

# DIGITAL HERO

# #2

JUL/AUG  
2002



In this issue:  
• Plot Twists  
• Body Twists



• The Past  
• The Future  
• The Answers



• Ninjas & Spies  
• Mad Men  
• Bad Girls



# Table of Contents

## HERO HIGHWAY

### WHEN LAST WE LEFT OUR HEROES...

Keep up with the news from Hero Games. This issue – *Bestiary* and *Champions*. 2

### HEROGLYPHS

See how Steve Long himself answers rules questions. This issue – magical missiles. 4

### HERO PREVIEWS

See the Smoke Elemental that was too hot for the *Bestiary*. 6

### YOU GOTTA HAVE CHARACTER

Celine was a doctor, novelist, and madman that could really drain the life right out of you. 8

## ADVICE ALLEY

### FUTURE HISTORY

When the world around your game advances with or without the PCs, it feels much more alive. 13

### PLOT TWIST CARDS FOR CHAMPIONS

Deal up a handful of surprise maneuvers and events for your *Champions* game with this deck of story event cards. 19

## RESOURCE ROAD

### MOUKO NO SHI

This organization of good ninjas battles an evil counterpart, and is a great place for PCs to get a workout. 23

### GYMNASTICS AS A MARTIAL ART

Back in the day, people who could spin around and jump through hoops could really kick some evil butt. 26

### MERIQUEUI FALLS

This Midwestern town is the home to many superhumans, and one of the most powerful magical artifacts in history. 28

### ELIZABETHAN HERO CHARACTERS

Lords, pirates, highwaymen... There are many character types ready to be played in the past. 37

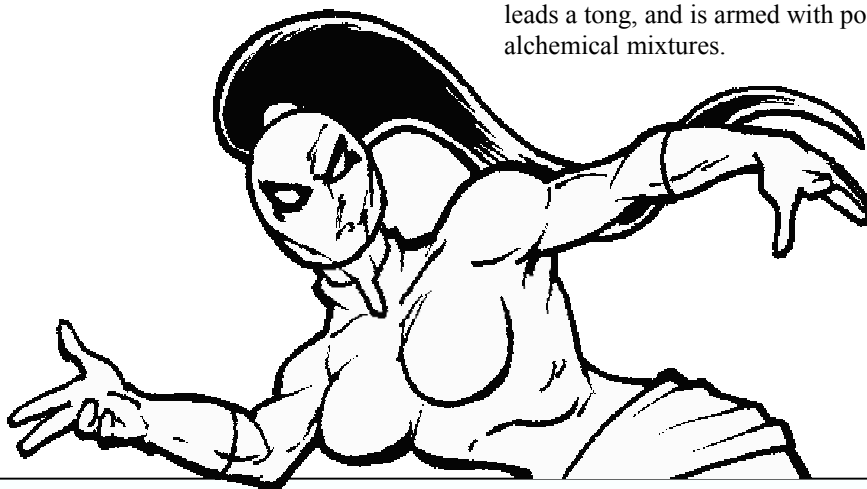
### PRIMUS UPDATE

PRIMUS Updates and New Divisions: VIPER Task Force, Public Relations, and the Wizards. 46

## CHARACTER CORNER

### THE JADE DRAGON QUEEN

Ma Lin Yao, the *Justice, Inc.* villainess leads a tong, and is armed with poisons and alchemical mixtures. 60



HERO System™ © is DOJ, Inc.'s trademark for its roleplaying system.  
 HERO System Copyright © 1984, 1989, 2002 by DOJ, Inc. d/b/a Hero Games. All rights reserved.  
 Champions Copyright © 1984, 1989, 2002 by DOJ, Inc. d/b/a Hero Games. All rights reserved.  
 Justice Inc., Danger International, Dark Champions, Fantasy Hero, and Star Hero Copyright © 2002 by DOJ, Inc. d/b/a Hero Games. All rights reserved.

No part of this electronic magazine may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or computerization, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher: DOJ, Inc., 1 Haight Street, Suite A, San Francisco, California 94102.

Issue #2 (July/August 2002)

## DIGITAL HERO

### Publisher

Hero Games

### Editor

Dave Mattingly

### Authors

Tim Binford

Lisa Hartjes

Robert Hudson

Joe Linehan

Steven S. Long

Shelley Chrystal

Mactyre

Andy Mathews

David McKee

Dale Robbins

Jacob Russell

Jason Walters

### Artists

Brad Parnell

Eric Rademaker

David Schrader

V. Shane

Derrick Thomas

Jason Walters

### Cover Artist

Storn Cook

Earth photograph  
copyright NASA  
and the NSSDC

### Online

[herogames.com](http://herogames.com)

### To Subscribe

[herogames.com/  
digitalhero](http://herogames.com/digitalhero)

## EDITOR'S NOTE

With ten issues per year, that means that twice a year, *Digital Hero* skips a month. With Origins (July in Columbus) and GenCon (August in Milwaukee) coming up, we won't be publishing again until September, but on the good side, you can come see us in person at the conventions! Just stop by the Hero Games booth!



# When Last We Left Our Heroes...

by Steven S. Long

Summertime... and th' livin' is eeeeasy...

Well, maybe not. Summer is the busy time in the gaming industry — all the major conventions take place during the summer, so we're all scrambling around preparing for the shows, trying to get new products ready to debut at them, planning tournaments, and things like that. I thought I'd spend this column telling you what's coming up with Hero for the rest of the summer.

First, just in case you haven't seen it on the main page of the website, Hero will be attending both Origins (Columbus, Ohio; July 4-7) and GenCon (Milwaukee, Wisconsin; August 8-11); we have booths at both. The DexCard guys, who are creating Herosphere, will be at GenCon as well, with the booth right next to ours, so we'll have a nice "Hero neighborhood" right there in the exhibit hall. Additionally, I will be attending DragonCon (Atlanta, Georgia; August 30-September 2) as a guest, but Hero's not going to have a booth or be selling books there.

As befits our efforts to put Hero back on the gaming map, we plan to have a major new release at both of the summer shows. Not only is this one of the best ways to showcase the company to some of the hardest of hard-core gamers, but it's a pleasant financial shot in the arm, since convention sales go straight into the Hero coffers in full — no distributor or retailer discounts.

## First Up: *The HERO System Bestiary*

At Origins, we're going to have the *HERO System Bestiary* ready for you. Written by yours truly, the *Bestiary* has 240 pages of critter goodness for a mere \$24.99. It consists of four chapters. The first delves into the subject of creature creation. It goes through the various Skills, Powers, and so on, reviewing possible uses for them in creating or running characters. For example, it has expanded, detailed writeups for the *Animal Handler* and *Riding Skills*, to make them more useful in your games. Chapter One also contains "templates" you can slap onto any creature to make it aquatic, demonic, elemental, bigger or smaller, adapted to arctic environments, or the like. Chapter One also discusses Hit Locations for animals, and how to create your own Hit Location tables — though you probably won't need to, since the book contains over a dozen tables for your use. If you want to know the Hit Locations on a centaur, octopus, dragon, or gargoyle, the *Bestiary* tells you.

Chapter Two contains about 80 fantastic, mythological, legendary, and monster-type critters, ranging from "Ape, Carnivorous" to "Worm, Giant." It includes demons, elementals, the undead, dragons, lycanthropes, giant insects and serpents, and lots more.

Chapter Three covers real-world beasts — again, about 80. It's got bats, birds of prey, gorillas, cats and dogs, six different kinds of horses, spiders and snakes, sharks, whales, wolves, you name it.

Chapter Four branches out to cover creatures of the movies and science fiction — only about 20 this time, since many "movie monsters" are just forms of the creatures covered in Chapters Two and Three. This is where you'll find giant city-stomping dinosaurs, planet-eating space amoebae, swamp creatures, robots of various sorts, and weird alien fauna.

It's also worth noting that all the creatures include information in their writeups about adapting them to create other creatures, changing them to fit a particular genre better, and so forth. Between that, and the templates in Chapter One, the book actually contains *thousands* of creatures rather than a little under 200.

Last, but certainly not least, there's an Appendix. In addition to a comprehensive chart listing every animal in the book, there are some sample creatures with templates applied, an easy-to-reference collection of all the Hit Location tables, and lots of other fun stuff.

So, in short, if you use creatures and related things (like demons or robots) in your game, or are even *thinking* about it, this is a book you don't want to pass up!

## Next Up: *Champions*

At GenCon, we're planning to roll out what will likely be one of our best sellers, after the core rulebook: *Champions*, the first of our 5<sup>th</sup> Edition-compatible "genre books." It will have about 200 pages (don't quite have an exact total as I write this), and retail for \$29.99.

If you've ever wanted to know anything — anything at all — about creating and running superhero characters or campaigns using the *HERO System*, this is the book for you. Written by fan favorite Aaron Allston (with a generous helping of additional material, including scads of sample powers, by little ol' me), the new *Champions* is the definitive guide to the superhero genre for gaming. Even superhero gamers who (for whatever foolish reason) don't use the *HERO System* will want to get this book!

## DIGITAL HERO #2

The book starts with a comprehensive review of the superhero genre. After describing the major “periods” of the comics (the Golden, Silver, Bronze, and Iron Ages) and how to represent, in game terms, the elements that make them special, Chapter One discusses basic issues about superhumanity you need to think about for your campaign (where do superpowers come from? when did supers first appear? how many are there?). It also discusses famous genre “bits” (like secret identities, costumes, and ever-recurring villains) and how to simulate or use them in your game.

Chapter Two is what all the players are looking forward to — character creation! It covers the possible types of origins for superhumans, various Skills, Talents, and other game elements of particular interest for *Champions* games, and various Disadvantages appropriate to the genre. Then it goes over the major superhero archetypes, like brick and gadgeteer, discussing ways to create them and play them. Each comes with a sidebar of possible origins and sample powers. Chapter Two concludes with a really cool little *Quick Superhuman Generator* that lets you randomly (but rationally) generate a *Champions* character in just a few minutes.

Chapter Three covers super-technology. If you want a base, a super-vehicle, an electronic “tracer,” blaster pistols, a flight ring, or anything like that, this is the chapter for you. It also has an extensive discussion about bases — how to build them, equip them, and use them in the game.

Chapter Four is for the GM. It discusses how to set up and run a *Champions* game, paying special attention to the advantages (and pitfalls) inherent in the genre and how to make the most of (or avoid) them. In addition to a few optional rules for combat tactics like the “fastball special,” it’s got advice on setting creation, NPC and villain creation, point totals and point/effectiveness ceilings, and just about any other subject you can think of that could impact on a *Champions* campaign.

Rounding out the book is Chapter Five, which contains some example supers from the Champions Universe (about which more next column, if all goes well). First, there’s the Champions, the premiere superhero team of Millennium City — perfect for use as pregenerated player characters, or as examples for new players struggling with ideas for characters of their own. The Champions base, vehicle, and associated NPCs are also described. Then there are seven example villains, including the feared robot Mechanon.

See what I mean? This book has it all. If you like playing superhero RPGs, you’ll find lots of great stuff in *Champions*!

## And Somewhere Along The Line...

...we’ll have yet a third product waiting for you: the *HERO System Resource Kit*, an all-purpose gaming utility for GMs and players alike. In addition to a five-panel GM’s screen filled to the brim with useful tables and charts, there’s a 48-page rules summary booklet (perfect for carrying around when you don’t need the whole rulebook), 36 cardboard miniatures (12 modern-day, 12 fantasy, 12 science fiction), and six 22”x17” maps (two modern-day, two fantasy, and two science fiction). We wanted to toss in the kitchen sink, too, but unfortunately it’s kinda hard to shrinkwrap.

So, in short... it’s going to be a tremendous summer for us here at Hero Games! We hope you’ll follow along and help us make this the year that Hero returns to its rightful place of prominence in the gaming firmament.

— Steven S. Long  
HERO System Line Developer





# HEROglyphs by Steven S. Long

## Zap!

### Creating A Magical Missile Using The *HERO System Rules*

In this month's column, I'm going to tackle a *Fantasy Hero* power construct that's often discussed on mailing lists and message boards — a “magical missile” spell that never misses its target. (Any relationship to a power or spell featured in another company's roleplaying game is, of course, purely coincidental. ☺)

As conceived, this spell has the following characteristics:

1. It creates a bolt of magical energy that can hurt any living being (or quasi-living beings, like golems or the undead). The only defenses against it are certain specific spells or enchanted items.
2. The bolts never miss their target. However, total cover blocks them; they cannot turn corners or weave around obstacles.
3. The greater the spellcaster's level of power, the more of these bolts he can throw at once (up to a maximum of 5). Each bolt, by itself, causes a relatively minor wound, but a volley of them can make for a pretty powerful attack.
4. If a spellcaster can throw more than one bolt, he can split them up among multiple targets, at his discretion. However, no two targets can be more than 2” apart.
5. The spell has a fairly long range, and it gets longer the more powerful the spellcaster becomes. But it's not unlimited; there's an absolute upper limit of 45”. The accuracy of the spell does not diminish over range.
6. Using the spell does not tire the character out.

So, let's take these elements one at a time and see what the options are for simulating them in the *HERO System*.

First, the bolt can hurt any living being, with only a couple of possible defenses. To me, that sounds like an RKA, NND, Does BODY — pretty expensive, but then again, what's being described is a fairly powerful effect. Of course, since it can only hurt living beings (“living” in this case also including things like robots and the undead, that mimic life), being an unliving, inanimate object also constitutes a defense — that way the character can't use the spell to destroy doors, siege engines, and the like. Since it's a magical bolt that does generalized damage and has no kinetic force, *Cannot Use Targeting* (-½) and *No Knockback* (-¼) are also appropriate.

Now, arguably, a few specific defensive spells and talismans might not necessarily qualify as a “reasonably common” defense against the NND. However, since the nature of the spell (and its counter-spell) are clearly defined, and all spellcasters know what the defense is, and the counter-spell is very cheap, this shouldn't cause a problem.

The second point is the trickiest — the bolts never miss. The *HERO System* doesn't allow for absolutes like “never misses” or “complete defense”; that's contrary to the spirit of the rules. But with the right arrangement of Advantages and abilities, we can come close enough that it doesn't really make much difference. First, we use the *Area Of Effect* (One Hex Accurate; +½) Advantage. That allows the attack to function against DCV 3 (though the target could still, for example, Dodge). With the addition of a few 2-point Combat Skill Levels, we can pretty much guarantee the attack won't miss except on the rarest of occasions.

The fact that the magical bolts can't attack through cover or around obstacles isn't necessarily unusual; most attacks can't. Ordinarily characters simply wouldn't waste the effort trying to penetrate cover unless they felt they had a good chance of doing enough damage to affect the target on the other side. But given the nature of this spell — that a target with total cover *can't* be successfully attacked — we can achieve the necessary effect, and cover most of the points under (5), by applying the *Line Of Sight* (+½) Advantage.

The third point is also tricky. For one thing, the *HERO System* doesn't have any specific method of tracking “character advancement” other than raw Experience Points earned. So, to determine a spellcaster's “level of power” for purposes of this spell (and perhaps others), the GM would have to establish standards. The standard could be fairly simple — “the spellcaster can project one magical bolt for every 10 Experience Points he has earned.” Or it could get more complicated; for example, the GM could require a wizard to buy a *Level Of Power* Perk to represent his growth in the magical arts. For the sake of this discussion, we'll go with the first, simpler, option.

But, that difficulty aside, how do we represent the multiple magical bolts? The most obvious method is the *Autofire* Advantage, but that presents problems. First, it's expensive, since the *Area Of Effect* Advantage boosts the cost of Autofire. Second, it's hard to track the attack across multiple targets, and it can only be tracked a certain distance. Third, Concentrated Sprayfire is required to hit a single target more

## DIGITAL HERO #2

than once. So, with all that stacked against it, Autofire really isn't the way to go to achieve the effect we want.

Fortunately, the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition offers another option: Rapid Fire. Typically, most spells can't be Rapid Fired — it just doesn't make sense for the genre or the “feel” of magic. Either they have a Limitation preventing the character from Rapid Firing them, or the GM simply establishes this as a ground rule for the campaign. But in this case, Rapid Fire works perfectly for the effect we're looking for, so the GM should allow it. We simply have to restrict the amount of Rapid Fire shots the character can take based on his level of power. Since *Cannot Be Rapid Fired* is a -1/2 Limitation, a restricted form of Rapid Fire should be a -1/4 or -0 Limitation. For purposes of this article, we'll use -1/4. The 2-point CSLs mentioned above will be bought in sufficient quantities to overcome the OCV penalty.

Most aspects of (5) were covered above, but there's still the restricted range to deal with. We can simulate that by applying a Limitation to the *Line Of Sight* Advantage, or simply reducing it to a +1/4 value. We'll use the latter approach for the sake of simplicity, but GMs desiring greater “realism” can use the more complicated approach if they prefer.

The last point, that the spell doesn't tire the caster out, indicates the need to apply the *Reduced Endurance* (0 END; +1/2) Advantage. Alternately, if it were appropriate for the magic system used in the campaign, the character could apply the *Charges* Limitation to the spell, indicating he could only cast it a certain number of times per day.

So, here's what that leaves us with:

*Magical Missile*: RKA 1 point, NND (defense is certain specific spells or talismans, or being an unliving inanimate object; +1), Does BODY (+1), Area Of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +1/2), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Line Of Sight (maximum range of 15' + [3' per level of power]; +1/4) (21 Active Points); Gestures (-1/4), Incantations (-1/4), Limited Rapid Fire (only one “shot” per 10 Experience Points earned, and no target can be more than 2' from another target; -1/4), Cannot Use Targeting (-1/2), No Knockback (-1/4) (total cost: 8 points)  
**plus**  
+20 with *Magical Missile* (total cost: 40 points). Total cost: 48 points.

Now, 48 points is a mighty hefty cost, especially for a Heroic character — but then again, this is a pretty powerful spell (or it becomes so eventually, if it's not already). Most

of it comes from the CSLs (+10 to counteract Rapid Fire modifiers, +10 to ensure an almost 100% success rate with Attack Rolls). The GM can, if he wishes, let characters buy the spell in increments, to keep the cost low. A starting spellcaster, who can only fire one *Magical Missile*, just needs +10 OCV (since he can't Rapid Fire at all yet). That reduces the cost to 28 points — still expensive, but much better. As he goes up in power, the character can use Experience Points to buy more CSLs with this spell.

If you want something a little more powerful, increase the RKA to 1/2d6, which bumps the cost of the spell up by 9 points. At that level of effect, a powerful wizard can inflict some pretty serious damage with every use of the spell.

At the GM's option, the *Gestures* and *Incantations* Limitations can be applied to the CSLs, which would reduce their cost to 27 points (and the overall spell to 35 points). Normally, of course, only 5-point CSLs can be Limited, but some GMs may wish to make an exception in this case. The GM may also wish to consider allowing characters to apply the *Requires A Skill Roll* Limitation to the spell (as written, the spell assumes a magic system where that Limitation's not required); if so, that could apply to the CSLs as well.



# Hero Previews

 by Steven S. Long

## Check It Out!

Welcome to *Hero Previews*, a column that will run in *Digital Hero* periodically to give you a glimpse at upcoming Hero Games products. Typically the column will feature out-takes from a book – a brief excerpt showing you something of the contents and flavor of the product. Villains/NPCs, gadgets, and the like are going to be the most common out-takes we'll make

available, since they're easy to excerpt and stand well on their own.

In other cases, where we end up with more material than we can use for a book and have to cut some of it from the final product, we'll use *Hero Previews* to see that our loyal fans get it anyway! That means nothing goes to waste, even if logistics and economics keep us from printing it in a book.





## DIGITAL HERO #2

### Smoke Elemental

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
0	STR	-10	9-	Lift 25 kg; 0d6 HTH [1]
22	DEX	36	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
23	CON	26	14-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll: 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
4	PD	4		Total: 4 PD (0 rPD)
8	ED	3		Total: 8 ED (0 rED)
4	SPD	8		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	2		
46	END	0		
35	STUN	8		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 98** (+17 with NCM)

Movement:	Running:	0"/0"
	Leaping:	0"/0"
	Flight:	20"/40"

#### Cost Powers END

81	<i>Smoke Attacks:</i> Multipower, 81-point reserve	
3u	1) <i>Touch Of Fire:</i> HKA 2d6; No STR Bonus (-0)	3
5u	2) <i>Choking Smoke:</i> Energy Blast 5d6, NND (defense is LS [Self-Contained Breathing]; +1), Area Of Effect (6" Radius; +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); No Range (-½)	3
5u	3) <i>Blinding Puff Of Smoke:</i> Sight Group Flash 10d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Limited Range (10"; -¼)	2
20	<i>Smoke Powers:</i> Elemental Control, 40-point powers	
13	1) <i>Body Of Smoke:</i> Desolidification (affected by magic); Cannot Pass Through Solid Objects (-½)	4
40	2) <i>The Rising Of Smoke:</i> Flight 20", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
28	3) <i>Blinding Smoke:</i> Darkness to Sight Group 5" radius, Personal Immunity (+¼); No Range (-½)	6
75	<i>Body Of Smoke:</i> Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75%	
	<b>plus</b>	
	Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%	0
45	<i>Body Of Smoke:</i> Life Support: Total	0
10	<i>Elemental Body:</i> No Hit Locations	
-12	<i>True Flyer:</i> Running -6"	
-2	<i>True Flyer:</i> Swimming -2"	
5	<i>Heat Vision:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0

#### Skills

2	AK: Elemental Plane Of Air 11-
2	AK: Elemental Plane Of Fire 11-
3	Stealth 13-

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 323**

**Total Cost: 421**

#### 75+ Disadvantages

5	Physical Limitation: Large (up to 4m; -2 DCV, +2 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
15	Psychological Limitation: Capricious (Very Common, Moderate)
25	Susceptibility: if immersed in water or doused with large amounts of water, takes 1d6 per Segment (Common)
25	Susceptibility: if deprived of all oxygen, takes 2d6 per Segment (Uncommon)
10	Susceptibility: if the temperature is below freezing, take 1d6 per Turn (Uncommon)
266	Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 421**

To start off, we've got a contribution of the second kind — a Smoke Elemental from the *HERO System Bestiary*, due out later this month. As the book was in layout, Steve realized that while he had several types of "subelementals" mixing two elements (like Cloud and Storm Elementals, which mingle Air and Water), he didn't have one for Air and Fire. At that point, there wasn't room to add another creature to the book, but he went ahead and wrote up a Smoke Elemental in the hopes of finding something to do with it. We figured "Smokie" was the perfect way to start this column. However, since the *Bestiary* has a section discussing elementals' ecology, nature, and combat techniques in general, the description for the Smoke Elemental is a little sparser than most creatures'. Nevertheless, we think you'll enjoy this little bonus from the *Bestiary*.

**Description:** Smoke elementals come from the dark and dangerous borderlands where the Elemental Plane of Air contacts the Elemental Plane of Fire. Sharing some traits with both air elementals and fire elementals, they can be quite dangerous. They resemble vaguely humanoid clouds of smoke, with glints of fire showing through at the eyes and hands, and sometimes elsewhere through the body.

With a few changes in special effect and appearance, you can also use this character sheet for a *dust elemental*.



## SOME SAYINGS OF CELINE

Almost every desire a poor man has is a punishable offence.

Experience is a dim lamp, which only lights the one who bears it.

If you aren't rich, you should always look useful.

One can't relive one's life. Forgiveness is not what's difficult; one's always too ready to forgive. And it does no good, that's obvious.

The poetry of heroism appeals irresistibly to those who don't go to a war, and even more to those whom the war is making enormously wealthy. It's always so.

There's a point of poverty at which the spirit isn't with the body all the time. It finds the body really too unbearable. So it's almost as if you were talking to the soul itself. And a soul's not properly responsible.

The whole business of your life overwhelms you when you live alone. One's stupefied by it. To get rid of it you try to daub some of it off on to people who come to see you, and they hate that. To be alone trains one for death.

Never believe straight off in a man's unhappiness. Ask him if he can still sleep. If the answer's "yes," all's well. That is enough.



# You Gotta Have Character

by Jason Walters

*"Life is lived forwards, but understood backwards" - Kierkegaard*

*My personal tragedy, I tell you, is that by now I should've been long gone... up in Lapland... or down in Portugal... as soon as the first voyeurs started showing up... the first ogles with their sidelong glances!... It's the essential signs!... The interest people take in you is atrocious... it's the death in you they've come to see... they want to stay on the right side of Death... they want to make sure no harm will come to them... to their dear little "selves," and when the time comes... well, it's better to be in cahoots with Death!... To laugh at Death, at your own death... and to make the most from being around Death... to make friends with Death... They'll hand you over to Death entirely... hands bound... instructing it to keep a tight grip on you, to never let you go... they'll tell Death to bear in mind that they are the jackals... and that Death has a soft spot for us! For you and only you will the scaffold exist!... So that they can come and applaud, bubbling with enthusiasm. They're all for you being put to death!... If it means they're gaining an extra hour of life! For themselves!... It's a Pact of Instincts!*

-Celine

**Louis-Ferdinand Celine**, originally named Louis Ferdinand Destouches, was a dangerously insane French author whose novels *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932) and *Death on the Installment Plan* (1936) set new anti-heroic lows as detailed nightmare visions of the human condition. Although a deep pessimism about human nature pervades Celine's works of fiction from cover to cover, his writing is redeemed by an incredibly crude yet deeply sympathetic sense of humor which constantly hits the reader with all of the subtlety of a bucket of ice water. His always semi-autobiographical main characters, although constantly plagued with feelings of failure, anxiety, nihilism, and spiritual inertia, manage to go about their business with one rueful eyebrow raised at the seemingly constant idiocy of mankind.

**Background/History:** Louis-Ferdinand Destouches (Louis-Ferdinand Celine) was born in 1894 at Courbevoie in the Seine District. His father was an intense, violent man employed by an insurance company while his mother, a club-

footed neurotic, dealt in high quality lace. Celine grew up in Paris where his mother owned a shop in the Passage Choiseul, an early 19<sup>th</sup> Century shopping arcade with elegant shops, galleries, and a bizarre glass vaulted roof. It was there, watching his crippled mother bicker over prices with Paris' petty bourgeoisie elite, that Celine first began to develop his almost universally low opinion of mankind's ethical nature. It was an opinion that was to be reinforced by everything he would see for the rest of his life.

Celine's parents planned for him to have a career in international business, so he was sent abroad to learn various languages. He studied German at a school at Diepholz in Lower Saxony, then studied English at a boarding school outside of London – an experience he found particularly loathsome. After graduating, he worked unhappily for various commercial companies around Paris until 1912, when he enlisted in a cavalry unit, the Twelfth Regiment of the Cuirassiers. He was seriously wounded in battle during World War One at Ypres, which left him with a permanently damaged arm, a recurring buzzing, ringing sound between his ears, and headaches which would return periodically for the rest of his life. Essentially, Celine suffered from severe brain damage, and in his novel *North* (1960) he wrote about the ear noises: "I listen to them become trombones, full orchestras, marshaling yards..." Although he was awarded the *Medaille Militaire* for Outstanding Military Service, a seventy-five percent disability pension, and became something of a national hero, Celine would never completely forgive the French government for what had happened to him.

After recovering somewhat from his injuries, Celine was assigned by the military to the French passport office in London. While there he married Suzanne Nebout, a Frenchwoman working as a barmaid, in 1915 but this marriage, which was not even registered with the French consulate, ended quickly. In 1916 he got a job working for a lumber company in the Cameroons, but quickly contracted both malaria *and* dysentery, forcing his return to Paris. Violently ill and raving with fever for months, it is possible that Celine then suffered *even more brain damage*. Upon his recovery, he met and married Edith Follet, whose father was a director of a medical school, in 1919. Celine then studied medicine in Rennes, somehow receiving his medical degree from the University of Paris in 1924 in spite of being almost totally insane. His doctoral thesis, entitled *The Life and Work of Philip*, was a rant that had nothing to do with medicine but for some mysterious reason The

## DIGITAL HERO #2

University gave him a license to practice so that within a few months the migraine-plagued, socially-alienated Frenchman who heard marching bands in his head was proscribing medicines and cutting people open with surprising success. Yet the following year he left his thriving practice, his wife, and his child to work for the newly formed League of Nations. His second wife wisely left him in 1926.

Employed by the League of Nations, Celine traveled all over the world to countries such as Switzerland, the Cameroons, the United States, Cuba, and Canada, reporting on problems relating to social medicine. In 1928 he returned to France, opening a private practice in a suburb of Paris. In 1931 he began to work for a municipal clinic at Clichy. While working in Clichy, Celine made his debut as a novelist with *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932) assuming for the first time the pseudonym Celine (it was the Christian name of his maternal grandmother). Like almost all of Celine's works, the novel is semi-autobiographical, so Ferdinand Bardamu, the protagonist, had a great deal in common with Celine. The story basically covered author's life from 1913 to 1932, although events are constantly twisted or rearranged as they pass through the filter of Celine's completely twisted, rearranged mind. The book is narrated in the first person Parisian gutter-slang, which is basically so similar to Jive that more recent translators have largely given up on converting it to standard English. It depicted Bardamu's unheroic adventures in the trenches of World War I, his miserable experiences in Africa running a trading post, the hellish work conditions in a Ford factory in the United States, and his eventual return to Paris, where he sets up a medical practice.

The book was praised by both the right-wing extremist Leon Daudet as well as the exiled Russian Communist leader Leon Trotsky, proving definitively that Celine was either a literary genius, a dangerous madman, or just really popular with guys named Leon. The book was even twisted enough to receive the most prestigious literary award in France, the Renaudot Prize, which was generally only awarded to authors who had consumed so much absinth that they couldn't remember their own first names. Celine's second novel, *Death on the Installment Plan* (1936), also gained great critical success. It continued the story of Ferdinand Bardamu, except that it details his constantly miserable and astoundingly sexually repressed adolescent years. In this landmark work, Celine sets about demonstrating that being a teenager in pre-World War One Paris was every bit as horrible, awful, and terrifying as being a teenager in America (or anywhere else) is today. After driving his violent father and

crippled mother to the brink of complete insanity with his inability to accomplish anything useful, young Ferdinand leaves home to help the inventor, pioneering hot air balloonist, and con-man Courtial des Pereires with various amusing swindles. First they write a successful book about bicycle repair, not letting the fact neither of them has ever ridden or even owned a bicycle stand in their way. Then, with the help of Courtial's hare-lipped wife, they sponsor a submarine design competition so that they can exploit a fake treasure map that had been conned off on them. Finally, they set up a private school for children in the countryside but end up having to train them to steal from the local farmers to keep food on the table.

Celine's journey to the Soviet Union the following year produced the first of his notorious pamphlets, *Mea Culpa* (1937), wherein Celine declared his complete disenchantment with the Communist system. He then started work on a third novel but stopped because he felt that preventing his country from entering a new war, which Celine believed would be completely disastrous, was far more important. He then produced several very strange anti-Semitic, anti-war pamphlets, two of which were condemned by the French courts. In *Trifles for a Massacre* (1937) Celine argued that there existed an international Jewish conspiracy to start a world war. Although Celine's political ideals had much in common with the Nazis, he claimed that Hitler was Jewish and that Nazi Germany was, therefore, simply part of that conspiracy. In addition, since he once interrupted a lecturer talking about "Judeo-Marxist tyranny" with the remark "Hey, why don't you talk about Aryan stupidity?" it can be safely assumed that Celine was in fact not a Nazi. He was far too crazy to have any single consistent belief system of any type.

In 1936 Celine met the attractive 23-year-old dancer Lucette Almanzor, who became his third wife. She faithfully stayed with the jealous writer through the hard years after World War Two until his death. At the outbreak of World War Two Celine served as a volunteer doctor on a French naval vessel, the *Shella*, which was promptly sunk by a Nazi submarine. After the fall of France in 1940, he rejected both resistance and collaboration to work as a doctor in municipal clinics at Satrouville and in a dispensary at Bezons. In spite of this fact, Celine was denounced on the BBC as a traitor to France. To avoid execution during the Allied liberation of France, he fled to Berlin with Lucette where he was promptly arrested by the Nazis. He was sent to join other important French refugees at the Castle of Sigmaringen.

In Sigmaringen Celine found himself under house arrest along with Marshal Petain, members

of the Vichy Government, and various French collaborators. As the war progressed, Celine fled Sigmaringen to travel across a devastated Germany with his wife and their constant companion, Bebert the cat. After a number of rather surreal, hair-raising adventures, which included going to Erwin Rommel's funeral, he finally managed to smuggle his tiny family, along with 17 cretinous, mentally-retarded children, into the relative safe-haven of Denmark as Germany was being slowly pummeled into rubble by Allied bombers. In Denmark, where Celine had deposited his savings during the early stages of the war, he was promptly imprisoned for over a year in the cold Danish prison-castle of Vesterfangsel. After finally getting released on the grounds of ill health, he was forced into exile in the icy town of Korsor on the Baltic Sea.

During his stay in Denmark, Celine was convicted "in absentia" by a French civil court, which did little to improve his already low opinion of mankind. He wrote in *From Castle to Castle* (1957) "Two years in a pit... seven by ten... then they thought of the cold... the blizzards of the Great Belt... we stuck it out! for five years! Paid for, I repeat! my savings, you can imagine... blown away by the blizzards... plus the court seizures... some joke!" But in 1951 he was finally cleared of all charges and permitted to return to France. Celine spent the remaining decade of his life in the town of Bellevue, on the outskirts of Paris. Although Gallimard, France's leading publishing house, went on to print such works as *Fear For Another Time* (1952) and *From Castle to Castle* (1957), Celine's later works were poorly received by both the critics and the public. Soon after finishing his last novel, *Rigadoon* (1969), he had a stroke. Celine died on July 1, 1961 of a ruptured aneurysm. He is buried in a small cemetery in the town of Bas Meudon.

**Personality/Motivation:** Celine was one of the most angry, most disillusioned, most bitter, and most complicated men who ever lived. His disgust with mankind practically oozes out of his pores, shocking and offending most of the people he comes into contact with. The fact that he wasn't executed *by someone* during World War Two is completely amazing; he must have been one hell of a doctor. In direct, almost obscene contrast to these facts, Celine may also have been one of the funniest men who ever lived, something which is seldom lost on those who have read *Death On The Installment Plan* (1936). His humor is brutal, razor-sharp, and crude, cutting feverishly away at human hypocrisy in a manner which cannot be described in any way as sane.

Celine was undoubtedly one of the greatest novelists of the Twentieth Century. Celine was a

caring doctor, an anti-war pacifist, and a man capable of great compassion. Celine was also an incredibly vicious racist and a complete anti-Semite, who called for the extermination of the Jewish race in a series of three infamous, currently untranslated pamphlets which raved about the coming extinction of the white race. It is very hard to reconcile the various facets of Celine into one consistent, coherent whole. He may very well have been either a paranoid schizophrenic or just so darn Gaelic that even the other French didn't understand him.

Celine had problems effectively communicating with others, and during his life sank more and more deeply into a hate-filled world of madness, rage, and nihilism. The progressive disintegration of his personality is visible in his later novels. These verbal frescoes, peopled with horrendous giants, paraplegics, gnomes, and scenes of dismemberment, are an outward artistic expression of Celine's horrific inner landscape; a landscape formed, unfortunately, through a lifetime of brilliant, thoughtful observation of human behavior.

Although he may be one of the most irritating, upsetting, and unpleasantly sarcastic historical figures which anyone could have the dubious fortune of running into, Celine's motivations are extremely simple ones; he wants to survive, avoid any and all violence, and be left alone to either practice medicine and/or write his angry, slang-riddled prose. In spite of his many, many faults, he *is* actually something of a genius whose work is genuinely of great historical importance. Celine's attacks against the evils of war, colonialism, and the nightmarish conditions of urban life heavily influenced such important writers as Henry Miller, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Charles Bukowski, and William Burroughs.

**Quote:** "To philosophize is only another way of being afraid and leads hardly anywhere but to cowardly make-believe."

**Powers/Tactics:** Unless you are using him as a Pulp Era character (see below), Celine has no combat value whatsoever. As a dedicated pacifist and coward, he will make a whole-hearted attempt to get away from any violent, or even potentially violent, situation. If he sees that a player character is hurt, however, Celine will stop to render quick medical assistance using his rather formidable healing abilities (healing and/or paramedic). *Then* he will run away.

On those extremely common occasions when he is in a foul mood, Celine can be an epically exhausting person to talk to. This is represented in game terms by his *Draining French Nihilist Philosophical Discourse* power. Use this 2d6 END Drain liberally on any player characters unfortunate enough to spend any real length of time around him. Celine himself is

## DIGITAL HERO #2

quite unaffected by his Drain power (advantage Personal Immunity), but will enjoy using it on his “tormentors” whenever possible.

**Campaign Use:** If played properly, it is very likely that Celine will irritate your players to the limits of their sanity; which is fine, because that's *exactly* the point of introducing Celine into your campaign. During his lifetime, Celine was generally regarded as a whoremonger, a loud-mouthed racist, and an all-around gutter-spawn; yet, oddly enough, he was also widely recognized as a literary genius. Absolutely nobody liked Celine – not the French, not the English, not even the Nazis (which is really saying something). Several things, however, kept him from ending up against a bullet-riddled wall with a blindfold on his face and a cigarette in his mouth. The first is that he was an excellent medical doctor at a time in which even mediocre ones were pretty hard to come by. World War Two was, after all, a fantastic wholesale producer of injured, maimed, and dead people. Secondly, since he was known primarily for his autobiographical novels, anyone who suspected that their days were numbered (which in the big WW2 was, reasonably enough, nearly everyone) had a vested interest in keeping Celine alive for their sake of their own posterity. Finally, despite all of his hateful ranting, Celine's heart seems to have in the right place at least some of the time. He didn't actually seem to practice what he preached, perhaps because he wasn't the sort of man he was preaching to.

In a World War Two or Golden Age campaign, the players should stumble across Celine in Europe somehow or the other. As a general rule, they will find him fleeing from whatever military is closest with his wife (and her cat) in tow. He will do his best to avoid any character who looks powerful or important (too dangerous!), but he will stop to help anyone who appears to be seriously hurt. Then he, along with his little family, will make themselves scarce at the first opportunity. There were those in both the French Resistance and the English Government who felt that Celine was a traitor. They might ask the player characters to capture Celine so that he can be brought back for a speedy trial... and an even speedier execution. Unfortunately, Celine didn't actually do anything that about two thirds of France didn't do – namely, not fight back against the Germans. He wasn't actually a traitor to France in any real sense of the word. Let the players know this so that they are forced into an ethical conundrum. Should they bring him back to an almost certain execution, or let him go, and live under a cloud of suspicion themselves?

In a Pulp Era campaign, the players could encounter a younger, less cynical but every bit as

crazy Celine nearly anywhere in the world. He traveled extensively as a doctor for the League of Nations, so he could plausibly be found slumming nearly anywhere that the League has interests; drinking in prohibition era Chicago, chopping his ways through the swamps of Central Africa, or visiting Geisha houses in Tokyo. A younger Celine will still have the same medical training but will not be as nearly adverse to physical danger. He will also still remember his training as a soldier from World War One, so WF: Carbine Rifle, WF: Cavalry Saber, and TF: Horses to his character sheet.

In a Silver Age campaign, the players will encounter an older beatnik Celine in Paris. Although he will be significantly physically weaker (STR of 6), Celine will know all sorts of strange, occult things about the world which he learned during those long hard years in which he was forced to flee across Europe... things which might be useful to enterprising PC (add KS: Occult 12-). At this stage in his life, play him kind of like an even more nasty (and very French) combination of Truman Capote and H.P. Lovecraft. He'll have all sorts of offensive, mean-spirited, and downright unpleasant observations to make about the human race in general and the player characters in specific – right before he begins babbling about the Nazi flying saucers he saw rescue Hitler from the rubble of the Reichstag.

Characters like Celine – paranoid conspiracy theorists, grouchy bigoted doctors, opinionated controversial writers – appear consistently in fiction, on television, and in the movies. Remove Celine's END drain, language skills, and physical limitation then replace them with Computer Programming, SS: Biochemistry, SS: Biology, SS: Surgery, SS: Xenobiology, and Systems Operation. Add Skill Enhancer: Scientist, change his Skill Enhancer: Traveler locations to various planets or space stations and you've got a passable ship's doctor for your *Star Hero* campaign.

**Appearance:** Celine was a tall, handsome but extremely disheveled Frenchman with swept back jet-black hair. He was also quite mad looking, with facial expressions that commonly include sneering contempt, paranoid terror, and even compassionate resignation. On the street he dressed conservatively but frugally in black wool suits, while indoors he generally wore the white nylon physician's clothing of the time. Or, as Celine said himself in *From Castle to Castle* (1957) “I don't try to look picturesque, it's not my way, I don't dress to attract attention... painter style... Van Dyck, Rembrandt... Vlaminck... not for me... inconspicuous, undistinguished.... I'm a doctor...”

## CELINE'S WORKS

- 1924 La Vie Et L'oeuvre De Philippe (*Life And the work Of Philippe*)
- 1932 Voyage Au Bout De La Nuit (*Journey to the End of the Night*)
- 1936 Mort A Credit (*Death on the Installment Plan*)
- 1937 Mea Culpa (*Mea Culpa*)
- 1937 Bagatelles Pour Un Massacre (*Trifles for a Massacre*)
- 1938 L'ecole Des Cadaveres (*School of Corpses*)
- 1941 Les Beaux Draps (*The Fine Mess*)
- 1944 Guignol's Band (*Guignol's Band*)
- 1949 Casse Pipe (*Shooting Gallery*)
- 1954 Feerie Pour Une Autre Fois I-II (*Fear For Another Time*)
- 1955 Entretiens Avec Le Professeur Y (*Conversations with Professor Y*)
- 1957 D'un Chateau L'autre (*From Castle to Castle*)
- 1960 Nord (*North*)
- 1964 Le Pont De Londres (*The Bridge of London*)
- 1969 Rigodon (*Rigadoon*)

**REFERENCE BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*The Crippled Giant* by M. Hindus (1950)  
*Celine and His Vision* by E. Ostrovski (1967)  
*Celine: The Novel as Delirium* by A. Thiher (1972)  
*Celine: Man of Hate* by B. Kanpp (1974)  
*The Inner Dream* by J.H. Matthews (1978)  
*Celine's Secret* by Lucette Destouches and Véronique Robert (2001)

**Louis-Ferdinand Celine**

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	Lift: 75kg; 1½d6 HTH [1]
12	DEX	6	11-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
10	CON	0	11-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll: 13-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	11-	Presence Attack: 3d6
14	COM	2	12-	
2	PD	0		Total: 2 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
3	SPD	8		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	REC	2		
20	END	0		
20	STUN	1		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 42**

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

**Cost Powers** **END**

- 36 *Draining French Nihilist Philosophical Discourse:* Drain END 2d6, BOECV (Mental Defense applies; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Area Of Effect (5" Radius; +1), Personal Immunity (+¼); Only Works When Celine Is Speaking (-½) 0
- 18 *Exceptional Medical Ability:* Healing 3d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (Medical Kit; -1), Requires SS: Medicine Roll (-1 per 10 Active Points used; -½) 0

**Perks**

- 4 Reputation: Literary Figure (in Europe) +2/+2d6
- 4 Reputation: Highly Skilled Doctor (in Europe) +2/+2d6

**Talents**

- 3 *Unfriendly:* Resistance To Seduction (3 points)
- 3 *Unimpressed:* Resistance To Reputation (3 points)
- 3 *Blasé:* Resistance To Oratory (3 points)

**Skills**

- 5 Bribery 13-
- 3 Conversation 12-
- 5 Forensic Medicine 14-
- 4 Gambling (Card Games, Dice Games) 14-
- 5 KS: French Literature 14-
- 5 KS: French Underworld 14-
- 0 Language: French (native, imitate dialects)
- 3 Language: English (completely fluent)
- 3 Language: German (completely fluent)
- 7 Paramedics 15-
- 8 SS: Medicine 18-
- 5 Streetwise 13-
- 3 Traveler
- 1 1) CK: Berlin 11-
- 1 2) CK: London 11-
- 1 3) CK: New York 11-
- 3 4) CK: Paris 15-

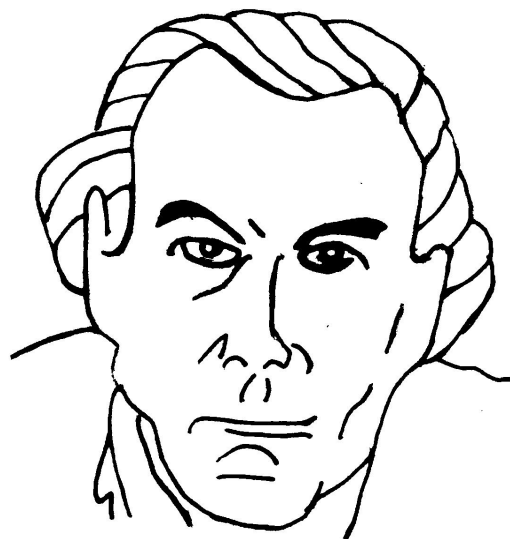
**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 133**

**Total Cost: 175**

**75+ Disadvantages**

- 10 Hunted: French Resistance 8- (Mo Pow, Kill)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Damaged Left Arm (-2 penalty to STR), Buzzing Ears (-2 to hearing), Headaches (All The Time, Slightly)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Coward (Common, Total)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Paranoid (Very Common, Strong)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
- 5 Reputation: Traitor, 8-

**Total Disadvantage Points: 175**



# The Future History Timeline

by David McKee

## Introducing The Future History Concept

The best campaigns, for those who truly enjoy the roleplaying aspects of RPGs, are those in which the players experience freedom in developing their characters and pursuing the goals of those characters. This means more than simply allowing them to choose skills, train in particular weapons, or learn a special group of spells. It means developing a sense that their characters move in a multidimensional world that at all times presents multiple paths of exploration.

One of the great challenges for any GM is the creation of a campaign that is not simply a series of independent and unrelated single-shot adventures the characters are plopped into one after another. All too often, however, the effort to create a cohesive campaign with plots spanning multiple adventures produces a game the players experience as rigidly linear. The sense of being channeled from one related event to the next is almost as bad from a player's perspective as the random series of disconnected adventures. This sort of campaign makes players feel that there can be only one outcome to an adventure and one predetermined narrative to a campaign. They should instead feel that their characters move in a vibrant world, rich with history and possibility.

GMs and players are understandably fixated on the immediate circumstances in which characters find themselves. When designing an adventure, a GM maps locations, develops NPCs, and traces a general plot. It is impossible for a GM to consider every possible event in the entire campaign universe, and the common result is that a GM will focus exclusively on what impacts the characters directly. When the characters are elsewhere, time seems to stand still for kingdoms on the borders of goblin country and spaceports orbiting through pirate infested asteroid fields. The characters go out into the world, adventure for weeks or months, and return to a home city that is largely unchanged.

Often this is as it should be. Continuity is extremely important in any campaign setting. However, if this is always and everywhere the case, problems can arise. Adventures will seem important only in themselves, and have little meaning in the larger campaign (and campaign world), except as means to advance the characters and to accumulate wealth. Another problematic result is a burden on the GM to contrive some plot device to set the characters on each new adventure. If one wishes to establish a

rich, living campaign, it is not always enough to develop a clever "hook" to alert the PCs that an adventure is ready to be had.

This article describes a number of methods for developing a Future History, a kind of timeline that provides for events to occur independent of specific adventures and scenarios. These events can be major, game altering events or relatively minor occurrences that provide a bit of local color to an adventure. Used liberally, the methods of Future History can transform the way a GM runs a campaign. Used sparingly, they can provide a little spice to an evening of otherwise traditional gameplay. In either case, they constitute a broader vision of a campaign; this vision can result in a little more work being required of a GM. However, the rewards easily justify the added effort.

## The Future History Premise

The fundamental premise of Future History is that the world is so very much larger than the space inhabited by the PCs. At all times there are many possible adventures for the PCs to consider tackling. Political, social and religious events move apace near and far, utterly without regard to the experience, desires, and actions of the PCs. Natural and supernatural occurrences ranging from the most mundane (intense weather) to the highly unusual (meteor striking a city) are to be expected in varying frequency.

All of these things are important for the effect they have on the world the PCs inhabit. Weather conditions and social conditions both, when dealt with in a measured and consistent fashion, add depth and a sense of reality to a campaign.

## Applying Future History To Your Game

### CREATING YOUR CAMPAIGN

The first thing you, as GM, need to do is to begin piecing together your campaign setting.

Create a rough map of your world. Think carefully about the sorts of adventures you would enjoy running. What kinds of characters, monsters, aliens, or other NPCs interest you? What terrains and environments can excite your imagination? What technologies and social structures appeal to your creative sense? Put *only* these in the game. The PCs will be limited in their explorations only by technological or magical barriers and the relative dangers present in various areas. In theory at least, the PCs can go anywhere and attempt to do anything, therefore you must be prepared to present the world to them as they set out to explore it.

This does not mean they can or should succeed at all their endeavors and explorations. A core assumption of this kind of roleplaying is that PCs will in fact suffer failures and setbacks. A successful conclusion to an encounter or an attempt to explore a new dungeon can be beating a hasty retreat – and living – as easily as it can be conquering the dragon and making off with its treasure.

These last few paragraphs may seem off-putting to a nervous GM. If the PCs are to be given complete freedom to explore the campaign world as they wish, in whatever order they desire, following whatever whims occur to them, how can a poor GM hope to keep up? Must every possible dungeon, town, and orbiting pawn shop be fully fleshed out from the very beginning? The answer is, of course, absolutely not.

The next thing you must do is to create the major characters of your world. Create, ahead of time, the religious and political leaders of all the kingdoms or regions or states. Establish what social and religious systems are at work your world. Develop brief histories for regions and for NPCs. Outline the relationships between them all.

The above is largely moot if using a prepackaged campaign setting. Still, it behooves you to familiarize yourself thoroughly with the setting you will be using before creating the Future History timeline.

You will also have considered whether you wish to run a campaign that is from the beginning establishing a coherent story arc or is rather a number of separate adventures – perhaps packaged commercial adventures – that will be integrated into the larger campaign setting.

This is all fairly standard campaign scenario design. Once you have made significant broad progress in this part of your preparation you can begin to work on the Future History elements of the campaign.

### THE METHOD ITSELF

There are two basic mechanisms for developing a Future History timeline: using random charts, and engaging in old-fashioned campaign planning and authorship. Most GMs will use a combination of these two mechanisms. A campaign that is intended to produce a coherent storyline at least partly predetermined by the GM will obviously depend heavily on intentional crafting of events. Still, some elements of the campaign timeline can be, and perhaps ought to be, dealt with randomly.

What is most important to consider when developing the timeline, however, is this: the events of the timeline occur and impact the campaign world *even when the characters are*

*not around to experience the events in question.* This is fundamental.

It is one thing to develop an outline or flowchart of overall adventure or campaign events as they pertain to the specific experiences of the PCs. It is another proposition altogether to develop a timeline that charts the life of the campaign world itself.

### SCOPE

Another important aspect of events in a Future History timeline is the scope of those events. There are personal events, or developments that pertain to the private lives of the PCs, such as when an NPC friendly to the PCs is killed or disappears. There are also regional events (*e.g.* plagues, wars, installation of new rulers, or development of new technologies). These constitute one axis, the range, of scope.

The other axis is depth. Some events are “passing occurrences,” events that have an immediate impact but no serious long term effect. A snowstorm is an obvious example of this sort of event. At the other end of the passing occurrences spectrum is the transformative event. This is an event that permanently changes some part of the campaign. At the personal level, the death of the NPC friendly to the PCs is transformative in effect. On a larger scale, an interkingdom war that causes a reshaping of boundaries and political policy is transformative. Conversely, a battle between two kingdoms that is concluded fairly quickly without altering the political landscape is a serious, but passing event.

These distinctions are important to keep in mind, because you must maintain a sense of proportion when developing your timeline. Multiple transformative events on a large scale in a relatively short period of time can reduce a campaign to chaos.

Table 1 provides a suggested guide to the number of events to include in a timeline. The table assumes the campaign calendar is twelve months long. For campaigns with other than a twelve month calendar this chart can serve as a general guide to event frequency. Regional events should be generated for each major region in the campaign setting.

**Table 1: Event Frequency**

Event	Passing	Transformative
<b>Personal</b>	1 per month	0 or 1 per half year
<b>Regional</b>	0 or 1 per month	0 or 1 per year



### EVENTS ON THE TIMELINE

Precisely because events of significant range and depth are such powerful influences on the direction and atmosphere of a campaign, they should almost always be placed in the timeline only after careful consideration. It is not the case, however, that they must fit neatly into a preconceived story arc. They serve to fill the void of inactivity outside the immediate concerns of the arc.

Once you have created the basic elements of your campaign setting you should determine how many of each type of event to include in your timeline. A timeline for a single year is sufficient. Now you must determine exactly what the events are. Tables 2 through 5 can be used to generate random event descriptions. If you prefer you can simply choose from among the listings for events that seem interesting to you or use the listings as inspiration for your own ideas.

The events are necessarily generic in nature. No two campaigns are the same, so the tables must by their very nature be general. Having determined the basic nature of the events that will appear in your Future History timeline you will have to interpret those events in terms of your campaign setting and in terms of the established or intended game balance. If you determine that in the eleventh month of the year, a king will suffer a violent death, you must determine which king. You must also determine the circumstances of the death. It may not be necessary to consider much more than this, though you might concern yourself with details such as the name and personality of the new ruler and whether the death is an occasion for some amount of political upheaval or drama.

Generally speaking, however, any given event represents a possible adventure hook. You must consider the possible reaction of the PCs to the events – or to rumors of them. Some, like a pickpocket targeting a PC, amount to little more than a brief random encounter. These require little in the way of preparation beyond developing an NPC to do the pickpocketing. This event could, however, easily be translated into a teaser to entice the PCs into an adventure. Perhaps the pickpocket is detected, but escapes. Chasing the thief, the PCs stumble into an adventure you had all along wanted them to find. Rumors of a political upheaval in a nearby kingdom might prove too curious to ignore. You might place an adventure in the path of the PCs as they attempt to travel to the ailing kingdom.

On the other hand, the PCs could be deeply entangled in an adventure when they hear news of an event. Unable to follow the lead right then, they file the information away for later consideration. The important immediate effect is the experience they will have of a world beyond

their immediate actions that is active and changing. If the Future History timeline you impose on your campaign does nothing other than generate this atmosphere in the campaign world, then it has done its job.

If you have decided to develop a coherent story arc for the campaign you must consider the impact the Future History events you have now plotted may have on that story. Many will have no serious effect at all, while others may suggest new approaches to the story altogether. Others may seem inappropriate. These should be discarded in favor of more appropriate or appealing events.

As always, the key is that these events will occur whether the PCs are present to experience them or not. In the case of personal events, such as a pickpocket targeting a PC, not being in a location where this can occur at its predetermined time means simply that the PC has luckily avoided becoming a mark. The events of the timeline do not constitute absolute fate. One can imagine any number of scenarios whereby PC activities inadvertently prevent an event from occurring.

They may (and should) hear rumors of the events. Perhaps they will see some evidence of impact of events. A line of refugees streaming past the group on their way to explore a subterranean troll city might provide a clue that Viking raiders have been razing nearby villages. If the PCs are unable to avoid their adventure in the troll city – perhaps because they have been contracted to slay the troll prince – then they may well be consumed with a renewed sense of urgency. Perhaps some of the refugees are known to the PCs. If the compulsion to investigate the raids overwhelms them, their work as hired adventurers might be impacted in complicated and interesting ways.

The above example is a perfect illustration of the depth Future History can provide a campaign. Having determined that raiders will be attacking local villagers, all the GM must do to prepare is to create the NPCs who are doing the raiding, and decide where they will be conducting their operations. Then, as the time for the event approaches, the GM will consider whether and how the PCs will come to learn of the event. This is a relatively minor burden, and the raider NPCs can always be used later if the PCs decide not to investigate.

The direct effect on the players is excellent in terms of the roleplaying experience. The character and commitment of their PCs will be tested. Which is a more important obligation – to discharge the duties contracted for or to offer assistance to helpless villagers? While the event in question is really a “passing event” there are subtle long-term implications.

**EVENT TABLES**

These tables below are geared for a campaign set in the mid to late medieval age on the Hero Universe Timeline but can be easily altered for other eras. To use them to produce random results, roll three six-sided dice and consult the entry corresponding to the sum of the roll. As in all things relating to the campaign, the GM is the final arbiter. If an event seems inappropriate, discard it.

Some GMs will decide the transformative events are simply too significant to be left to chance. Still, a Future History timeline benefits greatly from events of this magnitude. For the full effects of this method to be felt, some consideration should be given to incorporating one or two transformative events into a campaign's timeline.

**TABLE 2: PASSING PERSONAL EVENTS**

- 3 A grateful past beneficiary of the PCs' actions presents a gift to them.
- 4 A creature or NPC the PCs face in combat is ill and suffers penalties to its attacks.
- 5 The PCs come into possession of a partial map or other information useful in an upcoming adventure.
- 6 The PCs are honored by local authorities for their value to the community.
- 7 Prices in markets and inns are subject to 5% deflation for one month.
- 8 A PC finds an item of low to medium worth.
- 9 The PCs' favorite tavern receives a batch of the very best quality Bock.
- 10 An ally of the PCs is assaulted, but survives.
- 11 A PC loses an item of low to medium worth.
- 12 A non-magical/non-special weapon owned by one of the PCs breaks during combat.
- 13 The PCs come into possession of a partial map or other information useful in an upcoming adventure. The map or information is incorrect or flawed.
- 14 Prices in markets and inns are subject to 5% inflation for one month.
- 15 A PC is targeted by a pickpocket/thief.
- 16 One or more PCs are exposed to an illness, and suffer temporary negative effects.
- 17 The home village/city/port of the PCs is assaulted or raided, but the attack is repulsed.
- 18 A PC is assaulted by a monster or NPC.

A campaign with a definite story arc virtually demands this in terms of events relating to the story. Events outside the story remain important, however.

On the other hand, using just passing or personal passing events in a timeline can add a little color to a game.

**TABLE 3: TRANSFORMATIVE PERSONAL EVENTS**

- 3 The home village/city/port of the PCs benefits from a royal grant. Defenses are improved considerably.
- 4 NPCs or monsters who are enemies of someone recently slain by the PCs adopt the PCs as honorary family/associates. Passage through or near their lands is no longer subject to attack or interference.
- 5 The PCs are named heroes in their local area. Room and board are provided for free, forever.
- 6 The home village/city/port of the PCs comes under new leadership. The new government is fond of the PCs.
- 7 An inn, tavern, or other common haunt of NPCs antagonistic to the PCs burns to the ground.
- 8 NPC enemy of the PCs dies a natural or accidental death.
- 9 Prices in markets and inns in the PCs home city are subject to permanent 5% deflation.
- 10 A new bishop, friendly to the PCs, is installed in the cathedral nearest their home base.
- 11 A new mayor, vaguely unfriendly to the PCs is installed in a town near the PCs main area of activity.
- 12 Prices in markets and inns in the PCs home city are subject to permanent 5% inflation.
- 13 NPC friendly to the PCs dies a natural or accidental death.
- 14 An inn, tavern, or other common haunt of the PCs burns to the ground.
- 15 The home village/city/port of the PCs comes under new leadership. The new government is antagonistic to the PCs.
- 16 A magical/special weapon owned by one of the PCs breaks during combat.
- 17 Relatives of an NPC or monster the PCs kill initiate a blood feud with the PCs.
- 18 The home village/city/port of the PCs is assaulted and razed.

**TABLE 4: PASSING REGIONAL EVENTS**

- 3 Traveling circus or fair visits the region.
- 4 Any seasonal crops/game hunting produce unusually large yield.
- 5 Weather in the region is extremely mild for one month (e.g. no snowfall in winter or cool temperature in summer).
- 6 Local lord travels through the region, examining his lands and vassals.
- 7 An heir to the local lord is born.
- 8 Demonic influence in region decreases for a short time.
- 9 Weather in the region is extremely mild for one week.
- 10 Weather in the region is very harsh for one week.
- 11 Demonic influence in region increases for a short time.
- 12 Small earthquake hits region, causing minor damage.
- 13 Harsh taxes are imposed on the region to pay for emergency public works.
- 14 A passing comet disrupts magic for 2 to 4 weeks.
- 15 Ring of thieves plague the region for 1 to 2 months.
- 16 Weather in the region is very harsh for one month (e.g. blizzards in winter or draught conditions in summer).
- 17 Mild plague infects region for one or two months.
- 18 Nomadic or marauding raiders attack a number of villages or towns for a period of 1 to 4 weeks.

**TABLE 5: TRANSFORMATIVE REGIONAL EVENTS**

- 3 An important political marriage occurs, increasing stability in the region.
- 4 Valuable trade relations between two or more kingdoms in the region are established or improved.
- 5 Church makes major inroads against demonic influence in the region.
- 6 A new colony is established at the frontiers of the region.
- 7 New road between major cities is built (or mountain pass is discovered/made).
- 8 Major royal NPC or Church leader (unfriendly to the PCs) dies an untimely death.
- 9 Regional product (e.g. textiles, ale, woodcraft) begins to find an increased demand in other regions.
- 10 A new star appears in the night sky, causing much speculation and prognostication.
- 11 A wall is constructed between two uneasy neighboring kingdoms.
- 12 Important mountain pass or road is permanently closed by beasts, men, or natural disaster.
- 13 Rise of heretical sect erodes Church's ability to resist demonic influence in the region.
- 14 Major royal NPC or Church leader is assassinated.
- 15 Major magical disaster causes massive destruction and results in severe political repercussions against those who practice magic.
- 16 Evil monsters begin to move into the region and make permanent homes.
- 17 Earthquake or other natural disaster causes major damage to cities, towns and villages in the region.
- 18 Region is caught up in a major war.

## Conclusion

As GM, you know these events will occur. What you do not know is the exact context in which they will occur. You do not know whether the PCs will be anywhere in the vicinity of the events. Having determined they will happen beforehand, however, and having done so under conditions of limited ignorance, you will have infused a catalytic element into the alchemy of your game. In a sense, it is as if the campaign setting itself has become a kind of grand and independent NPC, acting and evolving on its own terms without regard for pesky interlocutors like PCs and adventurers.

## Sample Future History Outline

### MONTH 1

- Pictish war bands in Scotland begin raiding the northern towns and villages of Britain. Refugees stream into southern Britain demanding succor.
- Intense winter storms pound northern Europe.

### MONTH 2

- The Church demands a crackdown on wizards and witches in Lyonesse.

### MONTH 3

- A heretical sect rejecting oppressive Church rule arises in Lyonesse.

### MONTH 4

- Sailors from Hispania reestablish contact with Antillia.
- The PCs are honored by the king of Britain for their valorous exploits.
- The weather in Britain is unusually mild.

### MONTH 5

- The village most recently used as a home base by the PCs succumbs to fire. Their favorite inn is burnt to the ground.

### MONTH 6

- One of the PCs is accused of fraternizing with demons.

### MONTH 7

- A lunar eclipse occasions a significant rise in demonic activity for one night in Ireland.
- An heir is born in Austria.

### MONTH 8

- The king of a small Nordic kingdom is assassinated following remarks suggesting an alliance between humans and fairy folk.

### MONTH 9

- Small French boats filled with spies come ashore under the chalk cliffs of Dover. The sailors are quickly set upon by local villagers. Political tensions are strongly felt across the channel.
- Weather across southern Europe is exceptionally mild.

### MONTH 10

- Packs of amphibious demons harass villagers on the small islands off the west coast of Ireland.
- One of the PCs is marked by a pickpocket the first time he visits a sizable city.

### MONTH 11

- The Church crushes the heretical sect in Lyonesse. Magicians and witches are persecuted (if the PCs have acted on rumors of the events in Lyonesse earlier in the year, this event may have been prevented or caused to occur much sooner).

### MONTH 12

- The first PC to strike a blow with a non-magical weapon this month breaks her weapon.



# Plot Twist Cards for *Champions*

by Tim Binford, Andy Mathews, and Steven S. Long

Plot Twist Cards can add some spice to a game session. Gamemasters can use Plot Twist Cards when they want to inject some humor and unpredictability to their game. These cards allow the players to control the plot at key points, and the GM must adapt to the unforeseen development. Gamemasters should only use Plot Twist Cards if they and their players are confident in their ability to ad-lib, because Plot Twist Cards may undo hours of careful planning in an instant. Used well, they can tremendously liven up a game as a Gamemaster and his or her players take turns directing the flow of events.

To use Plot Twist Cards, take a standard deck of playing cards (pull out the Jokers), shuffle them before each game session and allow the players to “pick a card – any card” from the deck while it is held face down. Once they have chosen, the players may then look at their card to see what they have. The GM keeps the Jokers. The cards are listed below by the Playing Card, Plot Twist Name, and Card Type, e.g., “Ace of Spades – Tables Turn (3).” GMs may want to print out the list of cards and pass it out to their players for reference.

## PLOT TWIST CARD RULES

1. Use these cards to add enjoyment to your game!
2. Playing a card is a zero-phase action and does not interfere with other actions.
3. Players are allowed only one card per game session.
4. Cards may only be played once.
5. “A card laid is a card played.”
6. The first card played is the one that takes precedence unless the GM overrides the card.
7. Non-combat cards should be given to the GM at the start of the night’s adventure. Combat cards are played as they come up.
8. Plot Twist cards may be used to assist another character or NPC.
9. Plot Twist Cards may be played in combinations.
10. If the Gamemaster cannot work in the player’s card, he must admit he is a weenie and apologize – perhaps with extra xp.
11. All cards must be played.
12. Effects, unless otherwise noted, last for only one game session.

## TYPES OF PLOT TWIST CARDS

1. **Instant Card, Combat:** This card is used and discarded during combat.
2. **Instant Card, Non-Combat:** This card is used and discarded while not in combat.
3. **Anytime:** These are Instant cards that can be used anytime during the game session.
4. **Game Session Card, Combat:** This card affects all combat during a game session.
5. **Game Session Card, Non-Combat:** This card affects non-combat of a game session.
6. **Secret, Play First:** Give to the GM and he will begin to work it into the plot.
7. **Non-Secret, Play First:** Tell everyone what it is and watch the fun.

## SPADES

**Ace of Spades – Tables Turn (3):** An unexpected and beneficial change of events – a disadvantage becomes an advantage, an enemy is friendly, etc. Treat as 1 to 2d6 of Luck.

**2 of Spades – Enemy Disadvantaged (1):** During combat, something happens to your opponent that slightly disadvantages him, delays him, or puts him in a worse combat position. Treat as 1 to 2d6 of Luck.

**3 of Spades – Enemy Disadvantaged (5):** Something happens to the character’s enemy that will disadvantage him. He gets a cold, does a sloppy job of hiding his tracks, his girlfriend leaves him, etc. Treat as 1 to 2d6 of Luck.

**4 of Spades – Unexpected Lead (3):** The character comes upon an unexpected lead in tracking down his objective. Treat as 1 to 2d6 of Luck.

**5 of Spades – Unexpected Clue (3):** The character discovers an unexpected clue or piece of evidence that aids his current investigation. Treat as 1 to 3d6 of Luck.

**6 of Spades – Beneficial Disaster (2):** Some disaster such as computer failure, flooding that destroys papers uncovering a player’s Secret Identity, or other natural happening besets the character’s enemy. Treat as 2 to 4d6 of Luck.

art by V. Shane  
inspired by White Wolf Games’ *Whimsy Cards for Ars Magica*

**7 of Spades – Flash of Insight (2):** The character suddenly gets a brilliant inspiration or deductive leap. Treat as making a Deduction Roll by 5 or more.

**8 of Spades – Unexpected Assistance (7):** The character receives help from an unlooked-for source. Perhaps an old enemy has reason to aid the character (this time), or the police give him a helpful hint. Treat as 1 to 2d6 of Luck, or as a Favor on a 14-.

**9 of Spades – Coinciding Motivations (7):** An NPC that would normally oppose or be unfriendly to the character has reason to agree with him and may offer assistance (or at least, will not hinder the character as they would normally). Treat as a Contact at 15-.

**10 of Spades – Strangeness Strikes (3):** Utter chaos breaks out as a completely random or unforeseen event, generally not connected to the plot or exceptionally beneficial to any party, occurs. Persons playing this card should refrain from utter silliness or from incredible plot complications.

**Jack of Spades – Deus ex Machina (3):** The character is saved by a completely unforeseen event. The cavalry arrives, an enemy has a heart attack during combat, somebody drops a 10-ton weight on the enemy, etc. Treat as 6 to 8d6 of Luck.

**Queen of Spades – Scientific Progress Goes Boom! (7):** One of the character's technological foci goes on the fritz. If the character does not have a technological focus, then he or she may play this card on the villain. Treat as a 14-activation roll on the focus or roll 3d6 for a variable result (Double effect 3-8, Normal effect 9-13, Half effect 14-18).

**King of Spades – Cramming (5):** The character somehow gains access to a source of information that provides him with a Knowledge Skill at 8- that is useful to the adventure. This KS: will disappear at the end of the adventure unless the player purchases it with points. Treat as the talent Cramming.

## DIAMONDS

**Ace of Diamonds – Intuition (3):** The character gets a one-time only in-or-out of combat Danger Sense Roll at 16-. When the card is played, the player must give it to the GM who must use it to help the character out. If the character already has Danger Sense, then it will add +5 to his or her roll. Generally equal to Danger Sense at 16-.

**2 of Diamonds – Friend of Fate (3):** The character gets +3 to any one roll. This card must be played before the roll is made.

**3 of Diamonds – Fortuitous Circumstances (2):** The character can alter a situation to make it more likely that he will make a Skill Roll; the bonus is the GM's discretion, but should range from +1 to +3, depending on how clever the player's explanation is. Generally equal to +1 to +3 levels.

**4 of Diamonds – On a Date with Lady Luck (3):** The character get a luck roll at 5d6; if the character already has Luck, then the card adds +3d6 to the number of Luck dice.

**5 of Diamonds – Unexpected Perk (7):** The character receives some unforeseen, temporary Perk to aid him or her in this adventure, such as extra cash, a Favor, etc. Treat as a one to three point Perk.

**6 of Diamonds – Plot Twist (3):** The player can introduce a plot twist to complicate the GM's life a little. The plot twist should not be especially advantageous to the player's character – and it should be a minor event. Generally equal to the god-like powers of the GM.

**7 of Diamonds – Plot Device Neutralization (3):** The character gets to override or alter one minor plot device. Generally equal to 4 to 6d6 of Luck.

**8 of Diamonds – Things Man Was Not Meant to Know (2):** The GM must explain or reveal some hidden secret of the adventure or the campaign world. Generally equal to the god-like powers of the GM.

**9 of Diamonds – Once Again, From the Top (3):** The character gets to re-roll any roll.

**10 of Diamonds – Deep Agent (3):** One of the game session's villains is really an undercover friend, policeman, etc. Treat as either 3d6 of Luck, a Favor at 16-, or as a way to work in a player character that was absent last week.

**Jack of Diamonds – The Human Hostage (6):** The villain has captured an old friend of the character and the character must rescue the hostage. Treat as a DNPC.

**Queen of Diamonds – You're Having My WHAT?! (6):** The character's DNPC or other friend has a big change in their life. Examples include: a DNPC gets pregnant, hospitalized, or a change of perspective on an important campaign issue (such as how they view superheroes, justifiable force, mutants' rights, etc.). Treat as 3 to 4d6 of Unluck.

**King of Diamonds – Murphy's Law (1):** The character benefits from a lucky coincidence. The villain's aim goes awry, his foci malfunction, a deathtrap fails, etc. Treat at 4d6 of Luck.

## DIGITAL HERO #2

### HEARTS

---

**Ace of Hearts – Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner (6):** The character gets a DNPC for the game session. This DNPC could be a parent, in-law, friend, small child, ex-wife, etc., but must be someone who is not a DNPC for which the character received points. Treat as a normal (i.e., non-powered) DNPC.

**2 of Hearts – You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feeling (7):** If the character is romantically involved, then the relationship is strained. If the character is not romantically involved, then he must play this card on another character. Treat as 2 to 3d6 of Unluck.

**3 of Hearts – Turn Out the Lights, Let’s Get Romantic (7):** The character has someone fall in love with him. This can be anyone – a master villain, reporter, or person on the street. Treat as a DNPC; generally equal to 2 to 3d6 of Luck or Unluck.

**4 of Hearts – Somebody’s Watching Me (7):** Someone is hunting the character, and he or she does not know whom. It could be a reporter, ex-spouse, ex-girl or boyfriend, a police detective, the government, etc. The hunter may intend good or ill. Treat as a Hunter or Watcher, Less powerful, with non-combat influence.

**5 of Hearts – Love Potion Number Nine (7):** The character falls head-over-heels in love with a DNPC. He or she must act the part, even when it means acting to his or her disadvantage. If the character has a psych lim “In love with…” then he or she may play the card on another character, or choose to play the card himself or herself and role-play the effects on their existing relationship. Treat as a Psych Lim: In love with (fill in name of DNPC).

**6 of Hearts – I’ve Been Framed (7):** An enemy frames the character for a crime. Can the character prove his innocence before the cops find him? Treat as a Reputation: “Suspected of committing x.” Generally equal to 2 to 3d6 of Unluck.

**7 of Hearts – He’s the One What’s Done It (7):** The character’s DNPC or friend has been arrested for a crime. Did he do it? Can the hero uncover the truth in time? Generally equal to 2 to 3d6 of Unluck.

**8 of Hearts – Old Wounds Die Hard (4):** The character is suffering from an injury received while doing something heroic. Roll 3d6 and consult the Hit Location chart - any attacks hitting that part of the body are at 1.5x Stun and Body. Treat as a Vulnerability, x1.5 Stun and Body from a group of common attacks.

**9 of Hearts – We’re From the Government, We’re Here to Help (3):** The character gets one favor from a member of the government. This favor can be anything within reason. This may require a return favor at a later date. Treat as a Favor at 14- with the Government.

**10 of Hearts – The Butler (6):** The target of this card (except the GM) is the designated butler for the game session. He or she will get refill the drinks, snacks, etc. The GM may want to be nice and award this person an extra XP for all their hard work. Generally equal to the services of one very talented player, but unhappy butler.

**Jack of Hearts – Silver Bullet (6):** The character learns one weakness of a villain. If the villain does not have a dependence, susceptibility or vulnerability, then a psychological limitation will do. Treat as KS: Villain X.

**Queen of Hearts – Life of the Party (5):** The character gets +3 to all PRE rolls in non-combat social situations.

**King of Hearts – XYZ-PDQ (5):** The character suffers a -3 to all PRE rolls in non-combat social situations.

### CLUBS

---

**Ace of Clubs – Nowhere To Run, Nowhere To Hide (1):** The target of this card is at half DCV for one phase.

**2 of Clubs – Media Darling (6):** The character has been given great publicity by the media for their good deeds. This can last as long as the character keeps up his noble, heroic ways. Treat as Reputation: True Blue Hero.

**3 of Clubs – Whispering Campaign (6):** The character has been targeted for a negative media campaign for some reason, such as making enemies, “crossing the line,” etc. Treat as Reputation: (something negative).

**4 of Clubs – Elvis Sighting (3):** The character sees Elvis and may distract his or her opponent for two of the character’s phases. Treat as 2d6 Flash (max two phases, though), or as a Surprise Maneuver.

**5 of Clubs – Jinx (7):** The character has built up bad karma and is a focus of misfortune. Treat as 1d6 Unluck that affects the group.

**6 of Clubs – Bull’s Eye (3):** The character makes a critical success on any one die roll. This card must be played before the dice are rolled. Treat as a three on to hit or skill rolls.

**7 of Clubs – No One Could Have Survived That (1):** The character may negate the effects of a critical hit or may escape a deathtrap.

**8 of Clubs – Doomed, Doomed, Doomed (7):** Something bad will happen to the character in the game. Treat as 3d6 of Unluck.

**9 of Clubs – The Blue Bird of Happiness (7):** Something good will happen to the character in the game. Treat as 3d6 of Luck.

**10 of Clubs – One For All, and All at Once (1):** The player of this card and one other player get a Coordination attack without having to roll to coordinate. They must still roll To-Hit and damage as normal.

**Jack of Clubs – Momma Told Me Not to Come (6):** The character winds up in a location where they are out of place, such as a topless bar for Captain Clean, or clown alley for Nightgrim. Worse, they are seen and photographed. Internet download, anyone?

**Queen of Clubs - Criminals are a Superstitious and Cowardly Lot (3):** The character is suddenly awe-inspiring to behold. Treat as 6d6 Aid to Presence that fades at the normal rate.

**King of Clubs – Righteous Enragement (1):** The character sees something that inspires him or her when a combat is going against them and suddenly gains a zero-phase Recovery at +10. Taking damage does not affect this Recovery. Examples include: Captain Freedom spots the American Flag, or Nightgrim sees a child that reminds him of his murdered kid brother, etc.

#### **JOKERS (GM ONLY)**

**Joker – The “I Am a Weenie” Card (3):** The GM may use this card to cancel any one player’s card.





# Mouko No Shi

by Joe Linehan

## Early History

In 1946, the once mighty Japanese empire was a mere shadow of its former self. While hard-working men and women began to rebuild the country and remake it as a military power, others sought to revive darker traditions.

In the shadow of the awakening industrial lion was a darker world of assassination, industrial spying, and sabotage. Yakuza and corrupt businessmen alike were quick to call on the talents of self-styled ninja clans imitating the ways of their predecessors. The new ninjas relied on stealth, training, and ample funding to thwart all attempts to stop them.

Toshiro Nakagawo had done very well for himself, but still he was overcome with guilt. The Japanese government had paid him well for the armaments his company had built for them, but the war had cost him the lives of 4 of his 5 children. He desired to use the money he had made in the war to do good. Knowing that any attempt on his part to combat these bloodthirsty criminals would only result in his swift death and possibly the death of more people close to him, he chose to work anonymously.

With his vast fortune, Toshiro set up a base of operations in Tokyo. He hired the best martial arts instructors he could find and scouted the country for the best, brightest, and least corruptible men he could find to serve as his agents.

Mouko No Shi was established on April 16, 1947 and boasted nine operatives working in three-man teams with a support staff of an additional 12 people. They used the ninja to defeat their opponents. Through stealth and subterfuge, they would strike at crime in ways the police could not.

## Today

Today, Mouko No Shi is still headquartered in Tokyo, but it operates all over the world and boasts 72 field agents and a support staff of nearly 500. In addition to the traditional skills that served the organization so well in its early days, the modern organization is on the cutting edge of computer and surveillance technology. Toshiro Nakagawo has long since passed on, and the organization's first female director has taken his place. Asano Kumada was behind the push for new technologies and worked her way up from a support position. She is an extremely capable manager who has won the respect of her subordinates.

Field agents continue to work in three-person teams. Agents refer to themselves by code names that are related to tigers (Red Tiger, Tiger Claw, etc.).

## Kurotsume

Kurotsume (Black Talon) is an international espionage organization that has become the de facto arch-foe of Mouko No Shi. The ninja clan



art by Brad Parnell

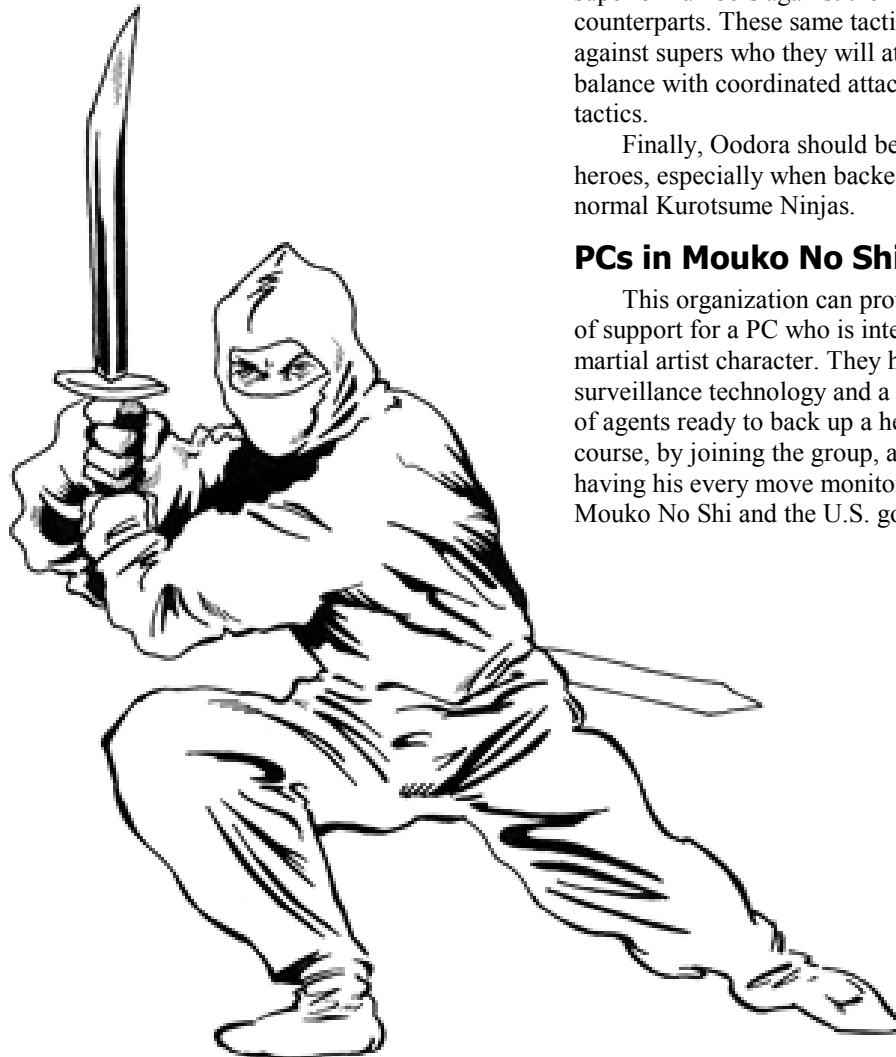
that spawned Kurotsume dates back to the Tokugawa era of Japanese history. In their 300 years of existence they have had highs and lows, but their loyalty and discipline have remained unquestioned.

The current leader of Kurotsume is Takeshi Kai, the son of one of Mouko No Shi's founders, and a ruthless tactician who will not hesitate to sacrifice agents to further his own mysterious goals. It is rumored that Takeshi is now living on the West Coast of America and running operations in Japan out of the way of Mouko No Shi who have made his capture their primary objective.

### Betrayal

One of the chief requirements for entrance into the Mouko No Shi has long been a resistance to corruption. Unfortunately, no system to measure honor or ethics is foolproof.

While on assignment in California, the agent known as Oodora (Big Tiger) betrayed his two partners after being approached by members of Kurotsume. In the process he killed Toraneko (Tiger Cat). Mouko No Shi agents, who view his treachery as their own failure, speak Oodora's name only in hushed voices.



### Operations in the United States

Mouko No Shi is not operating in the United States without U.S. government sanction. As a condition for being allowed to operate in the U.S., the American government has been given a certain degree of "control" over Mouko No Shi's agents while in the U.S. The government may even give the agents missions, provided they do not conflict with Japan's own interests.

While the U.S. government acknowledges the value of using Mouko No Shi to keep Kurotsume in check, they do not completely trust their Japanese allies. All Mouko No Shi agents in this country receive heavy scrutiny.

### Campaign Use

Mouko No Shi's interests will frequently bring it into a position to be of assistance to any PCs. Their interests may also bring them into conflict with PC heroes. A typical agent of Mouko No Shi will probably not be a match for most heroes, but three of them (especially with differing abilities) should be capable of giving one or two heroes fits.

Kurotsume ninjas are not as capable as Mouko No Shi agents, but they tend to rely on superior numbers against their better-trained counterparts. These same tactics can be used against supers who they will attempt to keep off balance with coordinated attacks and hit and run tactics.

Finally, Oodora should be a match for most heroes, especially when backed up by a group of normal Kurotsume Ninjas.

### PCs in Mouko No Shi

This organization can provide a great means of support for a PC who is interested in playing a martial artist character. They have the best in surveillance technology and a three-person group of agents ready to back up a hero in need. Of course, by joining the group, a PC is accepting having his every move monitored by both Mouko No Shi and the U.S. government.

## DIGITAL HERO #2

### Typical Mouko No Shi Agent

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH [1]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
13	CON	6	12-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 12-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
12	COM	1	11-	
				Total: 10 PD (5 rPD)
				Total: 10 ED (5 rED)
				Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
5	PD	2		
5	ED	2		
5	SPD	19		
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
32	STUN	4		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 96**

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

Cost	Powers	END
10	<i>Naginata</i> : Multipower, 20-point reserve; OAF (-1)	
3u	1) <i>Naginata Blade</i> : HKA 1½d6 (2½d6 with STR)	2
1u	2) <i>Naginata Haft</i> : HA +4d6 (7d6 with STR)	1
15	<i>Ninja-to</i> : HKA 1d6+1 (2d6 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½); OAF (-1)	3
13	<i>Smoke Bombs</i> : Darkness to Normal Sight 3" radius; 4 Charges (-1), IIF (-¼)	0
13	<i>Throwing Stars</i> : RKA 1d6; Autofire (5 shots; +½); OIF (-½), Charges (12, -¼)	0
10	<i>Micro Flex Ninja Suit</i> : Armor (5 PD/5 ED); OIF (-½)	0
4	<i>Night Vision Lenses</i> : Infrared Vision; IIF (-¼)	0

#### Martial Arts: Ninjutsu

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Strike	+0	+2	6d6 Strike
5 Roundhouse Kick	-2	+1	8d6 Strike
5 Back Kick	+1	+3	4d6 Strike
5 Nerve Pinch	-1	+1	2½d6 NND
4 Escape	+0	+0	STR 35
5 Chop	-2	+0	1d6+1 HKA
4	+1 Damage Class (already added in)		

#### Skills

10	+2 with Hand-to-Hand Combat
5	+1 with Ninja Weapons
3	Acrobatics 13-
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Climbing 13-
3	Concealment 12-
3	Contortionist 13-
3	Conversation 12-
3	Demolitions 11-
5	Disguise 12-
1	KS: Ninjutsu 8-
3	Language: English (completely fluent)
3	Language: Other Language (completely fluent)
3	Lockpicking 13-
3	Paramedic 12-
3	Security Systems 12-
3	Seduction 12-
2	Small Arms
3	Stealth 13-
3	Survival 11-
2	WF: Common Martial Arts Weapons
2	WF: Common Missile Weapons

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 174**

**Total Character Cost: 270**

#### 150+ Disadvantages

10	Hunted: Kurotsume Ninjas 11- (Less Pow)
10	Hunted: Mouko No Shi 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching, Mild Punishment)
10	Hunted: U.S. Government 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching, Mild Punishment)
20	Psychological Limitation: Code Of Honor (Common, Total)
15	Psychological Limitation: Always Obeys Orders Of Superiors (Very Common, Moderate)
5	Reputation: world class ninja, 8-
5	Rivalry: Professional (Kurotsume Agents)
25	Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 270**



# Gymnastics as a Martial Arts Style

by Jacob Russell

Gymnastic Martial Arts is a martial arts style intended for use with Heroic and Super-Heroic campaigns. In the good old days of comic books, before the general American public was exposed to Karate and Asian martial arts, comic book super-heroes utilized a different form of unarmed combat: gymnastics. If a character wasn't big and strong, possessing super-human powers, a professional wrestler, or a boxer they usually used gymnastics. Gymnastic characters performed flips and tumbles to dodge attacks and even perform special attacks of their own.

Martial Arts: Gymnastics					
Maneuver	Phs	Pts	OCV	DCV	Damage/Effect
Back-Flip Kick	½	4	-1	+1	STR +3d6 Strike
Cartwheel Kick	½	4	+0	+2	STR +2d6 Strike
Gymnastic Dodge	½	4	-	+5	Dodge; Abort
Leg Grab	½	3	+0	-2	Grab +10 STR
Low Cartwheel Kick	½	4	+2	+2	STR Strike
Rebound Kick	½	5	+0	+1	STR +4d6 Strike; must follow Dodge
Slam Flip	½	4	+2	-1	STR +4d6 Strike; must follow Leg Grab; both fall; must half-move
Somersault Strike/ Flip By	1	5	-2	+1	STR +2d6 +v/5 Strike; FMove

## Prerequisite Skills

Acrobatics and Breakfall are prerequisite skills. A Dexterity of 14 should also be considered as a minimum qualification, otherwise no one would bother to teach you gymnastics of a sufficiently advanced level. Unless the gymnast is a young teenager or a lithe woman, a minimum Strength of 15 should also be required as real gymnasts are usually capable of supporting their weight with one hand.

## Maneuvers

Gymnast characters do not have to take all of the maneuvers from the list below, just enough to meet the 10 point requirement. Previously published maneuvers that are also appropriate for a gymnast are: Legsweep, Flying Tackle, and Passing Strike. Because Gymnastic Martial Arts is adapted from a non-combat skill, there are few purely defensive maneuvers. Only the Martial Dodge and Gymnastic Dodge are appropriate defensive maneuvers. Blocks are not appropriate. Because gymnastics is about throwing your body into each move, the maneuvers are generally high on damage, low on OCV, and several utilize velocity damage. The DCV of many of the maneuvers is kept high because the gymnast's rapid and wild motion makes them a difficult target.

## Description/Explanation of Maneuvers

**Back-Flip Kick:** Gymnast back-flips, lets one (or both) feet extend to give target uppercut.

**Cartwheel Kick:** Gymnast does a cartwheel into target's face.

**Gymnastic Dodge:** Gymnast makes a series of flips and tumbles to avoid incoming attacks.

**Leg Grab:** Gymnast does a flip or hand-stand. Grabs target between legs. See Slam Flip.

**Low Cartwheel Kick:** Same as Cartwheel Kick, but the strike is performed at lower level which makes it hard to avoid.

**Rebound Kick:** Gymnast extends Dodge into back-flip. See Back-Flip Kick.

**Slam Flip:** After Leg Grab, gymnast executes flip that puts their target beneath them when they land.

**Somersault Strike:** Gymnast leaps, does flips and somersaults, but instead of a traditional dismount, they land on target's chest (or head, etc.).

### Designing New Gymnastic Maneuvers

Because the gymnastic martial art is the free-floating non-art that it is, this list should not be considered comprehensive. Players should feel free to design their own maneuvers. Velocity damage is a highly appropriate advantage to put into a maneuver. As mentioned, Blocks and Throws are not appropriate maneuvers. Generally speaking, gymnastic maneuvers should favor DCV over OCV as the chaotic motion of the maneuvers make them a hard target, but easier to see coming. Weapons maneuvers are not generally appropriate for gymnastic characters. Carrying weapons, especially pole arms, would throw off a gymnast's balance.

### Disadvantages

Because of the fact that gymnastics is not really a martial arts style Style Limitations are not appropriate. The only exception to this would be if the campaign world has a significant number of gymnast-stylists in it. Gymnasts with classic gymnastic super-hero personalities (see below) should take psychological limitations such as "Showoff" (very common, moderate), "Overconfident" (very common, moderate), or "Wisecracker" (very common, moderate).

### Gymnasts and Other Martial Artists

Gymnasts, like wrestlers and boxers are not part of the "martial arts world" like Karate and Kung Fu devotees. Thus, they are not part of the system of authority and deference. Additionally, gymnasts are not perceived as fighters at all. This not only effects things like Presence attacks and job offers, this also means that defeat of a "real" martial artist at the hands of a gymnast could be particularly disgraceful. It would mean that the martial artist was defeated by a non-combatant who most will see as no more than a mere circus performer. This could mean a ruined reputation for the martial artist.

### Classic Gymnasts

Despite the fact that gymnastics takes a huge amount of discipline, gymnasts in comic books are overwhelmingly portrayed with madcap, devil-may-care attitudes. Many incorporate elements of slap-stick humor, with their opponents bearing the "brunt" of the jokes, into their motif. Cream pies, jester costumes, and verbal jokes are common accessories to the gymnast in comic books. As heroes they provide the comic relief, either for the team or the comic itself, lampooning the villains as they knock

them unconscious. As villains they fling insults along with their feet at the heroes. Heroes taking themselves especially seriously will have a hard time trying to maintain their hard-earned reputation as intimidating crime-fighters with meringue dripping from their cowls.

### "Realistic" Gymnasts

In real life the gymnast works as much as 40 hours a week developing their skill. Many start as young as five years old training to compete in prestigious athletic competitions such as the Olympics. To be a truly accomplished gymnast takes dedication and immense mental and physical endurance. Players who prefer a more realistic campaign may want to reflect these facts in their characters. Psychological limitations such as "Wisecracker" or "Showoff" may be swapped for "Obsessive" or "Humorless". Gymnasts who have developed super-human levels of Dexterity may be forced, by law or personal morality, to give up gymnastic competition. This could lead to a very morose demeanor.

Especially realistic campaigns may want to consider putting size limits on gymnasts as there are such limits imposed upon real gymnasts in training. Gymnasts are expected to keep their weight at the lowest safe minimum. Young gymnasts who become too tall with the onset of puberty are usually refused training as their size quickly becomes too much of a hindrance to training.

### Gymnastic Tactics

The Gymnastic Martial Art has been designed as a high-offense art. Without blocks, throws, or disarms the gymnast will be largely forced to rely on their high DCV and natural defenses to protect them. Players making gymnasts should prepare for that either with high Speeds or defenses.

### Gymnast-Friendly Campaign Settings

The best place that Gymnastic Martial Arts fits in is in the Golden and Silver Age campaigns. While it is true that the Asian martial arts have existed in the real world for thousands of years, they did not make their way into American comic books until about the mid-1960s. For this reason, many GMs may not consider Kung Fu, Karate, or T'ai Chi as appropriate martial arts for any period campaign set earlier than the 1960s (*i.e.*, Golden Age or Silver Age). Players who like to play martial artists may not like playing in these campaigns with their choices limited to Boxing, Wrestling, and Dirty In-Fighting.

THE HEART OF  
THE  
GRANDMOTHER  
SPIDER

Darren

*Davenport slowly roused from a painful sleep. The last thing he remembered was being by the Falls with his friends on one of his brother's "military field exercises" experimenting with his new powered armor suit. Suddenly, almost too quickly, a storm had brewed and a lightning bolt had struck the ground. Now....*

*"Crimmy!*

*Crimmy! Are you okay?"*

*Darren slowly opened his eyes to see a young red-haired girl looking over him. She was rather pretty for her age, but couldn't be much older than 14 or 15 years. Her blousy clothes suggested that she wanted to move freely, if need be.*

*"Ugh," Darren groaned, rubbing the crown of his head. "Where am I?"*

*"The silver mines under the Falls," the young girl replied. "Deep underground. You fell down the Falls and washed up here."*

*"Huge wonder that I didn't drown, then," Darren mumbled as he tried to stand up. His tall frame stumbled slightly, prompting the young girl to take his arm to hold him*

## Meriquai Falls by Dale Robbins

Welcome to the city of Meriquai Falls. The Meriquai (pronounced mare-eh-kwie, without any emphasis of syllable) are the indigenous Native Americans of the region where the Missouri River and the Meriquai River intersect. Meriquai Falls, the Midwest metropolitan city that has grown on the banks of these two rivers, is named after the waterfalls that lie approximately five miles north of the city limits of North Meriquai Falls along the Meriquai River. It is a thriving center of transportation, communication, and music within the United States.

It is also the home of a powerful magical artifact, and, therefore, an epicenter of metahuman activity.

This is the first installment in a series that will detail the City of Meriquai Falls. An overview is given herein. In later installments, specific suburbs, neighborhoods, sites, subcultures, and persona will be presented in greater detail. Gamemasters are welcome and encouraged to draw from these materials. Meriquai Falls can be placed anywhere along the Missouri River, as the Gamemaster sees fit.

### Meriquai Falls at a Glance

**Size:** 805.0 sq km (310.8 sq mi)

**Mean Elevation:** 229 m (750 feet)

**Climate:** Temperate; annual precipitation 956 mm (37.6 in); occasional severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, cold waves, blizzards, or drought; temperatures range from 2°C (35°F) in January to 32°C (89°F) in July.

**Population:** Residential, including suburbs: 1.7 million. Residential, metropolitan area: 442,000. Working: 2.0 million.

**Racial Background:** White: 60.7% -- Black: 31.2% -- Native American: 1.9% -- Asian: 0.6% -- Other: 5.6% -- Hispanic (of any race): 6.9%

**Government:** Mayor (Hon. Clarise H. VonWeider) plus a ten-member City Council.

**Tallest Building:** The Jackson Sullivan Research Foundation Corporate Tower (or the Sullivan Building, for short), 98 stories (985 feet [152 hexes] tall)

### History

During the Age of Legends, many thousands of years ago, there existed the great Meriquai Kingdom. Led by the Grandmother Spider, an immortal spirit matron, the people lived idyllic and serene lives. They were peaceful and agrarian. Thus, when the darkness known as the Myste threatened to destroy the kingdom, the Grandmother Spider was forced to create four powerful spirit warriors to aid her.

The strong and solid Turtle, the fluid and adaptable Frog, the fiery and passionate Thunderbird, and the beautiful and free-spirited Butterfly defeated the Myste. But they could only entrap him, not kill him. Even that came with great cost, as the Myste had corrupted the Grandmother Spider's body during the battle. With great sorrow, the four Spirit Warriors separated the heart of Grandmother Spider from her corrupt body, so that her wisdom could continue to guide the Kingdom.

With the Heart of the Grandmother Spider, the Kingdom did indeed fare well for another four millennia beyond this, before the world collapsed on itself to give way to the Classical Age.

Eleven millennia later, mankind had rebuilt itself and the Europeans were exploring the rest of the world. The Meriquai had survived not one, not two, but three great Ages, although they had lost much with each passing Age. They could not even recall the fabulous age in which they ruled like kings. However, being peaceful, philosophical people who were more in tune with the spirits than with man, the Meriquai were quickly displaced by the influx of European settlers.

In 1835, at the junction of the Missouri and the Meriquai Rivers, Jacques Francois built a trading post to trade with the Meriquai people. Ten years later, Phillip Smith developed the town of Smith's Gate to provision steer herders on the Santa Fe Trail. Settlers slowly began to settle Smith's Gate, the nearby Blue Hills, and the Eagle's View Plain just east of Francois' post.

Commerce for the area picked up as the Mexican War, the California gold rush, and the incoming railroads became factors. On 1853, the community at the apex of the two rivers was chartered as the Town of the Meriquai. Western settlers, railroads, cattle barons, and military forces continued to move through or to the town. By 1892, the Town of the Meriquai had annexed the two other banks of the rivers and reached as far north up the Meriquai River as the legendary Meriquai Falls. The Town was rechartered as the City of Meriquai Falls.

During this time, the Town of Revolution was founded just south of the river community of South Meriquai Falls in protest against the draconian military tactics of General Wilford McKenzie during the American Civil War. By 1901, Revolution annexed South Meriquai Falls.

Meanwhile, the Meriquai people were relegated to a reservation north of the Blue Hills, encompassing the Meriquai Falls itself. Despite this degradation, the Meriquai took comfort in

## DIGITAL HERO #2

their close relationship with the spirits of the region. They knew they were a people with an important role in the greater scheme of the world. They chose to bide their time, despite the occasional uprisings lead by such legends as Running Deer and Laughing Raven.

Through the Prohibition Era, Meriquai Falls' major industry had been cattle, industrial factories, trade goods, and railroad transportation. Meriquai Falls' banks helped finance many cattle barons and wheat or corn farms. But then silver was discovered in the Blue Hills. And a lot of it! This caused an influx of settlers and prospectors that helped the City of Meriquai Falls annex the Blue Hills, the Eagle's View Plain (now called simply Eagleview), the town of Revolution and even Smith's Gate. The population increased exponentially.

This was also an important era of music for Meriquai Falls and even the United States. Jazz, reggae, and blues became especially popular during the early twentieth century. Jazz greats like Fat Jimm, Eddie Brown, and Aaron Thurston all got their start in Meriquai Falls. More importantly, music with local Meriquai flavor gained a huge underground following. Although the native music never became as popular as jazz or blues, it took hold in Meriquai Falls. The "new age" music of the Meriquai would eventually become Meriquai Falls' most important musical commodity.

During the Great Depression, miners desperately mined silver from the silver mines of the Blue Hills in order to make ends meet. However, industrial, railroad, and cattle concerns were put to the side because of this, making starvation a serious threat to Meriquai falls. An Italian *Mafioso* boss named Vincent "Vin Vinny" Vincetti quickly took the reins of the city, bringing to bear all of his resources (both legitimate and illegal) to bring Meriquai Falls back out the Depression. His intention was to stabilize and revitalize Meriquai Falls so that he would gain a prime market for his illegitimate concerns, reaping huge profits. In 1941, though, Vincetti was tagged by Federal agents with tax evasion and was sentenced to prison.

Vincetti's work on the city's economy did help, however. With the city's industrial and service priorities straight, new Mayor Reginald "Reggie" Hughes continued to use the silver mines as a prime source of income. Throughout World War II, the Korean War, and much of the Viet Nam conflict, the silver mines made Meriquai Falls a rich and fabulous city. Waterfalls and fountains were built everywhere, to give the city a sense of dignity and class. Unemployment in Meriquai Falls was amongst the lowest in the United States for much of this period.

In 1974, however, conditions turned for the worse when a mysterious terrorist calling himself "The Manitou" suddenly appeared to harass the silver miners. With the aid of his four "equalizers" named Water Buffalo, Eagle, Coyote, and Grizzly Bear, the Manitou quickly drove the miners and their employing companies away from the Blue Hills. After the Manitou cleared out the silver mines, his attention turned quickly to the unsuspecting communities of Blue Hills Park. A mysterious hero named Blood Shadow, with the help of trucker/vigilante Shotgun Rider and his shaman wife Prairie Maid, saved the city.

Meriquai Falls had just tasted its first taste of paranormal conflict, the likes of which they'd only read about from New York City, San Francisco, and Detroit. And it would certainly not be the last. However, the loss of the silver mines would cost Meriquai Falls dearly, as the city slipped into a severe recession that would last nearly twelve years.

In 1988, Maurice Lewis III was elected Mayor of Meriquai Falls. His first priority was to bring the city from its recession. Mayor Lewis did this by attracting many major corporations to establish factories, call centers, distribution warehouses, or more preferably primary headquarters within the city.

Industrialist Gregorio Lynconius suddenly took interest in the abandoned Great Meriquai Station. Building a technological empire within Meriquai Falls almost from the ground up, Lynconius took Lyncon Technologies and led it into the new millennium. Within eight years, Lyncon Technologies had opened its main headquarters within the newly renovated Great Meriquai Station. The Station sported, in addition to Lyncon Technologies' offices, a technology museum called Tech World, several prestigious restaurants, a Broadway-style theatre, and a memorial to the railroad companies that made the Station famous.

Also during the 1990s, security technologies firm Impulses Unlimited, medical firm Jackson Sullivan Research Foundation, telecommunications giant Bolt Telecom, and publishing concern Watermark Books and Cards selected their headquarters in Meriquai Falls. These all served to revitalize the city's economy. By the end of Mayor Lewis' third term in the year 2000, unemployment and loan rates were both at the lowest they had been since the early 70s.

A tremendous blow to the morale of the citizens of Meriquai Falls came in early 2000, though. The criminal organization, VIPER, made a blatant and fateful attempt to secure control of the city in what is now called "The Great Meriquai Falls Massacre" (or "The Biggest Oops of the Midwest" by various VIPER leaders).

*steady. "The spirits must be with me tonight."*

*"More than you know, Crimmy," the girl replied, looking around. "I think it was this way."*

*"Um, who are you?" Darren asked, looking at the girl curiously. "Nothing personal, mind you. You did help me and all. But what's with this 'Crimmy' stuff?"*

*"Oh, that's right," the girl giggled, leading Darren to a stone altar with a large, glowing crystal atop it. "You haven't taken that name yet. Sorry, Darren. I'm Trina. Trina Sullivan."*

*"You mean, as in Jackson Sullivan, of the Sullivan Research Foundation?" Darren asked, astounded. "I thought I recognized the eyes and freckles. Are you Jackson's little sister or something?"*

*"Well, I—" Trina started to answer.*

*"Welcome, Vixen and Crimson-Hawk," a mysterious, elderly feminine voice rang out. It seemed to come from nowhere and everywhere all at once.*

*"What the—" Darren gasped, looking around. "Who... who's there?"*

*"I am Grandmother Spider, dear child," the voice replied. Darren glanced at Trina, who seemed unusually*

*calm considering a disembodied voice was talking to them. "And I have guided you here to give you your life's calling."*

*"Um, okay," Darren responded, taking a deep breath to calm down. "Well, I'm here, now. What is this 'calling' you're talking about?"*

*"Crimmy, be a little respectful here, okay?" Trina hissed calmly. "This is the greatest of your people's totem spirits, after all."*

*"Sorry, I'm just not used to the 'spirits' talking back," Darren admitted. "Please, Grandmother Spider. Continue."*

*"Thirty summers ago," Grandmother Spider replied, "a great Meriquai shaman from summers past awoke from a deep slumber and found that white man had desecrated his homeland. I granted him the power to seek balance in what the white man had destroyed. With his power, the Manitou brought allies under his wing, each representing the totems of the winds: the Water Buffalo, the Eagle, the Coyote, and the Grizzly Bear."*

*"The Manitou?" Darren asked, amazed. "You mean the terrorist who's brought shame to the Meriquai?"*



Nest Leader Freezing Snake attempted to bribe various political and economic leaders of Meriquai Falls into working with VIPER, thus putting the whole city under his control. Those who refused were bloodily murdered in the most unexpected and grotesque manner. Amongst the dead were Mayor Lewis, Impulses Unlimited founder/CEO Sebastian Robinson, and Bolt Telecom chairman William Excelsior.

The massacre threw the city into an economic and political chaos unheard of in American history. It also painted a big bull's eye on the forehead of Freezing Snake. Impulses Unlimited recovered the quickest, thanks in no small part to its new leader. Darren Davenport seemed fresh out of college, but took the reins of his company with skill and zeal. Bolt Telecom, who hired former competitor COO Maxwell Gonzalez as their new CEO, followed this quickly.

The rise of a new hero came about at this time. Blood Shadow had mysteriously disappeared at the same time as the Massacre. However, a shaman hero emerged from the Blue Hills. He called himself the Crimson-Hawk. Along with Vixen, a spry teenage girl whose reflexes were far greater than any Olympic gymnast, Crimson-Hawk found and assaulted the main VIPER Nest within Meriquai Falls. Freezing Snake was killed during the assault and VIPER was shamed and routed from the city.

Crimson-Hawk quickly gathered like-minded heroes from throughout the city, forming the hero team called the Omega Legion. Dubbing his team the "last line of defense against the threats to the City of Meriquai Falls," Crimson-Hawk and the Omega Legion have since clashed with Galvakar and the Imperions, various attempts for revenge and resurgence by VIPER, the newly reinvigorated and active Equalizers, and various independent villains.

At the same time, Mayor Clarise VonWeider has taken the reins of the city in the aftermath of this terror, hoping to keep the city steered in the direction that Maurice Lewis III had fought so hard to take it. She is being bombarded from all sides for cries of economic reform, bribes and underhanded deals, reassignment of funds to various departments, and unfair comparisons to the late Maurice Lewis. She fights every day within City Hall on behalf of the city itself, but it is only a matter of time before the pressure causes her to snap.

And no one suspects that the sudden increase in metahumans within Meriquai Falls lies at the end of one of the lowest level shafts of the silver mines behind the Meriquai Falls. In an encounter between the Manitou's Equalizers and Galvakar's Imperions, the Manitou accidentally let slip a hint of the existence of the Heart of the Grandmother Spider.

And Galvakar has been pursuing knowledge of the Heart ever since.

## City Government

The Mayor of Meriquai Falls, the Honorable Clarise H. VonWeider, leads a city council consisting of six representatives of the major districts (Midtown, North Meriquai Falls, Smith's Gate, Blue Hills Park, Eagleview, and Revolution) and four citywide "at-large" representatives. The mayor and the council are elected for four-year terms.

The last election was in 2000, when Mayor VonWeider, formerly a successful and aggressive partner in the Drake/Durham/VonWeider legal firm, replaced the late Honorable Maurice Lewis III. Mayor Lewis had been a popular Catholic Cardinal whose firm grasp of morals and hard-hitting work ethics brought Meriquai Falls out of a fifteen-year recession during his three terms in office. As Mayor VonWeider's first official action, 52<sup>nd</sup> Street was renamed Maurice Lewis III Boulevard in the former Mayor's honor.

The council is the legislative branch of the city government. A city administrator is selected by the city council to run the actual day-to-day operations. The city administrator appoints the various department heads and oversees the elections of the various district police chiefs and fire chiefs. Cisco Rainer is the current city administrator. He is not well liked as a person, but he is known for getting fast and thorough results.

## City Layout

The Meriquai River runs from north-northwest to south-southeast and drains into the Missouri River as the latter runs from west to east. Most of the metropolitan area lies at the apex between the two rivers, though there are two districts that lie at the outer banks of the rivers (Eagleview and Revolution). Beautiful fountains and man-made waterfalls abound throughout the city; Meriquai Falls, in fact, is renowned for its incredible number and beauty of decorative waterfalls.

The greater metropolitan area of the City of Meriquai Falls encompasses six counties surrounding the point where the two rivers meet. Within these six counties, nearly 80 smaller cities, towns, suburbs, and neighborhoods can be named. However, almost all the people within the area can identify the five political districts of Meriquai Falls.

**Midtown:** Located at the apex of the Missouri and the Meriquai, Midtown is the most urban part of the city. The standard of living is poor and crime rate is high. However, most of the "old" banks of Meriquai Falls have offices



## DIGITAL HERO #2

here and many people commute on the public bus system's 150 routes.

**North Meriquai Falls:** Located north of Midtown, North Meriquai Falls is the most industrial part of the city. Most of the factories and plants are located here along both banks of the Meriquai River, straight up to the border of the Meriquai Reservation.

**Smith's Gate:** Located in a thin strip between Blue Hills Park, Midtown, and North Meriquai Falls, Smith's Gate is the oldest part of the city and perhaps the richest in culture. It currently hosts many restaurants, a few nightclubs, and even a renowned comedy house. Smith's Gate also has the largest concentration of individuals living "alternative lifestyles."

**Blue Hills Park:** Located northwest of Midtown, furthest from the riverbanks, Blue Hills Park has become the bastion of corporate lifestyle. Most of the major corporations based in Meriquai Falls have their main offices here.

Consequently, the residents of Blue Hills Park have the highest standard of living within the metropolitan area. The fact that the former silver mines of the Blue Hills are just outside of this district is not lost the Omega Legion; their headquarters is in Blue Hills Park.

**Eagleview:** Located along the east bank of the Meriquai River and the north bank of the Missouri, Eagleview is mostly a middle-class residential suburb. It does have a few commercial areas, bars, dance clubs, and gaming stores. It does enjoy the lowest crime rate in the metropolitan area.

**Revolution:** Located on the southern bank of the Missouri River, Revolution annexed South Meriquai Falls only to be later annexed by Meriquai Falls itself. Revolution is proud of its part in history during the Civil War; many museums and monuments commemorate this. Revolution is also known for its major industry... car dealerships.

*"Instead of seeking balance between the Native Peoples and the white man, as I had instructed him," the voice continued, "he sought genocidal revenge against the white man. And has done so for many years."*

*Darren glanced at Trina, who listened with great interest, watching Darren as if gauging his reaction. He turned his attention back to the voice. "Um, what does this have to do with me?"*

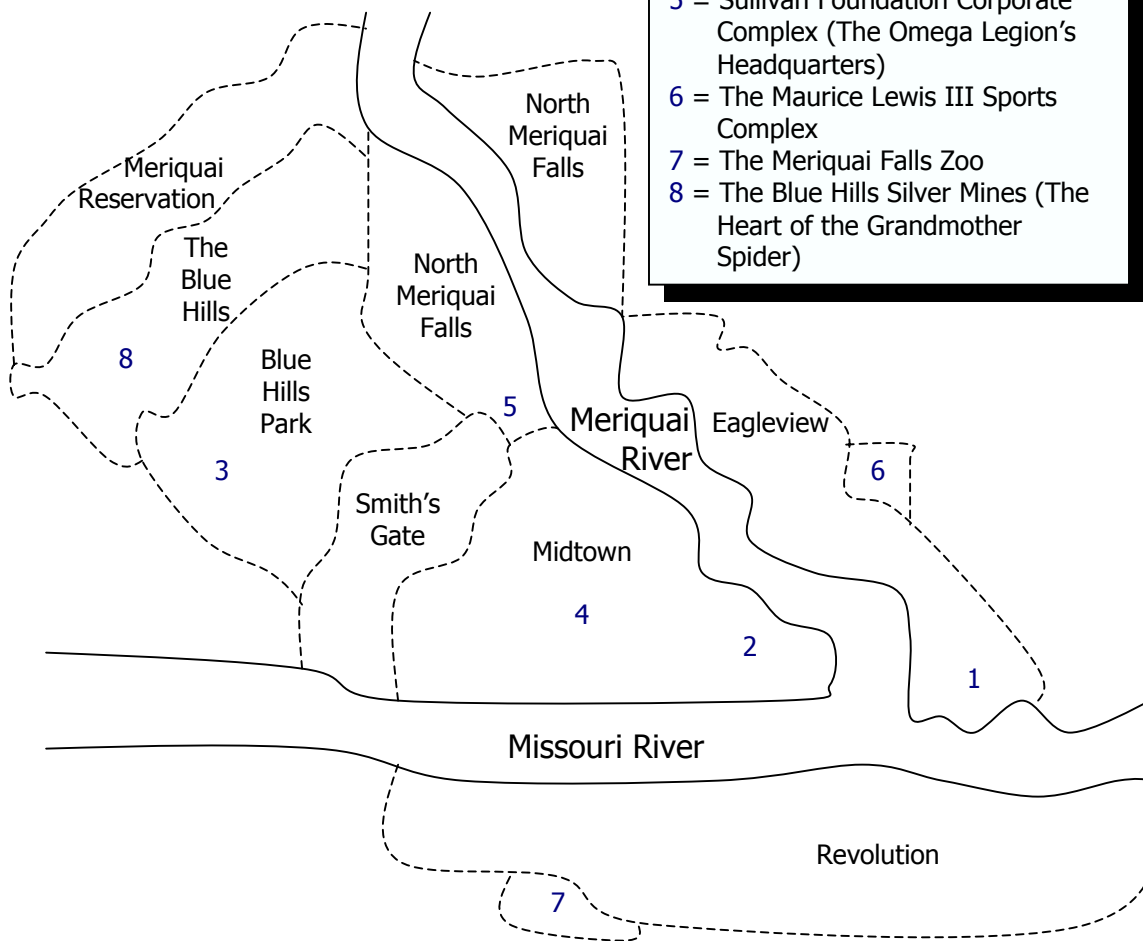
*"Your moon is that of the Budding Trees Moon, Darren Davenport," the voice answered. "Your heart embraces truth, rebirth, adaptability, and openness. For this, your totem is the Red Hawk. Henceforth, you are the Crimson-Hawk."*

*With that, a bright red light glimmered from above. As Darren and Trina watched, the light sank from the ceiling and embraced Darren's outstretched hands. A small medallion, bearing the totem symbol of the Red Hawk, materialized.*

*"But... why me? Why now?" Darren asked, tensely holding the medallion against his chest.*

*"Because the Manitou's carelessness may have cost the world greatly,"*

### The City of Meriquai Falls



Grandmother Spider replied. "Because of the Manitou's actions, others have become aware of my Heart."

"Your... heart...?" Darren asked.

"The Heart of the Grandmother Spider," Trina replied, pointing to the crystal on the altar. "It's a gemstone of incredible power left over from the Age of Legends. If Galvakar gets a hold of it, he knows how to make himself into a god. Then the whole world's screwed."

"A bit out of place, now, are we not, Vixen?"

Grandmother Spider noted in a pleasant, motherly tone.

"Um, yeah," Trina said, shyly scratching the back of her head. "I... uh, I'm still trying to figure it out, myself."

"So, it's up to me to protect this Heart of the Grandmother Spider?" Darren asked. "Why me? I'm only half-Meriquai."

"All the better," Grandmother Spider replied. "Because of your blood, you know better the need for balance between the Native Peoples and the white men than few others. You can complete the mission that I had tasked the Manitou to. Go now, and seek allies in your calling."

## Cultural Institutions

### Meriquai Falls University (MFU):

Located in Eagleview, MFU is one of the largest and most prestigious colleges of the region. The MFU Bulldogs sports teams consistently rank high throughout the nation. The schools of Business, Medicine, Science, and Arts are all critically acclaimed. And the college offers a relaxed, fun atmosphere for its learning environment. Entrance requirements are higher than many other public colleges, but are worth it with a nearly 92% job placement after graduation.

**The International Market:** This cultural smorgasbord is located in Midtown. Although dominated by Asian grocers, the International Market is the place to go for imported goods of all kinds. Visitors are native foreign-language speakers looking for ingredients for ethnic dishes, tourists taking in the multinational flavor of Meriquai Falls, or fanboy kids looking for the latest imported anime or video game. Anything from ethnic goods, import crafts and rugs, foreign language reading material and media, and farmer-market fruits and vegetables can be found here.

**Bolt Telecom Superplex:** Located in Blue Hills Park, this is one of the largest privately owned corporate office plazas in the United States, encompassing over 160 acres and 32 office buildings. It's been under construction for over eight years now and will continue to be under construction for another six. Once done, Bolt Telecom hopes to have it chartered as a city.

**The Meriquai Falls Zoo:** Located south of Revolution, this incredible 200-acre extravaganza is a must-see for any visitor to Meriquai Falls. Various trains, tours, and animal rides aid the visitor in seeing the breadth of the Zoo. Special theme exhibits come about once a month and a giant-screen, surround-sound theatre immerses visitors in incredible motion picture productions.

**Great Meriquai Station/Tech World Plaza:** Located in Midtown, Lyncon Technologies transformed this abandoned train station into a bastion of technological science and entertainment. Tech World is a museum and theme park all in one, catering to teaching kids about technology in a fun and interactive atmosphere.

**Sullivan Foundation Corporate Complex:** This complex, located in Blue Hills Park close to Midtown, sports the tallest building in the city and hosts nearly 375 corporate companies throughout its eight spacious buildings. Both the Jackson Sullivan Research Foundation and Impulses Unlimited have their own buildings within this complex.

**Sports Teams:** The Maurice Lewis III Sports Complex, located east of Eagleview, hosts many professional sports teams. They include the Meriquai Falls Cougars (football), the Meriquai Falls Monarchs (baseball), the Meriquai Falls Freeze (ice hockey), the Meriquai Falls Mystics (outdoor soccer), the Meriquai Falls Blast (indoor soccer), the Meriquai Falls Fireflies (women's basketball), and the Meriquai Falls Archons (tennis).

## Important Heroes/Villains

Many diverse and interesting people call Meriquai Falls their home. Listed below are some of the better-known metahumans of the area; stats may be presented at a later date. These are by far not the only ones; the GM is encouraged to introduce any character he feels is appropriate for the setting.

### THE OMEGA LEGION

The Omega Legion is one of the premiere hero teams of the Midwest, despite their recent inception. Brought together by Crimson-Hawk, they have charged themselves with protecting the Heart of the Grandmother Spider and, consequently, Meriquai Falls as a whole. With the exception of Vixen, the teammates have known each other since college. This helps create a bond unsurpassed by many other hero teams.

**Amethyst:** Lyssa Kellerman-Sullivan, an auburn-haired beauty with swarthy skin, is the wife of millionaire playboy Jackson Sullivan. She is the psychological backbone of the Omega Legion, keeping her teammates' morale high even in the most desperate situation. As Amethyst, she is a mentalist hero, channeling her powers through a beautiful amethyst gem.

**Crimson-Hawk (leader):** Darren Davenport, born of a white father and a Meriquai mother, is the CEO and President of Impulses Unlimited. He is a gentle, unassuming soul, having faced great persecution as a "half-breed" with stoic grace. He is unsure of himself as a leader and as a hero, but both Meriquai Falls and the Omega Legion members love him dearly. As Crimson-Hawk, he is a mystic hero, casting spells granted him by the Meriquai nature spirits.

**Jade Phoenix:** Moon Ok-hwa, a Korean woman with sparkling green eyes and a ready, quiet smile, is really the last of an ancient *hwarang* (Korean knight) clan who were massacred nearly twenty years ago. Darren's parents raised her, and she and Darren have a special fondness for each other. As Jade Phoenix, she is a martial artist hero. Although she is a healer by trade and faith, she is also strong in the *hwarang-do* martial art and the *shin gong* mystical powers that accompany it.

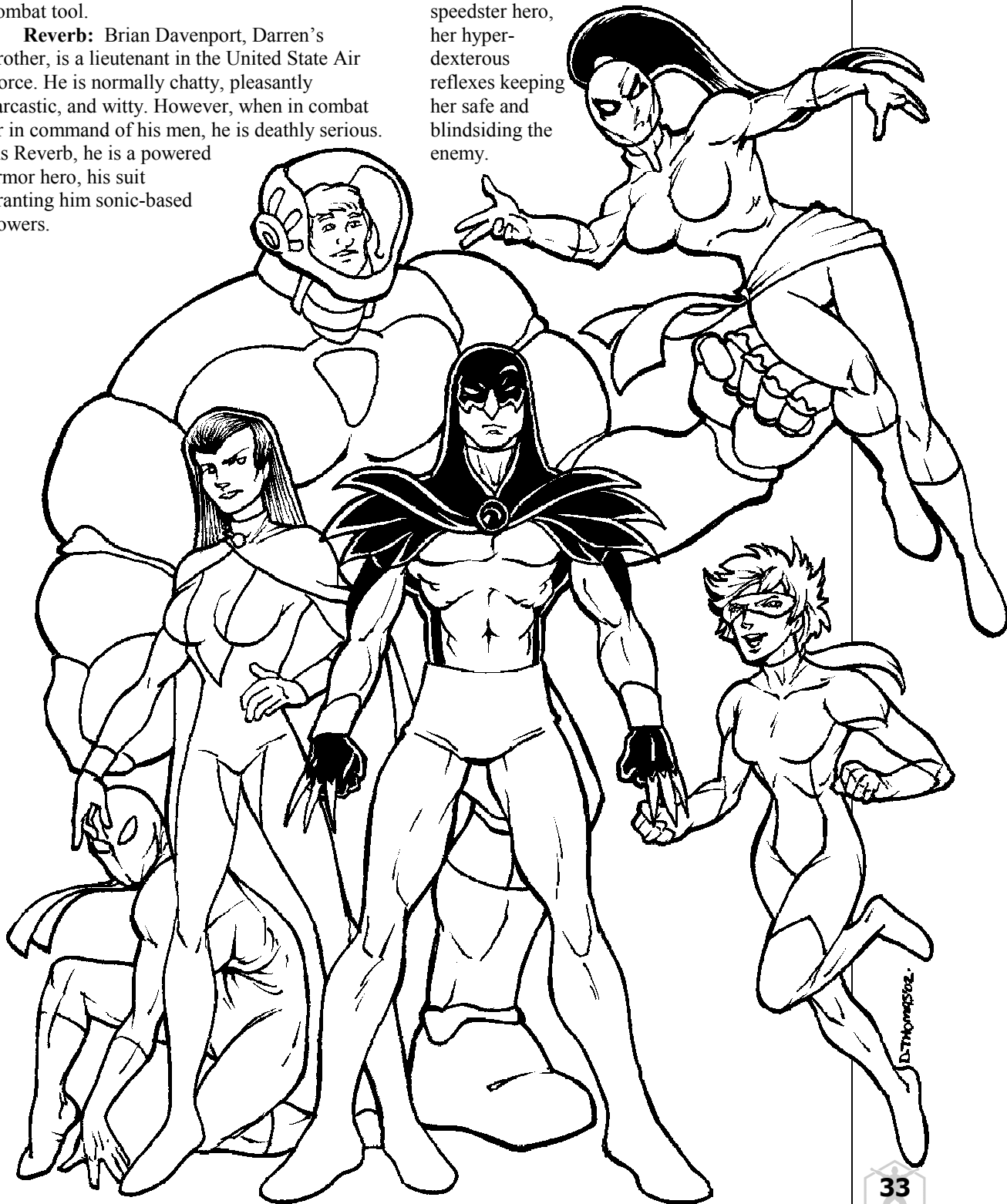
## DIGITAL HERO #2

**Masquerade:** Diana Forrest, a wild and beautiful African-American girl, is a paralegal specialist within the prestigious Drake/Durham/VonWeider law firm. As a young child, the ancient totem spirit Butterfly, who symbolizes transformation, growth, change, and joy, possessed her. As Masquerade, she is a metamorph hero, her ability to transform into any animal form being a useful recon and combat tool.

**Reverb:** Brian Davenport, Darren's brother, is a lieutenant in the United State Air Force. He is normally chatty, pleasantly sarcastic, and witty. However, when in combat or in command of his men, he is deathly serious. As Reverb, he is a powered armor hero, his suit granting him sonic-based powers.

**Vixen:** Trina Sullivan, a perky 14-year-old girl with rich red hair and a beautiful, freckled face, is a wild card within the Omega Legion. She claims to be from the future and often proves it with knowledge of team members even said members don't have yet. She loves dancing, having fun, and simply being a 14-year-old girl. But she harbors dreadful secrets that have forced her to grow up too fast. As Vixen, she is a speedster hero, her hyper-dexterous reflexes keeping her safe and blindsiding the enemy.

*With their help, you can protect Meriquai Falls and my Heart... and thereby protect the world."*



**THE IMPERIONS**

Gregorio Lynconius discovered early on that artifacts from the Classical Age and even the Age of Legend could still exist. When he heard rumors of an ancient magical artifact, he moved to Meriquai Falls and established a publicly beloved front identity. Hidden within Lynconius is a megalomaniac who wants nothing more than to obtain the Heart and turn himself into a god. When the Manitou accidentally let slip that the Heart really did exist, he stepped up his ambitions, forming the Imperions villain team to obtain the resources he needed to channel the energies of the Heart into himself.

**Arachne:** This dark-eyed, dark-haired beauty claims to be the actual Arachne from Greek mythology, who dared compare her weaving skills to that of the goddess Athena

herself and was punished by being changed into the first spider. Regardless of the truth of this, her knowledge of the Classical Age does seem uncanny. Her werespider-like powers make her a terrifying force to reckon with.

**Cougar:** Walter Cameron, a paraplegic man with rugged, handsome features, was thought lost and dead after the accident that blew Darren Davenport into the silver mines. He had been a firm friend of Darren's until that point. Feeling abandoned, he gladly joined the Imperions when they found him. His nanotechnologically-enhanced body (augmented by the presence of the totem spirit Cougar) grants him enhanced senses, retractable claws, great strength, and enhanced reflexes.



**Cyber-Dreamer:** Alyana Lynconius, the daughter of Gregorio Lynconius, was a budding “dream mage,” practicing an ancient Aboriginal art hailing from the Age of Legends. However, a horrible accident left her quadriplegic and unwilling to live. Gregorio did what he could, building cybernetic limbs whose nanotechnology granted enhanced access to dream magic and hidden weaponry. Cyber-Dreamer’s powers stem from manipulating a person’s dreams or perceptions of reality.

**Galvakar (leader):** Gregorio Lynconius, a tall, handsome, regal Grecian man, is at once a devoted father, leader, mad scientist, and megalomaniac. His genius in nanotechnology is unsurpassed. With nanotechnology, Lynconius has manipulated his body to be able stretch and change shapes at will. His skill in his powers, his tactical genius, and his ruthlessness makes him a terrifying foe.

**Incandentus:** Diego St. Nicole was a prominent engineer with the Meriquai Falls Power and Light Consortium. His life changed forever when the totem spirit, Firefly, chose him to be its host. When Firefly possessed the unsuspecting man, Diego could not handle the spiritual scope of his powers and he went mad. Firefly, unable to stop the sudden downward spiral of Diego’s sanity, went mad itself. Now, Incandentus is a horrid physical combination of human, firefly, and spiritual alien-ness. His powers of illumination, energy projection, and strength make him one of the toughest Imperions to beat.

**Nexus:** Tommy Flannigan was nothing more than a ghetto street ganger looking for his next meal and his next hit when a drive-by shooting should have killed him. Instead, in a panic, he jumped backwards and found himself on the opposite side of the street. Amazed, he tested his mutant powers and found that he could rip holes in space and time, stepping through the nexus to the other side in an instant. He found the Imperions, badgered Galvakar for membership, and has been having fun ever since.

## THE EQUALIZERS

The Manitou's Equalizers include Water Buffalo, Coyote, Eagle, and Grizzly Bear. Each is a pure-blooded Meriquai man possessed of the totem spirit of the same name. Water Buffalo is Eric Twofeathers, a massive man who delights in letting his enemies try to get through his defenses before pounding them completely into the dirt. Coyote is Joseph Gray-Fur, a sick, sadistic man taking pleasure in others' embarrassment and pain, which his mental powers are quite suited at delivering. Eagle is Jason Greentrees, a haughty man full of pride and superiority due to his ability to fly and command birds. And Grizzly Bear is Robert Valleyriver, a slow, patient man who never forgets an insult and avenges himself with his strong, raking claws.

The Manitou and his Equalizers have been operating as terrorists within the Meriquai Falls area since 1974. They successfully cleared out all of the silver mines in the Blue Hills and shut down their operations. Grandmother Spider had intended for the Manitou’s job to be done at that point. But the Manitou has taken it upon himself to continue the war against the white men when really the Grandmother Spider wants peace with them.

When the Manitou accidentally revealed the existence of the Heart to Galvakar, Grandmother Spider began sending other totem spirits out to take hosts, either willing or otherwise. Crimson-Hawk, Masquerade, Incandentus, Jetfire, and even Cougar all host totem spirits. The Grandmother Spider’s main concern is guarding her Heart, so its power does not land in the wrong hands. If Meriquai Falls is protected from villainy in the process, then all the better.

**INDEPENDENT VILLAINS**

**Count Dredmaus:** Count Dredmaus is an enigmatic figure, imposing in his demeanor while dressed in his anachronistic clothes and his well-trimmed beard. He has incredible control over the weather. What few realize is that Count Dredmaus is a man out of place in time; he is originally a mighty sorcerer from the Turakian Age. None knows how he came here and what his motives are now that he is here.



**Jetfire:** B.J. Sullivan, the brother of millionaire Jackson Sullivan, had forever been shadow of his more talented younger brother. Where Jackson's incredible success seemed to literally land in his lap, B.J. couldn't seem to hold a burger-flipping job. B.J.'s fury finally came to a head when the totem Thunderbird chose him as a host. B.J. fought an incredible battle with the totem and

finally won, burying the totem's strong sense of ethics while keeping its powers. B.J. now uses his newfound powers to obtain luxury and to harass his brother incessantly.

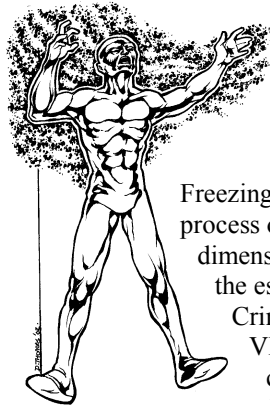
**Myste:** This creature is a bygone of the Age of Legends, when it attempted to consume Grandmother Spider and destroy the Kingdom of Meriquai. No modern person knows what the Myste looks like or what it is capable of doing, except perhaps Masquerade. Butterfly hasn't seen fit to reveal this knowledge to her host yet, though.



**Night Sparrow:** Doctor Heather Jaspers is a genetics scientist at the Sullivan Research Foundation. Her obsession with genetic



perfection is dangerous, however. She has hired several metahumans (mostly villains) in the past to hunt down various other metahumans, especially the enigmatic Vengeance, for their genetic data. Her extensive underground contact network makes her one of the most dangerous individuals in Meriquai Falls.



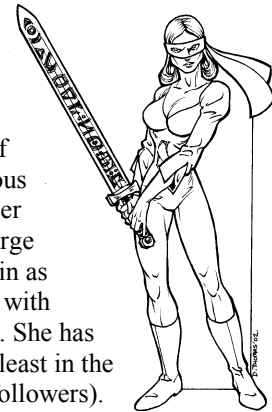
**Refractor:**

Refractor was originally Damien Lance, a VIPER scientist answering to

Freezing Snake. He was in the process of experimenting with dimensional refraction (warping the essence of reality) when Crimson-Hawk attacked the VIPER Nest. Through collateral damage, Lance's experiment

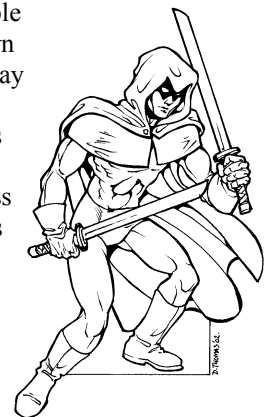
backfired. Now, Refractor has complete control over the essence of reality within ten feet of himself... he just doesn't have any control over his sanity.

**Sworddance:** A dark and beautiful Wicca priestess, Kristy Angelo began ruthlessly hunting her husband's murderers, believed to be a cult of dark magic-users jealous of Kristy's abilities. Her signature weapon, a large sword nearly half again as tall as she, is covered with pagan runes of power. She has forsaken her faith (at least in the eyes of other Wicca followers).



Her vendetta has several times put her at odds with Crimson-Hawk, whom she has grown quite fond of.

**Vengeance:** This mysterious individual has haunted the dark allies of Meriquai Falls for a couple of years now. He is known only to wear a flowing gray cloak and to wield two wicked katanas. He seems to be able to come back again and again, regardless of how much damage he's sustained. He seems bent on murdering criminals who have escaped justice.



# Elizabethan Hero Characters

by Lisa Hartjes

As mentioned before, the Elizabethan era was one of the greatest times in English history, and there is something going on that appeals to almost everyone. If your players love to explore, there's the New World just waiting for them, or they could attempt to circumnavigate the globe, just as Sir Francis Drake did in 1580. Should your players enjoy politics and intrigue, Elizabeth's court would be just the place. But what if they want to have daring adventures on the high seas? No problem! Queen Elizabeth signed many letters of marque for privateers to plunder the ships of England's enemies, especially the Spanish and the Dutch.

The information presented below is for a game that is purely historical. It would be a rather easy matter to include psionics or magic into the game. These things could, of course, alter the history of your campaign world. For example, what if the Spanish Armada had a wizard who could have manipulated the weather, allowing the Armada to return home to Spain without losing any ships?

## Adventuring in Elizabethan Hero

The most obvious location to run adventures in an Elizabethan Hero game would be in England. For the peers and the gentry, London would be the place to be. It was the center of Elizabeth's court when she wasn't traveling.

For a map of Elizabethan London, please visit the author's Elizabethan Hero web site, at <http://www.egms.org/elizhero>

## POLITICAL INTRIGUE AND ESPIONAGE

Elizabeth's court was rife with intrigue. Peers jockeying for position, trying to earn the Queen's favor. Gossip was one of the court's favorite pastimes, and a word whispered in the right ear could make or break a promising career.

Campaigns of this type will be centered around the Court and wherever it is currently located, especially London.

## EXPLORATION

The Elizabethan era, especially after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, was a time of expansion and exploration. The English East India Company was granted a monopoly to trade in Africa, Asia, and America by the government in 1600. This company, along with others such as the Muscovy Company, was chartered to find new and growing markets for English goods. Much of the motivation behind world exploration, by such explorers as Sir Francis Drake, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, and Sir Walter Raleigh, was based on a desire to expand overseas markets.

## SHIPBOARD ADVENTURES

If sailing the seven seas are more to your character's liking, the era was one that saw the rise of England as a naval power. There are many different opportunities for shipboard adventures as part of the Royal Navy, as merchants competing to get their goods from Africa to England before anyone else to ensure the best price, as explorers following Drake's example, or as Barbary pirates.

## Creating Your Character

Exactly who your character is will largely depend upon the type of game you will be playing in. In a game set at court, your character is likely to be a nobleman, as only he or she would be able to come and go as they please, and hobnob with the Queen. If playing a seafaring adventure, of exploration of the world, it is possible to be from any social class.

An Elizabethan Hero game is set at the Heroic level: 75 base points, with a maximum of 75 points in disadvantages, with a maximum of 25 points coming from any one disadvantage category. As in a Heroic level game, normal equipment costs no character points.

## NAMES

Children in Elizabethan England weren't named until a few days after birth when they were baptized. It was the godparents' duty to present the child to the church and the parish. All children usually had three godparents: two female and one male, if the child was a girl; two male and one female if the child was a boy. It was common practice for parents to try and get godparents who were higher in social status than themselves, such as local nobles or prominent people in town. Alternately, many asked other relatives, such as grandparents, aunts, or uncles to serve as godparents.

A very important reason why the choice of godparents was important is that a child would most likely be named after one of them. In fact, most children were given the name of a godparent. The person the child was named after and the child were then referred to as namesakes.

Your first name, also called your "Christian" name, was yours for your entire life. People rarely changed their names, though they might be more generally known by a nickname (i.e. Jack for James). Middle names, which are really nothing more than a second given name, were extremely rare in Elizabethan England. While the practice was gaining popularity on the continent, middle names didn't become commonly used until much later. During the Elizabethan era,

there are literally only a dozen recorded cases of middle names, and all were amongst the nobility or people born abroad.

On the other hand, last names were much more subject to change. There were also several different ways someone would get a last name. The most common kind was the surname or family name, like we use now. For example, if John's father's last name was Smith, John's last name would be Smith. Sometimes a surname might change; for example, a family acquires a new title and lands, and the family changes their surname to reflect it.

A person might be more commonly known by a byname rather than an inherited surname. For example, a butcher by the name of Stephen Archer might be called Stephen Butcher or Master Butcher rather than Master Archer. Sometimes the byname was applied to the children as well, and became their new surname. Likewise, if there were many Stephens in a village, each one might become known by some other identifier. A Stephen who was short might be called Stephen Little, and so on.

### **TITLES AND TERMS OF ADDRESS**

Children are taught to address their parents as Sir or Madam, or my lord or my lady. If the child is noble, they use my lord father or my lady mother.

Peers tended to sign their names and refer to themselves and each other by their territorial titles, or the name of the land over which he had control. For example, William Hackney, Baron Deversham would sign William Deversham. Alternately, he could be called Lord Deversham, but never Lord Hackney. His wife, Anne, would be called Lady Deversham, but not Lady Hackney. Should Lord Deversham ever achieve a political office, he could also be referred to as My Lord Treasurer. The title Lord is only used with the peerage. Not every knight is a lord, and not all lords are knights.

All the sons of a marquis or a duke are styled Lord. Only the eldest son of an earl is called a Lord because he takes his father's secondary title. All the daughter's of an earl are styled lady, and they retain this courtesy title even if they marry a commoner.

The term Your Grace was only used for those of royal blood: the Queen, dukes, and visiting princesses. It did not apply to Earls or Countesses during the Elizabethan era. Likewise, Honorable or the Right Honorable for younger children of peers had not yet come into use.

The title Sir is only used to address a knight, and then is only used with his given name. Master is used when using a knight's last name. So, Sir Henry Spakes would be called Sir Henry, Master Spakes, but never Sir Spakes. Sir Henry's wife, Mary, would be called Mary Lady Spakes,

Lady Spakes, but not Lady Catherine. The term Dame was still occasionally used in conjunction with the wife of a knight (or any gentlewoman), but it may be an old fashioned usage, more Country than Court.

The male heirs of knights, and the younger sons of peers could be referred to as Esquire. Officials such as judges, sheriffs, and offices of the royal household could also style themselves Esquires. While Esquire is not a title, it could be used after a gentleman's name. For example, Sir Henry Spakes' heir, John, would sign his letters John Spakes, Esquire.

Unmarried children were addressed in a manner similar to that of their parents. Lady Jane Palfey, a Maid of Honor (a household office which confers precedence – that is, a specific ranking in the hierarchy of the peers and gentry) and the daughter of an Earl, can be called Lady Jane, Mistress Palfey, but never Lady Palfey or “Lady Jane Mistress Palfey.” Mary, daughter of Baron Deversham, would be called Mistress Mary, or Mistress Hackney, but not Lady Mary or Lady Hackney. George, the second son of Baron Deversham, would be called Lord George, Master Hackney (though the familiarity may be insulting), but never Lord Hackney.

Finally, if you are not a noble, or you are unsure of the rank of the person of whom you are speaking, it is safest to address them as Your Worship, Your Honor, or Your Lordship/Ladyship.

### **SKILLS**

Not all skills listed in the *HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* rules are suitable for use in an Elizabethan Hero game. Below is a list of skills for the game, and an explanation of how some of them work in this setting:

#### **SKILLS AVAILABLE**

Acrobatics, Acting, Animal Handler, Breakfall, Bribery, Bureaucratics, Climbing, Combat Driving, Combat Skill Levels, Concealment, Contortionist, Conversation, Cryptography, Deduction, Disguise, Familiarity, Forgery, Gambling, High Society, Interrogation, Inventor, Knowledge, Languages, Lip-reading, Lockpicking, Martial Arts, Mimicry, Navigation, Oratory, Paramedic, Persuasion, Professional Skills, Range Skill Levels, Riding, Science, Seduction, Shadowing, Skill Levels, Sleight of Hand, Stealth, Streetwise, Survival, Tactics, Tracking, Trading, Transport Familiarity, Ventriloquism, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith



## DIGITAL HERO #2

Combat Driving applies to animal-drawn vehicles. There are no motorized vehicles in the Elizabethan era.

Unarmed Martial Arts in an Elizabethan Hero game should be limited to Dirty Infighting, Brawling, and the like. There is little evidence of there being any kind of regimented unarmed combat, or combat styles from the Far East being practiced by people in England during the Renaissance. Fencing and archery are the two basic forms of weapon-based combat taught during the Elizabethan era. Fencing is typically only learned by men, while archery was learned by both sexes – target shooting and hunting by bow are known pastimes.

Weapon Familiarities: Unarmed Combat & Clubs, Bows, Crossbows, Swords, Common Melee Weapons, Early Firearms

The following skills are not appropriate for a standard Elizabethan Hero game: Bugging, Combat Piloting, Computer Programming, Criminology, Demolitions, Electronics, Forensic Medicine, Security Systems, and Systems Operations.

### EVERYMAN SKILLS

AK: Home  
Climbing  
Concealment  
Conversation  
Deduction  
Language: 4 points English  
PS: Profession  
Shadowing  
Stealth  
TF: Horse-drawn Vehicles

## Character Types

Every game has a set of character archetypes. Below is a listing of several character types, along with package deals for creating the characters.

### PEERS AND GENTRY

The peers and gentry of Elizabethan England make up the upper crust of society. After the queen, they are the most important people in the lives of the masses. They are the landowners and employers. They are the founders of expeditions to explore and establish colonies in America, and backers of business concerns in Africa and Asia.

### COST PEER PACKAGE DEAL

- 3 Gambling
- 3 High Society
- 2 Language: Greek (Literate)
- 2 Language: Latin (Literate)
- 5 Perk: Peer
- 3 Riding
- 3 WF: (Unarmed Combat & Clubs, Swords, Bows, Early Firearms)
- 3 Choose one skill from this list: AK: London, PS: Dancing, PS: Play Musical Instrument
- 9 Choose three Skills from this list: Bureaucratics, Conversation, Language: French (Literate), Oratory, Persuasion
- 5 Reputation: Peer, 8-

### COST GENTRY PACKAGE DEAL

- 3 Gambling
- 3 High Society
- 2 Language: Greek (Literate)
- 2 Language: Latin (Literate)
- 3 Perk: Gentry
- 3 Riding
- 3 Choose one Skill from this list: AK: London, PS: Dancing, PS: Play Musical Instrument
- 9 Choose three Skills from this list: Bureaucratics, Conversation, Language: French (Literate), Oratory, Persuasion
- 5 Reputation: Gentry, 8-

You will notice in the above package deals no Wealth perk included. Not all of the peers or gentry have a lot of money available. Much of a nobleman's wealth is tied up in the running of his estate or governmental office. In fact, some nobles end up in financial ruin because the offices and titles given to them cost far more than they can afford to pay.

During the Elizabethan era, few women learned to use firearms or swords, so when creating a female character using the package deals, feel free to remove most of the weapon proficiencies from the package deals.

**William Hackney, Baron  
Deversham**

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
14	STR	4	12-	Lift 174kg; 2½d6 HTH [1]
12	DEX	6	11-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
13	CON	6	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 12-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
14	PRE	4	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
14	COM	2	12-	
3 PD				0 Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
3 ED				0 Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
2 SPD				-2 Phases: 6, 12
6 REC				0
26 END				0
24 STUN				0

**Total Characteristic Cost: 35**

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

**Cost Perks**

- 2 Member of the Lower Nobility
- 5 Money (Well Off)
- 9 *Ancestral Estate:* Deversham House (44 pts)
- 35 *Servants:* 64 Followers (4 pts)

**Skills**

- 3 AK: London 12-
- 5 Bribery 13-
- 3 Conversation 12-
- 3 Gambling 11-
- 3 High Society 12-
- 4 Language: French (Completely Fluent), Literate
- 2 Language: Greek (Basic Conversation), Literate
- 2 Language: Latin (Basic Conversation), Literate
- 3 Oratory 12-
- 3 PS: Courtier 12-
- 3 Riding 11-

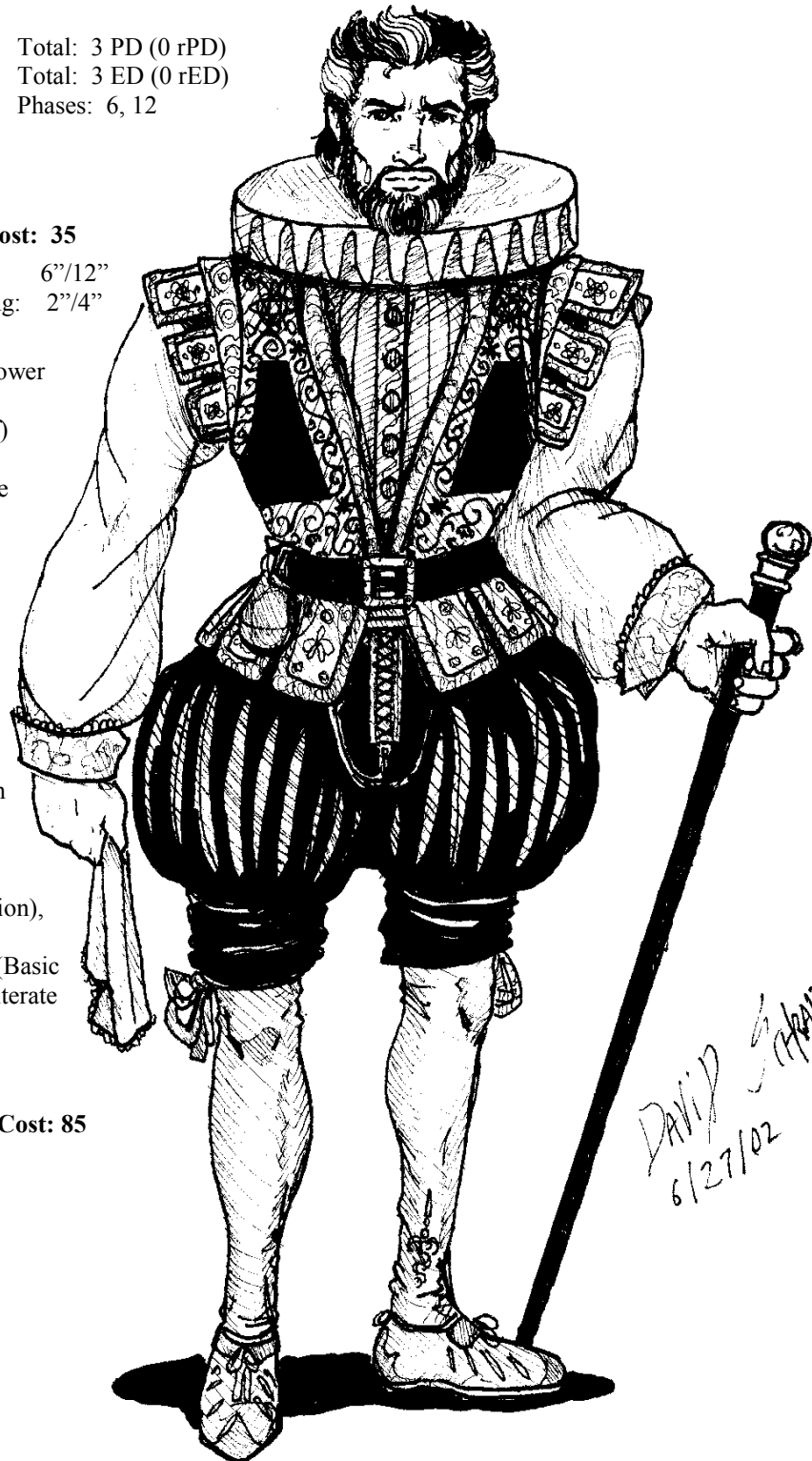
**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 85**

**Total Cost: 120**

**75+ Disadvantages**

- 5 Age (40+)
- 10 DNPC: Family 8- (Anne (Wife), Henry (Son), William (Son), Mary (Daughter): All Normal)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Bad Leg (Frequently, Greatly)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Ambitious (Very Common, Moderate)

**Total Disadvantages: 120**



## DIGITAL HERO #2

**Background/History:** The seventh Baron Deversham, William Hackney grew up as a typical child of a peer. He was fostered in the household of a friend of his family, and it is there he met Lady Anne Campbell. She was being fostered in the same household and a certain amount of affection grew between them. However, marriages had been arranged for each of them to other people, and they parted ways, seeing each other in social situations.

Hackney's wife, Margaret, died giving to their second child, leaving him with an infant to care for. By this time, Anne herself was a childless widow, her husband having died after being thrown from a horse. The two were married after the appropriate time of mourning was passed, and they have created a happy, loving household for Henry (the surviving child from Henry's first marriage), William, and Mary.

Two years ago, Hackney fell while hunting and broke his leg. It didn't heal well. He suffers aches and pains in the leg, especially when it's cold and damp or the weather changes, and he walks with a limp.

**Personality/Motivation:** Hackney grew up in and around the royal court, watching his father seemingly drift aimlessly from one situation to the next, never leaving his mark or influencing anyone. Hackney didn't want that for himself, and has dedicated himself to making a name for himself and his family. He is ambitious, and is willing to take risks to get ahead. He is currently trying to curry favor with Sir Michael Andrews, Marquis of Walkerton, who is rumored to have the ear of one of the Queen's advisors.

**Quote:** "So you see, Sir Henry, that what happened in London last week was not so much a disaster for your friend as an unexpected opportunity for yourself."

**Powers/Tactics:** Baron Deversham prefers to avoid direct conflict, and will instead try to talk his way out of situations, going back at a later time to exact his due or gain redress.

**Campaign Use:** William Hackney, Baron Deversham, would be an ideal candidate as a sponsor or investor for a group of characters who are looking to start their own commercial venture, providing they can convince him doing so would benefit him financially (or perhaps more importantly, politically). He is not filthy rich, but could get together a modest investment of, perhaps, 500 lbs. If the characters lied to Hackney about the venture, or if he feels he has been cheated, he will do his best to make the characters' lives miserable, from whispering bad things into the ears of important people to ruin their reputations, to seeking financial redress in the courts.

Alternately, he could serve as a contact for characters who are attending court for the first time. If Hackney believes they might be useful to him in the future, he might bring them under his wing and offer them guidance and friendship. If he views them as a threat to his ambitions, he will seek to discredit the characters and spoil any plans they might have.

**Appearance:** Hackney is an attractive man in his early forties, with neatly trimmed, graying brown hair and beard, and brown eyes. It is obvious by looking at him he used to be a very active and fit man, but the injury to his leg has forced him to curtail his activities, and it is starting to show. While Hackney is thrifty, he ensures he and his family are dressed in the latest fashion, as appearances are important when one is trying to climb the political ladder.

### PIRATES & PRIVATEERS

The image of pirates and privateers bring to mind swashbuckling adventures and unsurpassed cruelty. For the latter, nothing could be further from the truth when discussing English pirates and privateers. On the whole, they were polite and merciful, and the recorded incidences of cruelty and viciousness were few and far between.

The main difference between a pirate and a privateer was whether or not the pirate had the support of the crown. If the pirate was in the monarch's favor, then life was good. The pirate had open markets in England for the goods they stole from ships, and had a measure of protection from prosecution by the English navy.

The status of pirate or privateer sometimes seemed to shift as quickly as the wind. One day the sailors could be plundering Dutch ships for spices and other luxuries from Asia and Africa, the next, the Queen could have signed a treaty creating a truce and attacks on the Dutch ships make the privateers pirates once again.

Below is information about two real world pirates and privateers, followed by an example of one created using the Elizabethan Hero guidelines.

**Sir Francis Drake** was one of the greatest English sea-captains of all time. Both a navigator and a privateer, he was revered as a hero in the fight against the Armada and despised as an upstart by the old nobility. Drake is the archetype of the self-made Elizabethan privateer, predatory in the hunt for treasure, especially if it could be taken from the Spanish, but daring and visionary in exploration.

Drake and his men are best remembered as the first Englishmen to circumnavigate the globe, and they claimed a portion of California for Elizabeth along the way. His attack on Cadiz and his devastating raids on the Spanish Main earned

him nickname *El Draque*, “The Dragon,” and the fear and the grudging respect of the Spaniards.

Drake’s exploits were an inspiration for Captain Geoffrey Thorpe (Errol Flynn) in Michael Curtiz’s film *The Sea-Hawk*.

The story of **Gráinne Ni Mháille**, also known as Granuaile the “Pirate Queen of Connacht,” reads like a story out of an outrageous adventure, and there is a lot of history behind the myth. Gráinne (anglicized as Grace O’Malley) was an Irish noblewoman born in 1503, who led a band of 200 pirates operating off the coast of Galway in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

She was condemned for piracy but pardoned by the Queen herself, imprisoned twice, widowed twice, and fought both Irish and English for her rights and the rights of her family. In 1593, Gráinne sought a private audience with Queen Elizabeth, by simply showing up and demanding to see the Queen. No one knows what was said during that meeting, but whatever it was, it impressed Queen Elizabeth enough to grant the release of Gráinne’s husband and son from prison, and maintenance for herself for the rest of her life.

Against all odds, Gráinne died in her own bed of old age, and the location of her grave remains a mystery.

Gráinne’s exploits were practically legend in England, and made a strong impression on the Englishmen sent to complete the conquest of Connacht. In 1576, the Lord Deputy Sir Henry Sidney in Galway described her as a ‘most famous feminine sea captain’ and ‘a notorious woman in all the coasts of Ireland’.

For more information, visit the Pirates and Privateers web site at

<http://legends.dm.net/pirates/grainne.html>.

COST	PIRATE/PRIVATEER PACKAGE DEAL
3	Climbing 11-
2	KS: Rope Handling 11-
2	KS: Ships 11-
2	PS: Pirate/Privateer 11-
9	Choose three Skills from this list: Breakfall, Gambling (Cards), Gambling (Dice), PS: Predicting Weather, Navigation, Paramedic, Trading

## Katherine Winscott

**Background/History:** Katherine grew up in and around ships. Her father was a fisherman and her mother sold the catch in the London markets. When she was ten, her father’s ship sank in a horrible storm, and of the crew of five, only her older brother Robert survived. The loss of the ship meant the loss of the family’s livelihood.

The sea was all Robert knew, so he joined the crew of a merchant ship. The day he shipped out was the last day Katherine ever saw him alive. On his first voyage, the ship was attacked and sunk by the Spanish, who claimed it was a pirate vessel. Since that day, Katherine has harbored an intense hatred for the Spanish.

Katherine married Richard Winscott, the son of a friend of her father’s, when she was seventeen. Shortly after they were married, Richard and a large number of his friends conspired to steal a ship and become pirates off the coast of Cornwall. Katherine joined the crew because of her knowledge of navigation.

Over the next three years they weren’t very successful, only managing to capture enough goods to keep up the maintenance of the ship and to feed the crew and their families. Katherine suggested they head for different waters, namely the Barbary Coast, because of the rich pickings of the trade on the Mediterranean. The crew voted, and they headed for the north coast of Africa.

On their way there, they ran into a Spanish ship and attempted to take her. Lady Luck was with them, for they managed to surprise the Spaniards and capture the ship with little loss of their lives. Unfortunately, Richard was fatally wounded and died several days after the attack. Upon his death, Katherine was voted in as captain, and she has lead the ship ever since.

She has proven to be uncommonly successful, and over the past five years has amassed a following of 250 pirates and several ships under her banner. As stories of her exploits spread, she has earned the reputation as the Pirate Queen of the Barbary Coast. There are those who would dispute that title, but none have been able to catch or match her.

**Personality/Motivation:** Katherine is vengeful and driven, and has sworn to sink every Spanish ship she encounters. So far, she has been good to her word.

**Quote:** “Philip’s about to give us another present, boys! Prepare the cannons, and fire on my order...”

**Powers/Tactics:** Katherine’s preferred method of attack is to go after ships in shallow water by either forcing them there, or waiting near areas known to have dangerous waters. She and her men know these areas well.

## DIGITAL HERO #2

### Katherine Winscott

13 STR	3	12-	Lift 150kg; 2½d6 HTH [1]
15 DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
11 CON	2	11-	
10 BODY	0	11-	
15 INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 12-
15 EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
16 PRE	6	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
16 COM	3	12-	
3 PD	0		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
2 ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
3 SPD	5		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5 REC	0		
22 END	0		
24 STUN	0		

**Total Characteristic Cost: 49**

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

#### Cost Perks

45 *Pirates:* 250 Followers  
(20+20 pts)

#### Skills

- 3 AK: Barbary Coast 12-
- 3 Breakfall 12-
- 3 Bribery 12-
- 3 Climbing 12-
- 3 Concealment 12-
- 3 Conversation 12-
- 3 Gambling 11-
- 3 Forgery 11-
- 5 KS: Cartography 13-
- 1 Language: English (Native), Literacy
- 7 Navigation 13-
- 3 Oratory 12-
- 7 PS: Pirate 16-
- 3 Streetwise 12-
- 3 Tactics 12-
- 1 TF: Boats
- 2 WF: Early Firearms

#### 75+ Disadvantages

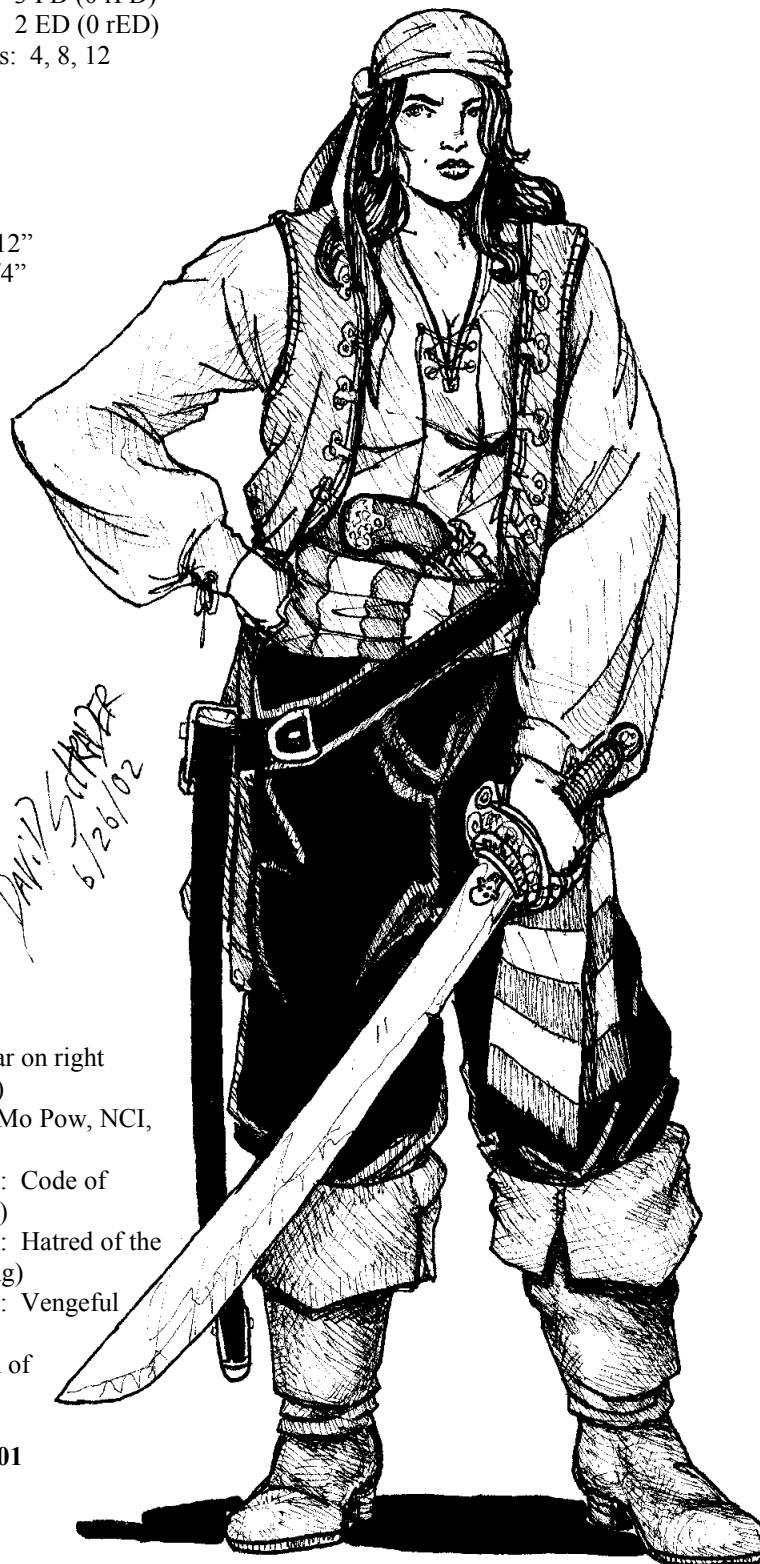
- 5 Distinctive Features: Scar on right cheek (Easily Concealed)
- 15 Hunted: for Piracy 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Code of Honor (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Hatred of the Spanish (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Uncommon, Strong)
- 5 Reputation: pirate queen of the Barbary Coast (8-)

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 101**

**Total Cost: 150**

**Campaign Use:** In a sea-based campaign, the Pirate Queen of the Barbary Coast could be either a potential ally, rival, or an implacable enemy if the characters are known supporters of the Spanish.

**Appearance:** Katherine stands 5' 6", weighs 120 lbs, and has chestnut hair and hazel eyes. She is invariably dressed in men's clothes, with a sword at her hip and a pistol tucked into the waistband of her pants.



**Package Deals**

Peers, gentry, and pirates may not be the only character types a player might wish to play. There are highwaymen, regular sailors, and soldiers, just to name a few. Below is a sampling of package deals which might inspire you.

**HIGHWAYMAN**

Highwaymen were a common threat in some areas, making travel by road dangerous. Both men and women belonged to these roving bands of brigands, and it is not unheard of for a woman to lead one of these groups.

<b>COST</b>	<b>HIGHWAYMAN PACKAGE DEAL</b>
2	AK: Area of Operations 11-
2	PS: Highwayman 11-
3	Weapon Familiarity (Unarmed Combat & Clubs, Bows, Common Melee Weapons, Early Firearms)
6	Choose Two of the Following: Shadowing, Streetwise, Tracking, Trading, Stealth
-10	Hunted: Local Sheriff 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Capture)

**UPPER SERVANTS**

The upper servants are perhaps the most important people the peers and gentry had working for them. They take care of the day to day running of estates, wrote personal correspondence, taught the children, and generally do all the things their employers don't have the time to or simply don't want to do.

<b>COST</b>	<b>UPPER SERVANT PACKAGE DEAL</b>
2	AK: Employer's estate/home 11-
1	Language: English (Native), Literate
2	PS: Upper Servant 11-
9	Choose three Skills from this list: Bureaucratics, Conversation, High Society, Oratory, Persuasion

**SAILORS**

Sailors are anyone who works on a ship, from the fisherman who brings in the fish you eat for supper, to the cabin boy on a warship.

<b>COST</b>	<b>SAILOR PACKAGE DEAL</b>
3	Climbing 11-
2	KS: Rope Handling 11-
2	KS: Ships 11-
2	PS: Sailor 11-
9	Choose three Skills from this list: Breakfall, Gambling (Cards), Gambling (Dice), KS: Predicting Weather, Navigation, Paramedic, Trading
-15	Hunted: Naval Powers for Piracy 8- (Mo Pow, Kill)

**SOLDIERS**

The common soldier makes up the backbone of the army. Officers tended to come from the gentry or peerage, but occasionally men of common lineage rose through the ranks to a command position.

<b>COST</b>	<b>SOLDIER PACKAGE DEAL</b>
3	Climbing 11-
2	KS: The Military 11-
2	PS: Soldier 11-
3	Weapon Familiarity (Unarmed Combat & Clubs, Early Firearms, Bows, Swords)
9	Choose three Skills from this list: Breakfall, Concealment, Gambling (Cards), Gambling (Dice), Paramedic, Stealth, Tactics
-15	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Frequently, Major)

### Running an Elizabethan Hero Game

The Elizabethan era holds a wide variety of campaign and adventure possibilities. Below are a few ideas to help you get started:

- Rumors say the Spanish found the legendary city of El Dorado, and even now, ships laden with gold are sailing back to Spain to fatten Philip's coffers.
- The English East India Company is looking for some courageous people to help carve out their trading empire.
- Sir Henry Wentworth has offered to take the characters under his wing and introduce them into life at Court. Does he have an ulterior motive, or does he truly have the characters' best interests at heart?

The first part of this article was dedicated to a very brief overview of the Elizabethan period, and should contain enough information for a basic feel for the era. For more detailed information, check out the references listed at the end of this article, especially *The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Renaissance England From 1485 to 1649* by Kathy Lynn Emerson, and "Life In Elizabethan England: A Compendium of Common Knowledge." The Compendium is geared towards people who participate in Renaissance Faires, but is equally useful for role players, and is available as a PDF download as well as in html format on the web site.

### Music to Play By

When playing any game, listening to appropriate music can help everyone get into the right mood. Below is but a small listing of free music on the web that was either written in the Renaissance era, or modern pieces written in that style. Not all the music is from Elizabethan England, but the flavor of the music is there.

MP3.com (<http://www.mp3.com>) - Renaissance Music

"Greensleeves" by Brobdingnagian Bards  
(Greensleeves was written by Henry VIII for Anne Boleyn.)

"Hole in the Wall" by Brobdingnagian Bards  
(There is also a dance by the same name, using that music.)

"Byrd: My Ladye Nevells Grownde (1591)" by Roberto Poli (written 1591)

"William Byrd (1543-1623): The Bells" by Peter Lönnerberg

### References - Books

Emerson, Kathy Lynn. *The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Renaissance England From 1485 to 1649*. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1996.

### References - Web Sites

- Brown University Women Writers Project. "In Her Own Words: Elizabeth I Onstage and Online"  
<http://www.wwp.brown.edu/project/rich/QEI/home.html> (February 10, 2002).
- Eakins, Lara E. "Tudor History"  
<http://tudorhistory.org> (February 14, 2002).
- Guild School Association. "Educating Shakespeare - school life in Elizabethan England"  
<http://www.likesnail.org.uk/welcome-es.htm> (February 10, 2002)
- Jokinen, Anniina. "Elizabeth I (1533 - 1603)"  
<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliza.htm> (February 10, 2002)
- Leed, Drea. "Elizabethan Costuming Page"  
<http://www.dnaco.net/~aleed/corsets/genera1.html> (February 10, 2002)
- PKM. "Legends - Pirates and Privateers - Gráinne O'Malley" July 11, 1999.  
<http://legends.dm.net/pirates/grainne.html> (March 1, 2002)
- PKM. "Legends - Pirates and Privateers - Sir Francis Drake" September 21, 1998.  
<http://legends.dm.net/pirates/drake.html> (March 1, 2002)
- Ross, David. "Elizabeth I and Elizabethan Life in England" 2000.  
[http://www.britainexpress.com/History/Elizabethan\\_life.htm](http://www.britainexpress.com/History/Elizabethan_life.htm) (February 13, 2002)
- Secara, Maggie Pierce. "Life In Elizabethan England: A Compendium of Common Knowledge" Summer 2001. Online.  
<http://www.renaissance.dm.net/compendium> (February 13, 2002).
- Thomas, Heather. "The Life and Times of Queen Elizabeth I"  
<http://www.elizabethi.org/europe/index.htm> (February 10, 2002)



# PRIMUS Update

by Shelley Mactyre

## PRIMUS

Spandex Feds. Blue Boys. Tin Cans.

Chances are you've encountered PRIMUS in one form or another in your *Champions* career, either as good guys or bad guys or – more likely – somewhere in between.

PRIMUS – the Primary Response and Interdiction Military Unified Service – is a federal agency under the auspices of the Department of Justice. PRIMUS agents, whether intelligence, assault, Iron Guard, or Avenger, have federal law enforcement powers and gather evidence to convict paranormal criminals of federal crimes. PRIMUS is also a primary responder, called upon when paranormal villains attack.

Originally detailed in Andrew Robinson's *PRIMUS and Demon*, updated for Fourth Edition in *Classic Organizations*, and completely overhauled in my very own *PRIMUS* sourcebook, PRIMUS has been a mainstay of *Champions* gaming for almost two decades.

And why not? It stands to reason that in a world with superheroes (and supervillains) the federal government would respond. After all, you can't count on volunteers to show up when the taxpayers are at risk, can you?

Whether PRIMUS agents are antagonists or allies is up to the GM – and the players. As written, most PRIMUS agents are skeptical of superhero types, but willing to be convinced of their usefulness over time – and conversations with the agents can make for some of a game's best roleplaying moments.

## WHAT'S IN THIS UPDATE

This update assumes you're familiar with the function and role of PRIMUS. If you don't have the sourcebook, you can buy it at the bargain price of \$10 from Hero Games or – even better, because it's free – you can check out <http://www.mactyre.net/scm/primus>. It's the website that started me on the path to writing *PRIMUS* in the first place, and there is a lot of information there to introduce you to the agency. If you like what you see, please return to Hero Games' site and buy the book!

Since Hero published *PRIMUS* as an eBook in 1998, I never stopped thinking about new material, and wondered when I would have the opportunity to get it done: now I have a chance. This two-part update for *Digital Hero* is the product of four years of ruminating.

In Part I, you'll be introduced to the VIPER Task Force, the PRIMUS "Wizards," the mighty PRIMUS PR machine, and you'll also find

alternate ways to create PRIMUS agents at lower power levels than outlined in the original book.

In Part II, four new PRIMUS bases – in Portland, Millennium City, Denver, and Las Vegas – will be outlined, along with their respective Silver Avengers. The Silver Avengers' roles will be clearly defined, too, with descriptions of their typical investigations and daily routines. Future ideas include adventure seeds, standard agent templates, and a collection of PRIMUS agents designed to drive your PCs *crazy*.

## PRIMUS News

### NEW PRIMUS BASES

PRIMUS opened four new bases: one each year from 1998 to 2001. The new bases, located in Las Vegas, Millennium City, Denver, and Portland, Oregon, have greatly increased the agency's ability to combat VIPER and other paranormal threats. Each base has a unique focus: Las Vegas is the home of the VIPER Task Force West; Portland combats environmental terrorism; Millennium City focuses on paranormals involved in the drug trade; Denver is home not only to a regular base, but to a secondary training facility as well.

### HARTIGAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

In 1999, **Avenger Frank Hartigan** made an announcement that stunned the country. He announced, at a press conference held in his home, that he was gay. "I can no longer continue to live this lie," the former Marine lieutenant said, "and deny who I am."

The Avenger's announcement was made with the support of his parents, Senator and Mrs. Thomas Hartigan, of Boston, Massachusetts – and longtime "girlfriend," Sandra Rikard, a PRIMUS agent who has often accompanied the Avenger to official events.

Several times voted America's most eligible bachelor by *People Magazine*, Hartigan revealed that he has been involved with Atlanta physician Michael Korman for almost a year, and that it was this relationship which gave him the strength to come forward and tell the truth about who he is.

PRIMUS Public Relations chief Kitty Cochrane made no official statement, saying that it was no one's business but the Avenger's own, but in numerous print and television interviews, the Golden Avenger and many Silver Avengers voiced their support of Hartigan.



### HARPER'S RESIGNATION

---

PRIMUS suffered a setback in February 2000, when **Silver Avenger Eric Harper** (Philadelphia) was critically injured in combat. Harper suffered spinal cord injuries and was paralyzed from the waist down. With the full support of Director Glenn, Avenger Johnson offered Harper an opportunity to keep his job, but the Silver Avenger turned him down and retired to write his memoirs.

**Assault Agent Ramon Ramos** replaced Avenger Harper as Philadelphia's Silver Avenger.

### GLENN'S RETENTION

---

After the 2000 Presidential election, **Director Peter Glenn**, a Clinton appointee, was retained by the new administration to the surprise of many. Officials cited Glenn's successes in overseeing the growth of the agency and a need for continuity as reasons for his retention, but many in PRIMUS doubt this. Glenn, who has already gone head-to-head with Attorney General Ashcroft behind closed doors, is known for his liberal beliefs and allies in the Democratic Party. The skeptics strongly suspect that Glenn (or Kitty Cochrane) has dirt on someone very powerful that enables him to stay at PRIMUS.

### RICHARDSON'S PROMOTION

---

**Silver Avenger Alex Richardson** of Hudson City became the "Assistant Director of Avengers" in October 2001. (The Director of Avengers is the formal title for the Golden Avenger.) Avenger Richardson, in addition to maintaining his Hudson City duties, also helps coordinate the Avenger games each quarter and assists with Avenger investigations.

Although it isn't openly spoken of, Richardson is, by virtue of his new position, now poised to become the new Golden Avenger if anything should happen to Avenger Johnson.

### CHOW'S SURPRISE PARTY

---

On December 31, 2001, **Avenger Maria Chow** hosted her annual New Year's Eve costume bash dressed as a bride – then shocked her guests when she announced they were really attending her wedding!

No one believed her, at least at first, but Chow was serious. That night, in front of everyone, she wed Bay Area entrepreneur Adrian Jones. Avenger and husband now make their home in a SoMA condominium.

### PRIMUS'S PLANS

---

PRIMUS's plans for the future include lobbying Congress for funds to add ten new Iron Guard squads to existing bases, creating thirty-five new Intelligence Agent positions as part of PRIMUS's attaché program, and building new bases in San Diego and Cincinnati.

## The VIPER Task Force

Agent Ramirez grimaced at his computer screen, then picked up his phone to dial Washington. After ten minutes on hold, he finally made it through. "Looks like our pals in the Atlanta Nest are planning another raid – this time on CNN."

"Do we have anything concrete this time? I don't want a repeat of last month."

Even through the phone, there was no disguising Andrea Canfield's disgust – and with good reason. PRIMUS had scrambled the PRIME Team, Iron Guard, and Avengers – everything it could – based on his information.

Incorrect information – a deliberate plant by VIPER counterintelligence – and while PRIMUS lay in wait for an attack that never happened, VIPER picked the Treasury vaults clean.

Ramirez flushed scarlet, was grateful that Canfield couldn't see him. "No, ma'am," he said firmly. "My intelligence is good, and we have it from three independent sources. VIPER is going to strike CNN, and soon. It's all up on the MATRIX for your review...."

The pause on the other end of the line continued so long he began to fear the Task Force Director had hung up.

"Very well," she said slowly. "Notify Avenger Hartigan and Base Director Cooper. But if you're wrong again, you'll be cleaning out cells in Stronghold from now until retirement. Got it?"

### DEPARTMENT BACKGROUND

---

In the mid-nineties, a resurgent VIPER attacked the PRIMUS Academy, the PRIMUS base in San Francisco, and the Seattle PRIMUS base all within the same year – and the agency was left reeling, just as VIPER had planned. Lax security, a feeling that "it would never happen to us," and simple laziness all contributed to the success of the VIPER attacks.

PRIMUS should have been ready – but it wasn't.

Director Glenn was livid – and, after punishing those responsible for the security breaches, he set out to make sure it would never happen again. The result was the VIPER Task Force, an ambitious project that employs dozens of Intelligence and Assault operatives across the country.

**Operations:** The VIPER Task Force has two primary branches. One, located in Washington, DC, is headed by Agent Andrea Canfield and oversees all VIPER investigations east of the Mississippi; she is also the Task Force's Director. The other, headed by Agent Dallas Hughes, is located in PRIMUS's new Las Vegas base and is responsible for Western operations.

Additionally, each PRIMUS base across the country has an agent specially trained in VIPER's modes of operation, who serves as an advisor to investigators and a liaison between the Task Force and the individual bases. These specialists often conduct their own investigations into VIPER operations, as well.

Task Force Agents in the field answer to their respective Regional Director (either Agent Canfield or Hughes); Agent Hughes answers to Agent Canfield, who, in her turn, answers directly to Director Glenn.

**Campaign Uses:** Are your heroes hunted by VIPER? (Whose aren't?) When VIPER strikes, the VIPER Task Force will not be far behind, ready to question the heroes and other witnesses. The Task Force realizes that heroes often have their own vendettas against VIPER and are more willing than regular agents to allow the heroes to help with the investigations.

Perhaps the Task Force gets wind of a possible attack on the hero before it occurs – and tries to approach him in either his public or private identity; after all, PRIMUS has a large database of information on supers' private activities, though that information is carefully guarded. How distressing would it be to your heroes to learn that PRIMUS knows their secrets? Would they really believe PRIMUS was there to help?

Conversely, have the heroes learned of an impending VIPER attack on PRIMUS? If they haven't established a good relationship with the local PRIMUS base, their intelligence might be greeted with skepticism – or antagonism.

### **TASK FORCE AGENTS**

As a rule, Task Force Agents are Intelligence by training, although from time to time an Assault agent may petition to join the Task Force. When combat is anticipated, the Task Force will call upon Assault and Iron Guard squads, as well as the Avenger complement, to assist in apprehending VIPER suspects.

## **Task Force Director Andrea Canfield**

**Background:** Born to the sort of privilege most people think only exists in the pages of *Town & Country*, when Andrea discovered her pedigreed husband was having an affair, she decided she needed a change.

She left her husband, returned to using her maiden name, and joined PRIMUS.

What else, she told her mother, was she to do to support herself with a degree in French Literature? If PRIMUS was willing to take her, why shouldn't she have an adventure?

Her mother was appalled, but Andrea persevered – and rightly so. Andrea has had a brilliant career as a PRIMUS Intelligence Agent. Her specialty has been VIPER, ever since her early days as an Intelligence Agent in New York City under Avenger Darin Falswell. When she accepted an appointment on the Golden Avenger's agent staff in Washington, DC, she maintained her focus and continued to oversee VIPER investigations, often traveling around the country to assist other agents.

No one in PRIMUS knows more about VIPER than Andrea – and when Director Glenn decided to establish the Task Force, Andrea was his first choice as a director. So far, she hasn't let him down.

**Personality/Motivation:** Andrea is not good at displaying emotion to people she does not know well, but with her friends she is lively and laughs openly. The Golden Avenger is a good friend, and she continues to look after him – a self-appointed task – even though she's no longer a member of his staff.

She finds VIPER-culture a continuing source of amusement, and collects VIPER-related paraphernalia – bootleg trading cards, comic books, video games. She's even acquired a large collection of paintings by an imprisoned VIPER agent, and selects a different piece to grace the walls of her office each month.

**Quote:** “Well, of course they've got snakes on their business cards, Senator. You were expecting penguins?”

**Powers/Tactics:** Andrea will attack at range first, and will engage in hand-to-hand combat second. Although she has extensive martial arts experience, she practices Aikido more for mental discipline, not for use in combat.

**Campaign Use:** Andrea could be called in to interview or to interrogate heroes with ties to (or who are running from) VIPER. She makes a very useful PRIMUS contact and, while she is not entirely trusting of unaffiliated heroes, once she has learned to accept a PC, she will be a stalwart ally.

## DIGITAL HERO #2

### Andrea Canfield

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200kg; 3d6 HTH [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
13	CON	6	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
16	EGO	12	12-	ECV: 5
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
14	COM	2	12-	
3	PD	0		Total: 3 (0 rPD)
3	ED	0		Total: 3 (0 rED)
3	SPD	2		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
25	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 67**

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

**Cost Powers** **END**

#### Martial Arts: Commando Training

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
3 Aikido Throw	+0	+1	3d6+v/5
4 Boxing Cross	+0	+2	5d6 Strike
5 Choke Hold	-2	+0	Grab, 2d6 NND
4 Judo Disarm	-1	+1	25 STR
4 Karate Chop	-2	+0	HKA 1d6+1
4 Kung Fu Block	+2	+2	Block

#### Martial Arts: Aikido

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Dodge	-	+5	Dodge
4 Escape	+0	+0	30 STR
3 Hold	-1	-1	25 STR
5 Strike	+1	+3	3d6 Strike

#### Perks

- 6 Contact: High-powered DC Attorney 8-
- 6 Contact: Paranormal Hero 8-
- 6 Contact: VIPER Double Agent 8-
- 3 Federal/National Police Powers

#### Skills

- 20 +4 with Hand-To-Hand Combat
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 Bugging 13-
- 3 Bureaucratics 13-
- 3 Computer Programming 13-
- 3 Concealment 13-
- 3 Criminology 13-
- 3 Deduction 13-
- 3 Disguise 11-
- 3 High Society 13-
- 3 Interrogation 13-
- 4 Language: French (native accent)
- 2 Language: Greek (fluent conversation)
- 1 Language: Latin (basic conversation)

- 3 Language: Spanish (completely fluent)
- 3 Paramedic 13-
- 7 PS: PRIMUS Agent 16-
- 3 Security Systems 13-
- 3 Scholar
- 5 1) KS: Criminal Organizations 16-
- 2 2) KS: Federal Law 13-
- 1 3) KS: French Literature 11-
- 2 4) KS: Investigative Methods 13-
- 2 5) KS: Paranormals And Their Powers 13-
- 2 6) KS: PRIMUS 13-
- 5 7) KS: VIPER 16-
- 3 Shadowing 11-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 3 Systems Operation 13-
- 3 Tracking 13-
- 2 WF: Small Arms

**Powers & Skills Total: 170**

#### 100+ Disadvantages

- 5 Distinctive Features: Razor-sharp features, large green eyes (Easily Concealable)
- 15 Hunted: VIPER 8- (As Pow, NCI)
- 10 Hunted: PRIMUS 8- (As Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 15 DNPC: Mother 8- (Incompetent)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Never Wants To Have To Depend On Another Person (Uncommon, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: PRIMUS Code (Common, Strong)
- 10 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Frequently, Minor)
- 10 Reputation: protects innocents, 11-
- 5 Reputation: ball-busting agent, 8-
- 42 Experience

**Disadvantages Total: 237**

**Appearance:** Andrea is whippet-thin, with short black hair and large green eyes. People either find her very beautiful or most decidedly not – she is certainly not conventionally pretty. She is 5'6" and wears haute-couture suits.

#### OTHER TASK FORCE AGENTS

**Agent Dallas Hughes** (he prefers this designation to "Assistant VIPER Task Force Director Dallas Hughes," which is how the nameplate on his office door reads) came to PRIMUS from the Hudson City Police Department. Growing frustrated with VIPER activity in his city – and after seeing his partner killed by VIPER agents – he made the leap from local to federal law enforcement with aplomb.

Dallas was a rarity among PRIMUS agents – he already knew what it was like to be a cop, and he had no illusions about the work when he started. He’s also older than most of his fellow agents (he’s now thirty-eight). Like Agent Canfield, Hughes has maintained his VIPER focus throughout his career, and he was Agent Canfield’s first pick for a Western counterpart. He’s proven her right at every turn – so far.

Hughes is 6’1 and 200 pounds, solidly built. He has brown, curling hair, graying at the temples, and hazel eyes.

**Agent Harry Martin** joined PRIMUS in 1998 and became interested in VIPER operations when his profiling subject, the superheroine Photana, was kidnapped by VF-1. He had grown attached to Photana and became deeply involved in the investigation. When Photana was killed, he was very upset – and knew he’d made a serious mistake in allowing himself to get too close.

After a leave of absence, Agent Martin joined the VIPER Task Force and now works closely with Agent Canfield in Washington. He is very guarded about his involvement with anyone – subjects, fellow agents, even his friends – and rarely socializes outside of work.

Agent Martin is a good looking, clean-cut man in his late twenties. He has black hair, blue eyes, and his cheeks dimple when he smiles.

**Agent Anders Sorenson** has seen it all. From his first days as an Intelligence Agent in Boston in the early eighties – back when VIPER agents still wore scaled armor – he has raided Nests, fought pitched battles with VIPER in the streets, and seen some of his best friends fall in combat.

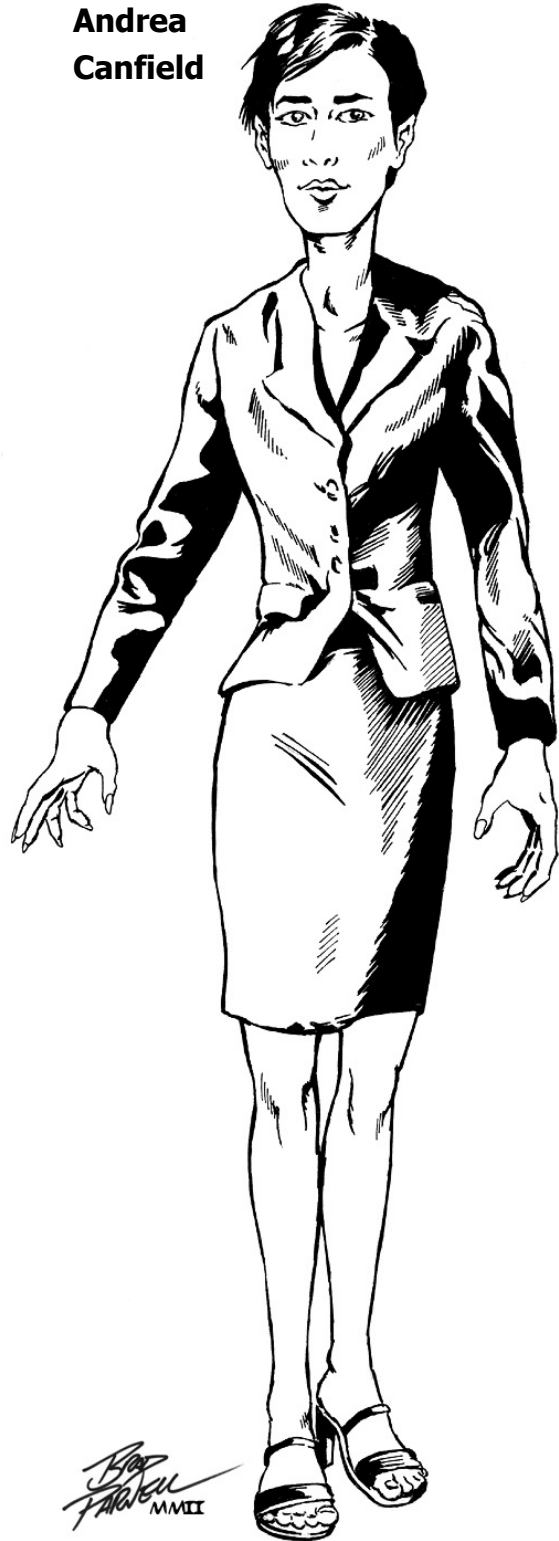
Unlike many of the agents on the Task Force, however, Anders doesn’t hate VIPER. He feels the strong emotions that many of his coworkers have about their work is, while justified, a dangerous thing – and he’s very careful never to allow his own feelings interfere with his judgment. As a result, Anders is often the voice of reason in the Las Vegas Task Force operations center and is also a father figure to the younger agents, who go to him for advice.

Anders is in his late forties, with white-blond hair and blue eyes. His skin is very ruddy from his time in the sun. He has a thin build but is very athletic.

**Agent Tony Ramierez** is new to PRIMUS and to the VIPER Task Force. While a journalism student at Columbia, he gained national attention when he went undercover in the New York VIPER Nest for a story.

Though his reporting won him awards, he gained a passion for fighting VIPER and so joined PRIMUS. He’s thought by many agents to be a hot shot, a dangerous maverick.

## Andrea Canfield



Ramierez – which he prefers to Tony – hadn’t planned on a career in PRIMUS himself, but the time he spent in the VIPER Nest convinced him that he had to do more than simply write stories about the evils of the agency: he had to fight them.

Ramierez is 5’11” and has black hair and brown eyes. He keeps in shape with running and bicycling in the summers and skiing in the winter.

## PRIMUS Wizards

“Ew.” Janine Spiering, administrative assistant, wrinkled her nose. Inside the makeshift laboratory, the air was heavy with the smell of... stale beer?

Before the Wizards moved in, this had been a lunchroom. Now Janine was afraid to open the refrigerator. But Agent Wenger was alone – and time with him, without Agent vanSnoden around, was priceless. “What the heck is that stuff?”

When the agent in the lab coat didn’t respond, she poked him in the arm with her pen. “Homer?”

“Huh?” Agent Wenger looked up. “Oh, hi, Janine. What is it?”

“What are you doing?”

He pushed back from the table and yawned. “Oh, just testing the samples I brought back from the DEMON raid last week.”

“Anything interesting?” Janine leaned forward and smiled. Perhaps the Wizards wasn’t the highest prestige assignment a PRIMUS secretary could get, but Agent Wenger was adorable when he was wrapped up in his work.

“So far, no. I thought it was ectoplasmic residue from the summoning, but all of the tests are coming back negative.”

“It smells like beer,” she said helpfully. “Maybe the Morbanes had a kegger before they summoned Nyharlo—“

Homer clasped a hand to her mouth. “Never say his name out loud,” he said urgently. “Promise me you won’t!”

### DEPARTMENT BACKGROUND

The division of PRIMUS charged with investigation of the mystical is officially known as the Detached Department for Research and Experimentation of Metapsychic Activity (DDREMA) – but everyone, Director Peter Glenn included, refers to them as the Wizards, an honorable title that belies their low reputation within the agency.

An unofficial department within PRIMUS, Congress refused to approve the agency’s budget as a whole when, in 1993, the Wizard division was first proposed. Then-Director Hawkins capitulated and slashed the proposed department – but he turned around and placed twenty intelligence agents on detached duty in an

unofficial capacity, pulling resources from bases around the country.

Though their status is unofficial, Wizard agents report to Area Directors – there are Directors in the Southeast, the Northeast, the Southwest, and Pacific Northwest, as well as a Central Director located in St. Louis. These Area Department Directors report directly to Director Glenn.

These detached agents – Wizards – both benefit and suffer as a result of their ambiguous position within the organization. PRIMUS labs aren’t overly generous with their time, and agents often must work off-hours. Equipment and weapons, too, are “borrowed” from other departments within the agency. Most regular PRIMUS agents consider the Wizards to be nutcases, though opinion runs the gamut from amusement to outright hatred. Not surprisingly, Wizards have an outsider’s mentality and a fierce pride about their work.

**Campaign Uses:** The Wizards are very interested in any heroes (or villains) with mystical origins or powers, and will seek them out. Because of the animosity they often encounter from PRIMUS, they’re more willing to bend the agency’s rules – and befriend the heroes, if they’re taken seriously.

Wizards could approach the heroes regarding an artifact in their possession – or, conversely, the heroes might need to ask the PRIMUS agents to use an artifact stored in one of PRIMUS’s vaults. Wizard agents, facing disbelief from within PRIMUS, might even seek out the heroes to ask for their help in fighting a paranormal menace.

### AVERAGE WIZARD AGENT

Most Wizards agents have been drawn from the core of Intelligence Agents – they have typically investigated cases which have led them into the realm of the supernatural, and have also usually taken flack from their coworkers for having believed there might be more to it than just “technology we don’t understand yet.”

**Creating Wizard Investigators:** follow the guidelines for creating Intelligence Agent characters, and add appropriate Skills, such as KS: Mystical Phenomena or SS: Ectoplasmic Residue Analysis.

## Area Director (Agent) Owen Hendricks

**Background/History:** Owen Hendricks was a captain in the Marine Corps when the Pentagon mandated Cyberline testing – and no one was more surprised than Hendricks to find out he'd tested positive. The Marines had been Owen's primary focus since he'd been in high school, and convincing him to join PRIMUS took a good bit of persuasion from Agent Trevor McEvedy, the recruiting agent. What finally sold Owen on PRIMUS was the fact there was significant room for advancement, he would still be able to hone his combat skills – and his salary stood to nearly double. This was a major selling point: Hendricks had been supporting his mother and younger sister since his father died during Owen's second year in college.

Owen's first assignment was Atlanta, to one of the largest PRIMUS bases on the East Coast. He was repeatedly commended for his work and was first in line for an open Agent Commander slot, a position that would have commanded respect, indicated a higher level of security clearance, and would have meant a sizable increase in pay again – until a background investigation revealed something PRIMUS found unacceptable.

Several months prior to the investigation, Agent Hendricks met a nurse – and fell for her, hard. Given that he had managed to avoid any serious entanglements through college and three years in the Marines and then PRIMUS, this was an event his mother rejoiced in – though PRIMUS didn't share the sentiment. Kimiya Rahman was born in Iran and considered a security liability to PRIMUS because her mother still resided there. (That Kimiya's family fled, fearing for their lives in the wake of the Islamic Republic's takeover of the government, and that her mother had stayed only because she was a second wife – those things didn't figure at all into the security profile.)

Bitter about losing the position to a less qualified agent, Owen jumped at the chance to become an area director for the Wizards project, when the position was offered to him a few weeks later. Granted he knew little about the occult, but that could change – and it did. The intelligence agent-heavy Wizards were relieved to have a new assault agent in their midst. So far, Owen has taken his job very seriously and has received several commendations from Washington, something he sees as vindication.

**Personality/Motivation:** An easy going man most of the time, Owen will become irrational over three things: derogatory remarks about Latino-Americans (his mother was born in Mexico), criticism of his fiancée, Kimiya

Rahman, and criticism of the Wizards, both from within PRIMUS and without.

**Quote:** “Let me get this straight. If the sun and moon both shine on this ugly piece of tin that it's going to release a host of demons into downtown Atlanta?”



## DIGITAL HERO #2

### Wizard Area Director Owen Hendricks

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400kg; 4d6 HTH [2]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
14	CON	8	12-	
11	BODY	2	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
16	COM	3	12-	
6	PD	2		
6	ED	3		
5	SPD	19		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
7	REC	0		
30	END	1		
30	STUN	2		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 98**

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

**Cost Powers** **END**

#### Martial Arts: PRIMUS Training

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
5 Choke Hold	-2	0	2d6 NND
4 Killing Strike	-2	+0	HKA 1d6+1
4 Martial Block	+2	+2	Block
4 Martial Disarm	-1	+1	30 STR
4 Martial Strike	+0	+2	6d6
3 Martial Throw	+0	+1	4d6 + v/5

#### Perks

3 Federal Police Powers

#### Skills

- 16 +2 with All Combat
- 4 *Range Skill Levels:* +2 vs. Range modifier with PRIMUS Weapons
- 5 Acrobatics 14-
- 5 Breakfall 14-
- 3 Bureaucratics 12-
- 3 Climbing 13-
- 3 Computer Programming 13-
- 3 Contortionist 13-
- 3 Conversation 12-
- 3 Criminology 13-
- 5 Defense Maneuver II
- 3 KS: Criminal Organizations 13-
- 3 KS: Federal Law 13-
- 3 KS: Magic Practitioners, Organizations 13-
- 3 KS: Occult 13-
- 3 KS: Paranormals And Their Powers 13-
- 3 KS: PRIMUS 13-
- 3 Paramedic 13-
- 3 PS: PRIMUS Agent 13-
- 3 PS: USMC Officer 13-
- 3 Tactics 13-
- 2 WF: Small Arms

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 112**

**Total Cost: 210**

#### 100+ Disadvantages

- 10 DNPC: Kimiya 11- (Less Pow, Useful)
- 10 Hunted: PRIMUS 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: In Love With Kimiya Rahman (Common, Total)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Misses Combat (Uncommon, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: PRIMUS Code (Common, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: protects innocents, 11-
- 5 Reputation: well-decorated PRIMUS agent, 8-
- 10 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Frequently, Minor)
- 15 Vulnerability: 1½x Effect from Poisons & Toxins

**Total Disadvantage Points: 220**

**Powers/Tactics:** While the majority of his job currently is running interference between PRIMUS and his agents, or between his agents and the outside world, when faced with a combat situation, Owen will come in with fists swinging. It's not that he doesn't know a better tactic – it's that he thrives on the confrontation, and knows the extent of his physical prowess.

**Campaign Uses:** Owen is a useful contact for heroes who need information about mystical phenomena as well as for mystical heroes who need a contact in the government. As a PRIMUS agent, he has access to all kinds of useful information – and might be willing to share some of it, provided he's approached well.

**Appearance:** Agent Hendricks is 5'10", with black hair and piercing black eyes. He was a perfect candidate for Cyberline: his physique altered only slightly, and he didn't bulk much at all. When in motion, he appears fluid, cat-like – and he has an uncanny ability to always land on his feet.

## OTHER WIZARD AGENTS

**Agent Erica vonSoden:** Now in her mid-thirties, Agent vonSoden's first career was as a high school history teacher. Quickly disenchanted with the reality of teaching bored teenagers, she returned to college and received a doctorate in Women's Studies – and found there was no job market. A cousin had recently joined PRIMUS and recommended she look into the possibility of a career there. While she tested negative for Cyberline tolerance (something she was relieved about!), she proceeded through the PRIMUS Academy, finishing several days shy of her thirtieth birthday. Always intrigued by humanity's fascination for the occult, she was one of the first agents to sign up for detached duty as part of the Wizards. Agent vonSoden is an attractive woman with short, sculpted brown hair. She dresses primarily in business suits and is a well-spoken woman. Quite often she finds herself given public relations tasks, because, as Area Director Hendricks once bluntly pointed out, she's the most presentable Wizard agent in the Southeast area. She is frequently partnered with Agent Homer Wenger.

**Agent Homer Wenger:** A nervous agent in his mid-twenties, Homer Wenger was one of the youngest agents to graduate from the PRIMUS Academy. His bachelor's degree is in biochemistry – and he has been obsessed since childhood with being able to document the existence of ghosts, and since becoming a Wizards agent, his quest has become all-consuming. Admittedly more of a “lab rat” than a field agent, Agent Wenger is most frequently found with his nose in a book or checking reading in the lab. Think a shorter Egon with a nervous tic.

**Agent Joanne Frost** got her start in PRIMUS not as an agent, but as a historian hired by PR Director Kitty Cochrane to produce a history of the agency. Fascinated by the “invisible” cases PRIMUS handled relating to the mystical world, after her history was completed, she applied to the agency – and was accepted.

Joanne is now in her mid-thirties and keeps her black hair short. She has green eyes that are often clouded in thought. She would be pretty if she took the time to manage her appearance; her suits seem to wrinkle as soon as she puts them on.

## PRIMUS Public Relations

“Is there any truth to Bob Martin's allegations against Avenger Chow?”

It was the question every reporter in the Robert Kaufmann Auditorium wanted to ask, and all eyes snapped to the diminutive woman standing at the podium, whose face darkened in anger. Though scarcely five feet tall, she loomed over the crowd, an imposing presence.

The reporter who'd asked the question took a step backwards – and tripped over his chair.

“Of course Avenger Chow is innocent,” PRIMUS Public Relations Director Kitty Cochrane said scathingly. “Unlike you, Frank, do you really think she needs to sexually harass a Post reporter to get a date?”

The crowd chuckled obediently.

“Didn't they teach you any better at Columbia?” she scolded him. “Or have you given up your job at the Times to work at the Daily Observer? Next question!”

## DEPARTMENT BACKGROUND

PRIMUS PR *is* Kitty Cochrane.

In 1996, Director Peter Glenn hired Kitty to head the PR department. Until that point, a photogenic Intelligence Agent would make statements to the press as needed. But Kitty turned PRIMUS PR into a powerhouse – and the agency's image has soared to new heights of popularity.

It was Kitty who masterminded Avenger Hartigan's press conference (she referred to it as his “coming out party”); Hartigan had notified Director Glenn about his intentions, and Glenn, in turn, directed Kitty to assist the Avenger. As a result, Hartigan's approval rating rose after his announcement, and he became one of the most sought-after talk show guests in the country. With Kitty's supervision, of course, he accepted those invitations.

Kitty's greatest challenge came in Summer 2000, when an assault agent accused the Avenger Chow of sexual harassment. Kitty immediately took control of the situation – and as a result, what could have been a disaster for both the Avenger and the agency again turned into a triumph. Not only was the Avenger innocent, she said scathingly in repeated interviews, the accusation (which was, in fact, groundless) was nothing short of a declaration of war by a disgruntled and disruptive employee.



## DIGITAL HERO #2

Around the country, people rallied to the Chow's defense.

Kitty won that round – and the bout. Kitty always wins.

Not surprisingly, Kitty Cochrane is a woman to be respected – and feared. She has her finger on the pulse of American public opinion and knows how to orchestrate events to manipulate that opinion just the way she wants it.

Kitty's office is located in the Jonathan Hawkins Building in Washington, DC, but she travels frequently to bases around the country. Her staff – there are now two agents in each base devoted to handling PRIMUS PR – dances to her tune; although she is a difficult woman to work for, she can also be generous. She is one of the highest paid members of Director Glenn's executive staff, and she has negotiated high salaries for her personnel.

All PRIMUS press releases are personally approved by Kitty; all press conferences are overseen by Kitty or one of her staff. Though Avengers and Base Commanders alike have complained (privately) to Director Glenn about her methods, Glenn is adamant in allowing Kitty absolute freedom to do her job as she sees fit.

### Kitty Cochrane

**Background:** An heiress and socialite, Kitty learned how to manipulate people at an early age. Her father, a wealthy publisher, had little time for his only child, and his numerous girlfriends often curried favor with him by being friendly with Kitty. She learned how to use them to get what she wanted.

Those lessons served her well as she grew older – and she found it was a simple matter to get what she wanted from just about anyone. Though she became very set in her ways, Kitty wasn't spoiled – just willful.

At twenty-four, she met Thomas Cochrane, a Washington lobbyist who didn't do exactly as she wanted – and she fell head over heels in love. Their marriage was a happy one, and when he died from lymphoma just a few years afterwards, she was devastated. She has never remarried and lives alone in a Georgetown townhouse with their son, Tom.

Kitty has long been a friend of Director Glenn's wife – it was she who suggested to her husband that Kitty might be a good fit with the agency – and continues to see both Glenns socially.

She has one weakness: her son, Thomas, Jr. Despite his mother's best efforts, Thomas has never been able to settle on a career and has struggled with drug addiction since his teenage years. Only his mother's powerful influence has kept him out of jail, but even she has her limits.

**Personality/Motivation:** Kitty loves to be in control. Her early childhood was chaotic and ungrounded, and she hated it – she has vowed to never be at anyone's mercy again. Until she met her husband, she kept that vow, and after his death, she returned to it. Only her son has the power to break her heart now (as he often has).

The more unhappy Kitty is with things in which she has no say, the harder she works to control the things she can. When Kitty's burning the midnight oil at PRIMUS, most staffers steer clear of her office – she's dangerous in a bad mood.

She is very protective of the agency and will respond to negative criticism with acerbic, quick wit.

**Quote:** “You're right, Senator, that's a very interesting allegation about Avenger Richardson. But it isn't true – unlike that little vacation you took with Miss Bambi Anderson down in St. Croix. Now, now, don't worry – no one besides me has heard a word of it. I'm sure you'd prefer to keep it that way, wouldn't you?”

**Powers/Tactics:** People believe what Kitty says – almost always. Kitty doesn't know she's a paranormal, and would scoff at anyone who might suggest it. Director Glenn has his suspicions, however, but has kept them secret; they're his ace in the hole if Kitty ever decides to leave. He is careful to use psionic-neutralizing equipment when he meets with her.

Many, many people owe Kitty favors. She prefers it that way – but only calls them in if she absolutely needs them. She likes having people in her debt.

**Campaign Uses:** Any hero who runs afoul of Kitty Cochrane by voicing criticism of “her” Avengers or agents is in for a bumpy ride. Conversely, anyone who wins Kitty over to their side will have a formidable ally, should the need arise. If a hero learns the secret of Kitty's influence and leaks it, the results could be disastrous for Kitty – or the hero, depending upon how the situation is manipulated (and by whom).

**Appearance:** Kitty is an attractive, petite woman in her forties. She has short, blond hair and hazel eyes. She dresses in severe, but tailored, suits that are never rumpled. Her voice will often take on nuances of different accents – Southern when she wants to put people at ease, Midwestern when she's trying to appeal to a large, diverse group – when she speaks.

**Kitty Cochrane**

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
13	CON	6	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
25	PRE	20	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
14	COM	2	12-	
3	PD	1		Total: 3 (0 rPD)
3	ED	0		Total: 3 (0 rED)
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
5	REC	0		
26	END	0		
24	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 57**

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

**Cost Powers** **END**

35 *Subconscious Presence:* Mind Control 14d6, Invisible to Mental Sense Group (+½); No Conscious Control (-2) 10

**Perks**

10 10 Favors  
30 10 Useful Contacts  
10 Money (Wealthy)

**Skills**

3 Acting 14-  
3 Bribery 14-  
3 Bureaucratics 14-  
2 CK: Washington, DC 11-  
3 Conversation 14-  
3 High Society 14-  
3 Oratory 14-  
3 Persuasion 14-  
4 PS: Public Relations Genius 14-

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 112****Total Cost: 169****75+ Disadvantages**

10 DNPC: Son, Thomas Cochrane, Jr. (Normal, 8-)  
10 Enraged: when PRIMUS threatened (Common), go 11-, recover 11-  
10 Psychological Limitation: Hates Being Out Of Control (Uncommon, Strong)  
15 Psychological Limitation: Protective Of PRIMUS (Common, Strong)  
10 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Frequently, Minor)  
10 Reputation: woman **not** to cross, 11-  
29 Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 169**

### OTHER PR PERSONNEL

---

Kitty's spokespeople – her term – are carefully chosen from the best agencies and are well versed in PRIMUS operations. As a rule, Kitty selects spokespeople with a strong sense of the community they're assigned to for maximum respectability.

**Andy Morconi, Boston:** This tall, brown-haired, brown-eyed beauty was born and raised in Boston and has served as PRIMUS's spokesperson there since 1999, ever since she graduated from Boston College. Andy has defused a number of difficult situations in the past and has a calm, soothing voice – with a thick Boston accent.

**Bob Holt, Seattle:** Bob came to PRIMUS after a career in broadcast journalism. He has sandy hair and blue eyes and the build of an Avenger. His all-American good looks and trusting voice have served him well at the Seattle base, which has been plagued with scandal after scandal.

**Fran Fujimora, San Francisco:** Fran is the half-sister of Silver Avenger Maria Chow and was *not* handpicked by Kitty. Avenger Chow so disliked Kitty's selection for San Francisco that she pulled a sneaky maneuver of her own – and to Kitty's surprise, triumphed. As a result, Fran does not enjoy many of the same benefits of patronage that her coworkers do, although she's working on improving relations with her boss. Fran is petite and thin, of mixed Asian descent.

## Creating Agents

*PRIMUS* describes how to create PRIMUS agents from a 75-point normal to a 200-point agent, after completing the Academy. The addition of 125 points reflects the long time the agents spend at the Academy acquiring a large number of skills, both investigative and combat-oriented. From a real-world standpoint, it's meant to simulate the training that an FBI agent receives – and then some.

Yet in a 350-point superhero game, 200-point agents are intimidating – and rightfully so. Those 200 points don't even begin to take into account the nifty gadgets agents have at their disposal: blaster pistols, heavy blasters, stun grenades, and EMP Frisbees go a long way toward leveling the field. In *PRIMUS*, a team of agents can threaten even experienced superheroes. (Which is exactly how it should be, according to PRIMUS!)

Existing PRIMUS agents, published in the original book or online, may be modified by simply reducing combat skill levels and skills. But for GMs who wish to create their own, lower-powered PRIMUS agents (or for lower-powered PRIMUS campaigns, where the PCs play Intelligence and Assault Agents), here's a step-by-step process for creating 125-point agents.

### AGENT CREATION PROCESS

---

All Agents types start with a 50-point character, using Normal Human Characteristic Maxima. This is the agent before he enters the Academy, and you should include all appropriate hobby and background skills and any marital arts the character learned prior to entering PRIMUS. Don't forget area knowledges or professional licensures here. Languages the character knows, contacts that may prove useful – this is the place to buy them.

**Essential PRIMUS Skills:** For the first three months at the Academy, all agents, whether they will follow the Intelligence or the Assault Agent paths, acquire essential PRIMUS Skills. These are a basic knowledge of PRIMUS's organization and mission, the criminal organizations it fights, what is expected of a PRIMUS agent professionally, as well as basic first-aid training. (17 points)

#### Perks

- 3 Federal Police Powers

#### Skills

- 3 KS: Criminal Organizations
- 3 KS: PRIMUS
- 3 Paramedic
- 3 PS: PRIMUS Agent
- 2 WF: Small Arms

## Assault Agent Template (Low Powered)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes	
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200kg; 3d6 HTH [1]	
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6	
15	CON	10	12-		
12	BODY	4	11-		
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 12-	
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4	
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6	
12	COM	1	11-		
5 PD				2	Total: 5 (0 rPD)
3 ED				0	Total: 3 (0 rED)
3 SPD				2	Phases: 4, 8, 12
6 REC				0	
30 END				0	
28 STUN				0	

**Characteristic Total: 58**

**Movement:** Running: 7"/14"  
Swimming: 2"/4"

<b>Cost</b>	<b>Powers</b>	<b>END</b>
2	+1" Running (7" Total)	1

### Martial Arts: PRIMUS Training

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
3 Aikido Throw	+0	+1	3d6+v/5
4 Boxing Cross	+0	+2	5d6 Strike
5 Choke Hold	-2	+0	Grab, 2d6 NND
4 Judo Disarm	-1	+1	25 STR
4 Karate Chop	-2	+0	HKA 1d6+1
4 Kung Fu Block	+2	+2	Block

### Perks

3 Federal Police Powers

### Skills

- 5 +1 with Hand-To-Hand Combat
- 5 +1 with Ranged Combat
- 2 Area Knowledge 11-
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 KS: Criminal Organizations 12-
- 2 KS: Degree 11-
- 2 KS: Paranormals And Their Powers 11-
- 3 KS: PRIMUS 12-
- 3 Paramedic 12-
- 2 PS: Degree 11-
- 3 PS: PRIMUS Agent 12-
- 3 Tactics 12-
- 2 WF: Small Arms

**Powers & Skills Total: 67**  
**Total Template Cost: 125**

### 75+ Disadvantages

- 5 Hunted: PRIMUS 8- (As Pow, NCI, Watching, Mild)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: PRIMUS Code (Common, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: protects innocents, 11-
- 10 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Frequently, Minor)
- 15 Vulnerability: 1½x Effect from Poisons & Toxins

**Disadvantage Total: 130**

### ASSAULT AGENT SPECIALIZATION

Cyberline-tolerant agents (a minority in the organization) will progress down the Assault path, and acquire hand-to-hand combat skills in the second phase of their training. They also learn small-group tactics and learn the PRIMUS Martial Arts package. (32 points)

- 3 Breakfall
- 2 KS: Paranormals And Their Powers (emphasis on how to fight)
- 3 Tactics
- 24 PRIMUS Martial Arts (Commando Package)

Additionally, Assault Agents acquire fifteen points to divide between STR, DEX, CON, PD, and ED. Normal Human Characteristic Maxima will no longer apply to the character after Cyberline treatment. (15 points)

And to round out the agent, allow the player to spend up to eleven points to acquire levels, to raise existing skills or characteristics. (11 points)

Using this system, the average assault agent is 125 points – a good deal lower in power than his 200-point equivalent and more easily overcome.

**Note:** In this low-powered version, the PRIMUS Assault Agent's Disadvantages easily outstrip what's required – GMs using this system should decide which Disadvantages are the most important to the campaign and should cut the others to allow greater personalization of the character.

## DIGITAL HERO #2

### Intelligence Agent Template (Low Powered)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
13	DEX	9	12-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
13	CON	6	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 12-
13	EGO	6	12-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
12	COM	1	11-	
2	PD	0		Total: 2 (0 rPD)
3	ED	0		Total: 3 (0 rED)
3	SPD	7		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	REC	0		
26	END	0		
24	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 41**

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

#### Cost Perks

- 3 Federal/National Police Powers
- 1 Contact 8-
- 1 Favor
- 1 Professional License

#### Skills

- 10 +2 with Ranged Combat
- 6 +3 with PRIMUS Blasters
- 3 Bureaucratics 12-
- 3 Bugging 12-
- 2 City Knowledge 11-
- 3 Computer Programming 12-
- 3 Concealment 12-
- 3 Conversation 12-
- 3 Interrogation 12-
- 3 KS: Criminal Organizations 12-
- 2 KS: College Degree 11-
- 2 KS: DEMON 11-
- 2 KS: Hobby Skill 11-
- 2 KS: Federal Law 11-
- 3 KS: Investigative Methods 12-
- 3 KS: Paranormals & Their Powers 12-
- 3 KS: PRIMUS 12-
- 3 Lockpicking 12-
- 3 Paramedic 12-
- 2 PS: First Career Field 11-
- 3 PS: PRIMUS Agent 12-
- 3 Security Systems 12-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 3 Tracking 12-
- 2 WF: Small Arms

**Total Powers & Skills: 84**

**Total Cost: 125**

#### 75+ Disadvantages

- 5 Hunted: PRIMUS 8- (As Pow, NCI, Watching, Mild)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: PRIMUS Code (Common, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: protects innocents, 11-
- 10 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Frequently, Minor)

*Add Character-Specific Disads; 1-point Quirks highly recommended to personalize.*

#### Total Disadvantages: 115

(125 with Character-Specific Additions)

### INTELLIGENCE AGENT SPECIALIZATION

Intelligence agents do the bulk of investigative work in PRIMUS. In the second phase of their training, they'll learn criminal methods, investigative techniques, learn more about paranormals and criminal analysis. Agents very often discover where they wish to specialize during this point in their training. (35 points)

- 3 Bureaucratics
- 3 Bugging
- 3 Computer Programming
- 3 Concealment
- 3 Conversation
- 3 Interrogation
- 3 KS: Investigative Methods
- 2 KS: Federal Law
- 3 KS: Paranormals & their Powers (emphasis on how to investigate)
- 3 Security Systems
- 3 Stealth
- 3 Tracking

Intelligence Agents also receive twenty-three points to use to raise their existing skills and characteristics (Normal Human Characteristic Maxima still applies) and to purchase new skills appropriate to their investigations, such as KS: VIPER. Combat skills are highly recommended. (23 points)

Using this method of character creation, Intelligence Agents will total 125 points. They are much less efficient in combat than their 200-point counterparts and will likely avoid it if at all possible.



# The Jade Dragon Queen

by Robert Hudson

**Background/History:** Ma Lin Yao was born to poverty in the slums of Shanghai in 1909, her family one of the many that eked out a living on the margins of society. At an early age, Lin Yao knew she wanted more for herself; she wanted the rich food, luxurious clothes, and worshipful attendants she saw wealthy women enjoying when she spied on them through their windows.

Her greatest assets being her appearance and intelligence, she used the first to disguise the second. Apprenticing herself to an old alchemist, she traded her charms for knowledge until she had learned everything he could teach her, and then poisoned him using a formula he thought too advanced for her.

Using her knowledge of alchemical preparations, she made her already devastating charms irresistible and attached herself to a local crime figure, learning everything that she could of his organization and how it functioned before moving on to another, more powerful, figure. She repeated the process several times, until she felt she had the knowledge necessary to implement the final stage of her plan.

In one evening, she killed her latest lover and seized control of his organization – a branch of the Glorious Jade Dragon tong. Cunningly keeping the knowledge from both the rank and file and her former lover's superiors, she maintained the fiction that her lover was alive and directing the tong while she began a program of expansion, building her faction into one of the strongest in the tong. Then, and only then, she revealed she had been the creator of the faction's success to the leaders of the tong, and asked to be granted their permission to continue.

Impressed by her audacity and success, the leaders agreed – with two provisions. First, they required her to accept a bodyguard to “ensure her safety” (and ensure that she did not betray them as she had her former masters). Second, they required her to assume control of tong operations in a new area, far from Shanghai (and them): New York City.

A consummate actress, Lin Yao protested and argued with them, while secretly delighted they were sending her away from the provincial streets of China to the greatest metropolis in the world. She allowed them their “victory,” acting properly contrite and subdued as they brought in her new bodyguard, a huge brute named Chang Hu, and sent her away under his watchful eye.

Since arriving in New York, she has divided her time between sampling the delights of western civilization and consolidating her control over the tong's enterprises. Once her control is

set, she will look to expand the territory under her control. That means a confrontation with one of the other major tongs in New York City – the On Leong and Hop Sing tongs – or with the American mobs. She has yet to decide which, but one of them will soon feel the touch of her claws.

**Personality/Motivation:** The most important things in Lin Yao's universe are herself and her desires. If she sees something she wants she will stop at nothing to possess it, even to the point of spending more than the item is worth to secure it. She is vain, and spares herself no luxury, exercising more to retain her figure than to hone her fighting skills.

She collects men like toys, playing with one until a new one strikes her fancy, but never releasing the old ones from her grasp. She can be the most ardent lover imaginable, but men who succumb to her charms must devote themselves to her fully. Any lapse can cause her ardor to turn to venomous, jealous rage.

She cannot abide any woman whose appearance rivals hers, and will do whatever is necessary to prove herself superior when she encounters one. She is not above sending presents with traps to disfigure her rival if all else fails.

Were she to find an organization or individual more powerful than the Jade Dragon tong, she would consider abandoning the tong and aligning herself with them. The only stumbling blocks would be her need to ensure her lifestyle did not decrease, and finding a way to remove Chang Hu.

**Quote:** “Come, sit here beside me and let us see if we can resolve our differences in a... civilized... manner.”

**Powers/Tactics:** Lin Yao is a manipulator, not a fighter, and the Jade Dragon's crimes under her leadership reflect this. She stresses crimes like blackmail, extortion, prostitution, and gambling over the traditional drugs importation business.

She knows the basics of kung fu, but prefers to let others, especially Chang Hu, do her fighting. If she is cornered or threatened with serious harm, she will surrender, trusting her rescue to her wiles and her minions.

Her studies of Chinese alchemy have made her a master poisoner. She can produce almost any desired effect, from weakening the will of a reluctant informant to turning his heart to stone in his chest. She can also produce drugs with various effects, depending on the availability of materials.

She will always have some sort of poisoned device to hand, carrying everything from darts

## DIGITAL HERO #2

disguised as ornaments, to cigarettes with poisonous smoke, to lipstick that saps the will. If she knows a conflict is inevitable, she will coat her nails with lethal venom that can be delivered with a scratch.

**Campaign Use:** Lin Yao is designed as a continuing Master Villain in a heroic level Pulp Hero campaign set in 1930. (If your campaign takes place later or earlier, adjust dates as necessary.) She should be presented to the PCs slowly, with small plans being encountered and thwarted first, and then more far-reaching ones as they learn more about her.

Meeting Lin Yao in person should be delayed until the PCs have become enough of a thorn to warrant her individual attention. When that occurs, she will first try to persuade them to turn their interest elsewhere, then try to find information that would let her control one or more of the PCs and barter for their non-interference, resorting to Chang Hu or her poisons and potions only if her other attempts fail.

She can be reasoned or bargained with for information, assistance, and even alchemical potions or drugs by the PCs. The price for such aid will rise directly with the effort involved, and might involve adventures to retrieve rare ingredients she requires for new alchemical preparations.

In genre tradition, she will find one of the male PCs fascinating and try to lure him to her side, first by charm alone, and then using other methods. This process should take place over time, allowing for many role-playing opportunities.

To reduce her power level, cut back the point total of her VPP reserve, or eliminate it entirely and purchase a few preparations individually. To increase it, add some maneuvers and a pair of Damage Classes to her martial arts, or revise her VPP and make her a practitioner of Chinese sorcery.

**Appearance:** Lin Yao is an extremely beautiful Chinese woman, very tall for the period at 5'7½". She has a well-proportioned figure for her height, and accents it with garments that show off her charms to best advantage. Her clothing always shows Chinese influences, even if cut in Western fashion. She may accessorize with small items of jewelry, and normally has a long cigarette holder at hand. She has black eyes and very long black hair. Her nails are long, but not strangely so. She walks like a jungle cat on the prowl, both a warning of her predatory nature, and a dare to those brave enough to test her at the same time.



## SAMPLE ALCHEMICAL PREPARATIONS

### 13 *Fingernail*

*Venom:* RKA  
1d6, NND (+1),  
Does BODY  
(defense is  
appropriate  
immunity, +1);  
Nails Must Do  
BODY (-¼),  
No Range (-½),  
Linked (-¼),  
No KB (-¼),  
4 Charges (-1)

### 9 *Universal*

*Antidote:* Dispel  
Poison 15d6; OAF  
Fragile Difficult  
To Acquire (easily  
spilled or diluted  
drug, ingredients  
difficult to  
acquire; -½),  
No Range (-½),  
1 Charge (-2)

### 8 *Aphrodisiac*

*Perfume:* Mind  
Control 1d6,  
Telepathic (+½),  
Area Of Effect  
(1-Hex; +½),  
Continuous (+1),  
Cumulative (+½),  
Increased  
Cumulative Points  
(48; +¾), NND  
(defense is  
holding one's  
breath or  
appropriate LS:  
Immunity; +½),  
Personal  
Immunity (+¼),  
Uncontrolled  
(power continues  
to affect target  
until all charges  
expended; +½);  
Single Command:  
"You Desire Me"  
(-1), No Range  
(-½), 10 Charges  
(-¼)

- 16 *Heart of Cold Stone Poison:*  
RKA 1d6,  
Continuous (+1),  
Uncontrolled  
(power continues  
to affect target  
until all charges  
are expended;  
+½), NND (+1),  
Does BODY  
(defense is  
appropriate LS:  
Immunity; +1);  
No Range (-½),  
OAF Fragile  
Difficult To  
Acquire (easily  
spilled or diluted  
poison,  
ingredients are  
rare; -1½),  
No KB (-¼),  
6 Charges (-¾)
- 18 *Weakness Darts:*  
Drain STR 4d6,  
Ranged (+½);  
OAF Blowgun  
and Darts (-1),  
Range Based On  
STR (-¼),  
4 Charges (-1)
- 10 *Kiss Of The Dragon's Sleep:*  
Major Transform  
1d6 (normal  
person to person  
in virtually  
undetectable  
suspended  
animation, heals  
back normally)  
Continuous (+1),  
Uncontrolled  
(power continues  
to affect target  
until all Charges  
are spent; +½);  
No Range (-½),  
OAF Fragile  
Difficult To  
Acquire (easily  
spilled or diluted  
drug, ingredients  
are rare; -1½),  
8 Charges (-½)

**Ma Lin Yao**

**The Glorious Jade Dragon Queen**

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
16	DEX	18	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
18	CON	16	13-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
19	INT	9	13-	PER Roll: 13-
17	EGO	14	12-	ECV: 6
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
22	COM	7	13-	
				Total: 5 PD (0 rPD)
				Total: 4 ED (0 rED)
				Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	PD	3		
4	ED	0		
3	SPD	4		
8	REC	4		
41	END	2		
28	STUN	2		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 93**

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

**Cost Powers END**

- 90 *Alchemical Supply:* Variable Power Pool (Poisons Pool), 70 base + 30 control cost; Can Only Be Changed In Quarters (-½), Only For Poisons Or Drugs (-¼)
- 4 *Claws Of The Dragon Queen:* HKA 1 Pip (½d6 with STR); IIF Alchemically Treated Fingernails (-¼)

**Martial Arts: Jade Dragon Kung Fu**

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Block	+2	+2	Block
4 Dodge	+0	+5	Dodge
4 Punch	+1	+3	2d6 Strike
4 Kick	+0	+2	4d6 Strike
3 Escape	+0	+0	25 STR
1 Use Art with Nails			

**Perks**

- 12 Contacts: 4 with very useful Skills or resources
- 45 Followers: 128 50-point Followers
- 10 Fringe Benefit: Tong Lord
- 10 Money: Wealthy
- 4 Reputation: Tong Lord (in criminal/Chinese circles) +3/+3D6

**Talents**

- 4 Double Jointed
- 6 Simulate Death (+3 to roll)

**Skills**

- 9 +3 with Block, Dodge, Escape
- 6 +3 with Blowgun
- 15 +3 with Interaction Skills

- 3 Acrobatics 12-
- 3 Acting 13-
- 3 AK: China 13-
- 3 Breakfall 12-
- 3 Bribery 13-
- 3 Bureaucrats 13-
- 2 CK: New York City 13-
- 3 CK: Shanghai 13-
- 3 Concealment 13-
- 3 Contortionist 13-
- 3 Conversation 13-
- 3 High Society 13-
- 3 Interrogation 13-
- 3 KS: Chinese Alchemy 13-
- 2 KS: Jade Dragon Kung Fu 11-
- 5 KS: Jade Dragon Tong 15-
- 8 KS: Poisons 18-
- 3 KS: Tong World 13-
- 4 Language: Mandarin (native accent) (Cantonese is native)
- 3 Language: English (fluent conversation)
- 3 Persuasion 13-
- 4 PS: Tong Lord 14-
- 7 Seduction 15-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 6 SS: Toxicology 16-
- 3 Well-Connected
- 8 WF: Common Melee, Common Martial Arts Melee, Common Missile, Nails, Blowgun

**Total Powers and Skills Cost: 335**

**Total Character Cost: 428**

**100+ Disadvantages**

- 15 Distinctive Features: Beautiful Chinese Woman (Concealable; Always Noticed)
- 10 Hunted: Jade Dragon Tong Leaders 11- (As Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 10 Hunted: Chang Hu14- (As Pow, Watching)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Selfish Hedonist (Very Common, Moderate)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Manipulative and ambitious (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Ruthless When Will Is Thwarted (Common, Strong)
- 5 Reputation: Tong Lord 11- (Limited Group)
- 10 Rivalry: Professional and Romantic (with other beautiful women, for any reason)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 228 Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 428**



### Chang Hu

**Background/History:** The leaders of the Glorious Jade Dragon tong discovered Chang Hu on the streets of Hangzhou when he was just a boy – and already the size of a full-grown man. Seeing his potential, they took him from the streets and trained him, forging a weapon to destroy their enemies.

As he grew, they made sure he had the best training possible, and that he worked to develop his physical power to undreamt-of peaks. He fought men daily, first singly, then in groups. When they ceased to be a challenge, the tong leaders procured bears and tigers for him to hone his skills against until they too were no challenge. Then, and only then, did the tong leaders unleash him on their enemies.

As he destroyed their enemies one by one, the tong leaders began to grow nervous, looking about for a new task for the giant they had created, lest he turn on them. Ma Lin Yao was their salvation. They assigned Chang Hu to guard and serve her – and to ensure that she did not betray them as she had her earlier masters – and sent him to America with her.

Before he left, knowing of Lin Yao's proficiency with poisons, the leaders gave him a final gift – a draught made from crushed pearls and other, secret ingredients, including a single drop of dragon's blood. The potion did its work, and granted Chang Hu virtual immunity to poisons and drugs, thus making him the perfect guardian for Lin Yao.

**Personality/Motivation:** Looking at him, one would expect Chang Hu to be a dullard – but looks are deceiving. While no genius, he is far from stupid. He says little, but when he speaks, the rumble of his voice gets attention. He has no hobbies outside of honing his skills, and no life outside his service to the tong. His loyalty to the tong is unshakable, even in the face of death. He's suspicious of Lin Yao, but will follow her orders until he determines that she is working against the tong's best interests, or she attempts to leave.

**Quote:** “You die now.”

**Powers/Tactics:** Chang Hu is rarely far from Lin Yao's side unless dispatched on an errand of death. He prefers to fight in close, where his size and strength are an advantage. He's not stupid, and if forced to fight with no chance of closing or if faced with firearms, he will retreat and ambush his opponent at a better time. He prefers to work alone – but only against opponents he deems worthy.

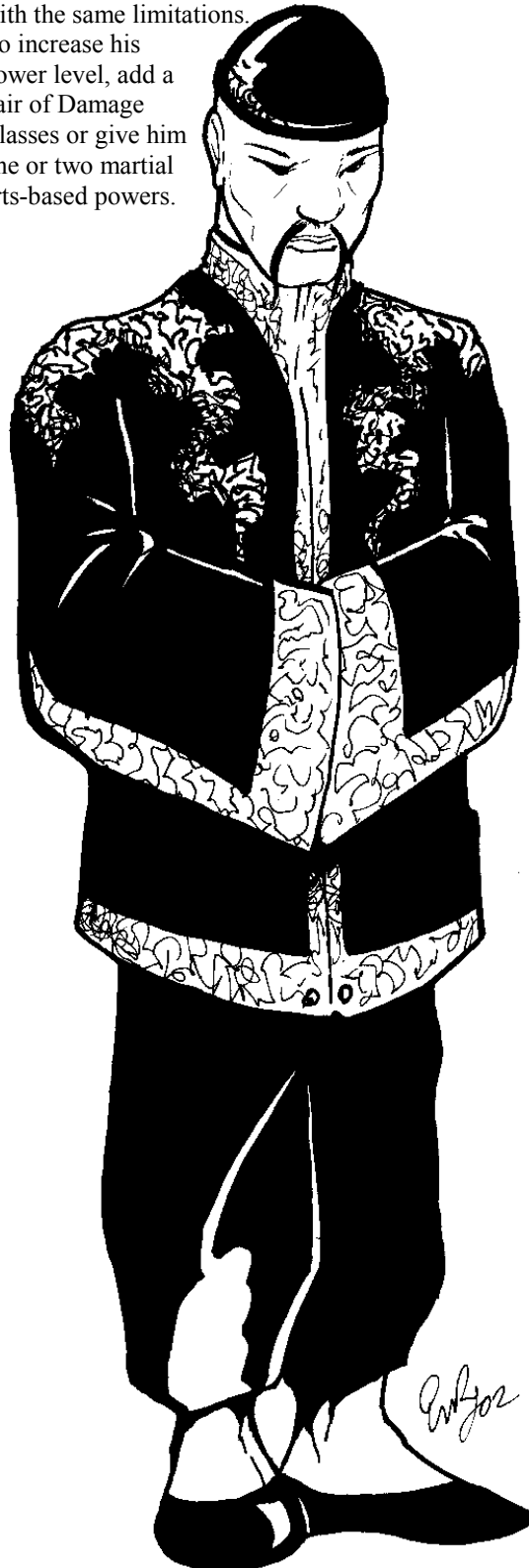
He will test individuals against regular tong enforcers (alone and in groups) and in dangerous situations before committing to a fight. He is not opposed to fighting two or three opponents at once – the challenge is all he lives for. The only

weapons he allows himself besides his hands and feet are several of the tong's trademark hatchets.

**Campaign Use:** Chang Hu is designed to be the unstoppable opponent characters run from until the final fight. He is totally loyal, virtually unstoppable, and very, very dangerous.

To reduce his power level, decrease all statistics to normal human maximum levels, cut back his skill levels, and make his Damage Reduction 25% with the same limitations.

To increase his power level, add a pair of Damage Classes or give him one or two martial arts-based powers.



**Chang Hu**

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	20	14-	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 HTH [2]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 8
23	CON	32	14-	
18	BODY	16	13-	
12	INT	2	11-	PER Roll: 11-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
23	PRE	16	14-	PRE Attack: 4 ½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
10	PD	7		Total: 13 PD (3 rPD)
5	ED	0		Total: 8 ED (3 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
12	REC	4		
50	END	2		
50	STUN	7		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 143**

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

**Cost Powers** **END**

- 17 *Iron Ox Technique:* 50% Damage Resistance vs. PD, Resistant; Must Be Aware Of Attack (-¼); Stun Only (-½)
- 8 *Stance Of The Immovable Mountain:* Knockback Resistance -4"
- 10 *Blood Of The Jade Dragon I:* Life Support (Immune To All Terrestrial Poisons and Drugs)
- 8 *Blood Of The Jade Dragon II:* Power Defense (12 points) Only Protects Versus Chemicals/Poisons/Drugs (-½)

**Martial Arts: Jade Dragon Kung Fu**

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Block	+2	+2	Block
4 Dodge	+0	+5	Dodge
3 Grab	-1	-1	Grab 2 limbs; 40 STR for holding on
4 Knifehand	-2	+0	HKA 1d6 (2d6 w/STR)
4 Nerve Strike	-1	+1	2d6 NND
4 Punch	+0	+2	7d6 Strike
4 Tiger Claw	+0	+0	9d6 Crush; Follows Grab
5 Kick	-2	+1	9d6 Strike
1 Use Art with Hatchet			
4 +3" Running (9" total)			

**Perks**

- 2 Fringe Benefit: Tong Enforcer
- 3 Reputation: Powerful Fighter (to the Martial World) +3/+3d6

**Talents**

- 6 Combat Luck
- 15 Combat Sense 11-

**Skills**

- 10 +2 with DCV
- 12 +4 with Martial Arts
- 5 Analyze Style 12-
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 Climbing 13-
- 10 Defense Maneuver IV
- 3 Interrogation 14-
- 3 KS: Jade Dragon Tong 12-
- 4 KS: Jade Dragon Kung Fu 13-
- 4 KS: Martial Arts Styles 13-
- 4 KS: Martial World 13-
- 4 KS: Tong World 13-
- 4 Language: Mandarin Chinese (native) (Cantonese is native)
- 3 PS: Tong Enforcer 14-
- 9 Shadowing 14-
- 5 Stealth 14-
- 3 Streetwise 14-
- 3 Tracking 11-
- 4 WF: Common Melee; Common Martial Arts Melee

**Total Powers and Skills Cost: 202**

**Total Character Cost: 345**

**100+ Disadvantages**

- 20 Distinctive Features: Huge, Looming Chinese Man (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Major Reaction)
- 10 Hunted: Jade Dragon Tong Leaders 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 10 Hunted: Ma Lin Yao 14- (As Pow, NCI, Easy To Find, Watching)
- 25 Psych Lim: Loyal To Jade Dragon Tong Lords (Very Common, Total)
- 15 Psych Lim: Tests Opponents Before Challenging Them (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psych Lim: Overconfident (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psych Lim: Vengeful (Uncommon, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: Lethal Tong Enforcer 14- (to the Martial World)
- 10 Rivalry: Professional (with other martial artists, seeks to harm or kill rival)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders And Responsible For Underling's Failures (Very Frequently, Major)
- 100 Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 345**

**Appearance:** Chang Hu is seven feet tall, scarred, and heavily muscled. He has black eyes and black hair, and normally shaves his head. He cultivates a mandarin-style moustache that hangs to his chin. He dresses in a traditional round, brimless cap and matching robes that will hide his hatchets.

