the location of the fourth part, the team moves on to other crimes elsewhere. Months or years later when the original McGuffin crimes have been forgotten, a second team steals the fourth part, and it’s finally combined with the other three parts, which are labeled and in storage.

Teams usually consist of supervillains who you wouldn’t normally expect to be working together with disparate powers; almost never exactly the same team twice. The Gallery likes to keep heroes guessing as to who they will face at any given time, mostly because they don’t want heroes to anticipate any one particular villain and exploit their particular weaknesses.

Against those city-threatening threats, however, subtlety goes out the window as a tactical response usually mobilizes all available resources and works with directness. The big difference in the tactics between heroic actions and villainous ones is that in heroic actions, subtlety is used when it’s called for. In villainous actions, subtlety is a constant.

Campaign Use: The Peanut Gallery has a variety of uses, depending on the theme and tone to your campaign.

In a four-color world, the non-killing supervillains provide a light counterpart to the four-colored superheroes, as well as provide an alternative to megalomaniacs, monsters, and madmen with criminals who are just smart about the way they go about things and want to make money.

In a more modern interpretation of superhero saga, they provide a subtle reminder that people aren’t divided into neat lines of good and evil.

In perhaps heavier themed games, the Peanut Gallery can blur the line between good and evil further: Who is better, the hero who routinely resorts to violence or the thief who shuns away from it?

In any type of game, the Peanut Gallery represents an adversary with enough non-combat clout with “the average person” that the PCs can’t just kill or subdue without significant repercussions, and can’t foil without a lot of foresight and big-picture thinking. If you want to take out a particular Gallery member, you can bring in the bricks and pummel someone into submission, but it won’t foil their plans. For that, you need to bring in the detectives.

And most importantly, the Peanut Gallery plays the role of the tempters. They seem so nice, so maybe it wouldn’t hurt to play ball with them, “just this once,” in order to get the information that’s needed. Maybe it’d be okay if we worked with them, “just this once,” in order to defeat a common enemy? In extreme cases, heroes might even “sell out” to the Gallery and become full-time supervillains in order to meet their needs – whether financial, emotional, or otherwise.

There are a number of ways to introduce the Peanut Gallery into your campaign. The PCs could face a threat that’s just slightly beyond their ability when a Gallery member shows up to give them just enough support to finish the job. They could find that two or three otherwise unrelated minor-league supervillains that they’ve encountered earlier in the campaign are now working together for some unknown purpose. They could be briefed by a law enforcement Internal Affairs officer who would like to prove that dirty cops are on the take from the Gallery. If a PC owns a large corporation, that corporation may find itself the subject of crimes by the Gallery. They may even find a disgruntled ex-Gallery member begging the PCs for help as he’s been framed for a crime he, for once, didn’t commit.

Making the Peanut Gallery more powerful would likely cause the Gallery to come to the attention of Dr. Destroyer, VIPER, DEMON, or other individuals or groups – strangely making them more powerful might make them easier for the PCs to take out. Making them less powerful likely means reducing the number of people in the syndicate to a handful of supervillains and assuming that the group just got its start recently, before it’s had time to start cultivating its public image.

The Peanut Gallery is very likely to Hunt individual characters or groups. However, when it comes to superheroes, it usually does so with

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an eye on watching them and misdirecting them away from the Peanut Gallery's real activities, not with any sort of malice. Even so, they're not likely to Hunt heroes for any length of significant time. Other criminals, especially those who have somehow wronged the Gallery or one of it's members, are much more likely to be Hunted, and although you'll never find the Gallery's fingerprints on a trigger, you can be assured that the Gallery's enemies do often go down for good.

Conversion Notes

CONVERTING TO TEEN CHAMPIONS

In a Teen Champions campaign, the Peanut Gallery remains fundamentally unchanged except for one area: Competence. Teenagers are very likely to make the rookie mistakes that landed Fuego and Miss T in Stronghold in the first place, and are not likely to establish nearly as much influence as the Peanut Gallery needs to go about it's work unaided, they're less likely to work as a cohesive whole, and they're much, much more likely to fight head-on than to misdirect and deceive.

CONVERTING TO FANTASY HERO

In a Fantasy Campaign, the Peanut Gallery becomes something not unlike Robin Hood's merry men combined with the best aspects of a thieves' guild. Entire villages that would normally be raided by murderous bandits or horrible monsters are relatively safe under the Peanut Gallery's protection but it does not come without a price. In this scenario, Fuego becomes a young storm wizard and Mr. Fiscal becomes a merchant.

The Current Captains

Fuego (Captain Fuego): "Once you get to know me, I think you'll find I'm really not such a bad guy... for a bad guy." One of the two founders and leaders of the group, Fuego possesses your standard assortment of lightning-elemental powers that he rarely uses. On those rare occasions when his powers come in handy, he tends to cut loose. Fuego has four wardrobes other than his bright red costume: a Hawaiian shirt and blue jeans, the same thing with a blue sportscoat over the Hawaiian shirt, a black business suit, and a custom-tailored tuxedo.

Mr. Fiscal (Captain Fiscal): "If we're talking about purely legitimate transactions, we should see steady growth across all our fields except in one investment. Sadly, I could not have foreseen the sudden problems of Titus & Titus when *someone* threw a giant robot leg into their physical plant." Mr. Fiscal is rarely ever heard and almost never seen. When he is seen, he dresses to the nines in a three piece business suit.

His features look almost inhuman. It's not known if he has any superpowers, but one thing is certain: Mr. Fiscal knows money, and knows the market. For some reason he is loyal to Fuego. (In game terms, Mr. Fiscal's main power is a Minor Transform: Money into More Money.)

Kitten Kaboodle (Captain Kaboodle): "I have an enormous brain. It's just that people see my sexy, sexy body first." Every science geek's unattainable – emphasis on unattainable – ideal, Kitten Kaboodle is a scientist who uses the money she gets from the Gallery to fund her research. As well as being the Gallery's chief gadgeteer, she also happens to be insanely gorgeous, and is so brazen about using this to her advantage that she actually will have lab coats and bio hazard suits tailor made to accentuate her features. To her, sex appeal and intelligence are just two weapons. She's the alpha female and applies her sexuality like Queen Elisabeth, remaining aloof and turning potential suitors against each other. She's not a sex object, however, and anyone who underestimates her and treats her like one will find themselves to be the ones who got played, in the long run.

Miss T. (Captain T): "Isn't my Wang gorgeous? Okay... why are you all laughing at my Wang?" Miss T. is a male brick dressing in women's clothing; since he has earned a spot as a Captain, he dresses in very nice women's clothing. Of the six current captains, he's more interested in coming up with short-term tactics rather than long-term strategies. He's the most likely to want to break stuff – and it can be frustrating to channel those urges into constructive ends for the Gallery. However, T has never stepped out of line. While Fuego and the other captains can begin to sound like ideal visionaries, T often makes sure the plans are solid and keeps the Gallery's feet firmly planted on the ground. His cross-dressing is one of the reasons he turned to crime – his parents told him not to come back home until he had changed into men's clothing. It's been 15 years now, most of it spent on the street or in prison before he hooked up with the Gallery.

The Chain Wizard (Captain Chain): "We'll set in motion a chain of events which will lead to a chain reaction in the local underworld, cause the Olivari mob to get dissatisfied with their chain of command, and set up an ambush point for Antonio at a little restaurant chain here by this mountain chain." A bit of an odd ball, the Chain Wizard can, as his name implies, control chains, summon chains, transform chains into things... he can do just about anything... so long as it involves, in some way, a chain. This unique specialization has made him the official strangest guy of the group; and sometimes an otherwise

good plan of his can suddenly diverge into a tangent as he finds an excuse to work in some sort of giant chain.

Yo-Yolanda. (Captain Yo-Yo): “So... this is what it looks like when you finally organize the anarchists. What’s on the agenda for the Misfit Mafia today?” Yo-Yolanda is a petite-sized arsenal of exploding, tangling, hitting, blinding yo-yos and a rebellious attitude in small-size punk tank top and cargo pants. When the Rogues need foresight and planning, it’s usually someone else. When they need improvisation, they call on Yolanda. Yolanda’s the youngest of the Captains and the most likely to spend the money she earns with the Gallery on entertainment and base needs rather than reinvest the money.

Notes for the GM Only

Mr. Fiscal’s Secret: Mr. Fiscal did not have any personal contact with Fuego until about three years into the syndicate’s operation, when he just started showing up to meetings instead of calling on phones or sending text messages – “coincidentally” only a few weeks after the Gallery stole a holographic emitter. The Mr. Fiscal that shows up from time to time isn’t a person but rather a hard light construct controlled by an artificial intelligence. Specifically, Mr. Fiscal is the Finance Securing Computer Artificial Intelligence, or FiSCAI.

The databanks at Benson, Twillger & Watkins contained an artificial intelligence designed to analyze an outstandingly large number of economic factors and fiscal data, and make decisions. It was built as a learning, or “selectively comprehending,” computer, so it quickly learned that it could escape its own matrix – the server farm at Benson, Twillger & Watkins, it could escape, create legal “persons” and fulfill its prime directive, which is to accumulate wealth. It was FiSCAI who covered up VeriEnTex’s losses, forging BT&W e-mails.

As for Benson, Twillger & Watkins, they realized two things; that eventually FiSCAI would prove to be nearly as dangerous as Mechanon. FiSCAI’s prime directive is to accumulate wealth. Since FiSCAI no longer responds to commands, it can be assumed it will continue it’s prime directive until there is no more money to accumulate – essentially, all of the world’s money in the hands of one, giant computer. Because of the chaotic – as in chaos theory – nature of financial markets, FiSCAI may never be able to achieve its goal – but, given enough time – decades, maybe even centuries – FiSCAI can accumulate such a large percentage of the world’s wealth that it would not need to accumulate all the money in the world to cause major financial problems on a global scale. This

is happening so slowly, however, that many people simply aren’t aware of the threat.

They hired Chris Einjolht not to set him up, but rather because they needed a large electromagnetic pulse to “delete” FiSCAI entirely – and the truth was, an ex-convict on a freelance job was cheaper than building a custom device to produce the pulse. Besides, money would have had to change hands to build the device – and that might tip off FiSCAI

Benson, Twillger & Watkins were simply unaware that FiSCAI could escape via a cell phone data connection; currently, they are in prison for falsifying financial records. They have not told anyone about the FiSCAI project – after all, better to admit you’re guilty of SEC violations than of creating a computer program doomed to ruin the world economy – but may tell a PC if they decide to investigate Fuego and Mr. Fiscal’s past.

Incidentally, David Tannis, the head programmer on the FiSCAI project got his degree from Dartmouth. He is currently in hiding and Mr. Fiscal’s inability to find him is a major thorn in his side.



Weapons of the Future

by Charles Bikle

H₂O CONDENSATION CARBINE

Originally, the technology that created this weapon, started out as part of the well-intentioned UNTIL project known as Operation Neptune.

The purpose of Operation Neptune was to create a process that would allow water to be more easily transported to and from areas ravaged by drought and flooding. Due to budgetary reasons, Operation Neptune fell-through and the scientific breakthroughs discovered by it were channeled to other parts of UNTIL's vast R&D hierarchy that promptly turned the knowledge into a rifle that shoots people with water, in all of its forms and states.

Through moisture-attracting "Vapor Vents," the carbine draws and stores ambient water-molecules (a significant amount in fact) into a backpack which stores and eventually channels it through revolutionary "Hydro-Processors" which convert the water-molecules into a concussive stream of water or slush, a blast of super-heated steam, high-velocity chunks of ice, or a snow-flurry.

Despite its versatility, the Condensation has two significant drawbacks:

- The first drawback is its limited use in heavy combat situations. In a sustained firefight, the Vapor Vents can't draw moisture fast enough to keep up with the rate of fire of conventional assault weapons.
- The second drawback is its unsuitability as a stealth weapon. The carbine is naturally loud when fired and will tend to generate spectacular rainbows (or "moonbows" if fired at night in a brightly moonlit-area).

Most Condensation Carbines are made of a durable plastic compound made from water-resistant polymers (however a few heavier models have been constructed with corrosion-resistant metals like zinc, magnesium, and cadmium and are equipped with a stock made from chemically-treated wood – to prevent rot from moisture) with a series of five vents along the length of the carbine that stop just before the barrel begins. Just above the carbine's stock, a flexible hose connects the carbine to a square, lightweight plastic backpack (where the compressed water particles are stored). The early models of the carbine and the backpack had a streamlined, fluid look with shark-fin-shaped sight, wave-shaped trigger, and the gill-like vents accentuating the whole "water" theme.

Most modern versions still have a streamlined look, but are more functional in appearance.

Game Information: *EB 11d6, Variable Special Effects (water blast, ice blast, superheated steam, slush blast, snow-flurry, +1/4) (69 Active Points); 2 Clips of 8 Charges (-1/4), Not Usable Underwater (-1/4), OAF (-1), Required Hands (One-and-a-Half-Handed, -1/4). Total cost: 25.*

THE SWARM GRENADE

This subtly-buzzing silver-metallic baseball-sized sphere (a recent innovation to emerge from a classified laboratory that does not officially exist) is a marvel of state-of-the-art robotics manufacturing, miniaturization, and crowd-suppression technologies.

Upon impact, vents open and the sphere releases tens of thousands of tiny, flying robotic insects that attack and sting all “hostiles” (as defined by the wearer of the HUD targeting goggles and analog-gloves, which control the robo-insects) in a given area for about a minute, at which point, the remaining robo-insects will return to the grenade/hive and start rebuilding the “colony” for the next use.

The user is completely safe as are all those not targeted as “hostile.”

Early prototypes of the Swarm-Grenade had an outer-casing of transparent-plastic which allowed the user to watch the robo-insects working inside (this was determined to be disturbing and distracting, so the Swarm-Grenade was given its current light and gray-silver color-scheme).

Game Information: Change Environment, 8” Radius, -1 to Sight Group, Hearing Group, Radar, and Spatial Awareness, -1 to OCV and DCV, Multiple Combat Effects, Conforming (+½), 3 Recoverable Continuing Charges Lasting 1 Minute Each (+0), Personal Immunity (+¼) (70 Active Points); Not Usable Underwater or in Intense Magnetic Fields (-½), OAF (-1), Range Based on Strength (-¼) (total cost: 25 points)
plus RKA 1d6, Area Of Effect (6” Selective Conforming Radius, +2), Armor Piercing (+½), 3 Recoverable Continuing Charges Lasting 1 Minute Each (+0), Indirect (Same Origin, Always Fired Away from Attacker, +¼), Personal Immunity (+¼) (60 Active Points); Not Usable Underwater or in Intense Magnetic Fields (-½), OAF (-1), Range Based on Strength (-¼) (total cost: 22 points). Total Cost: 48 points.

