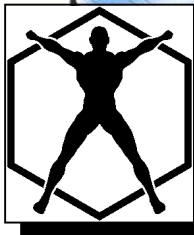


DIGITAL HERO

#4

OCT 2002



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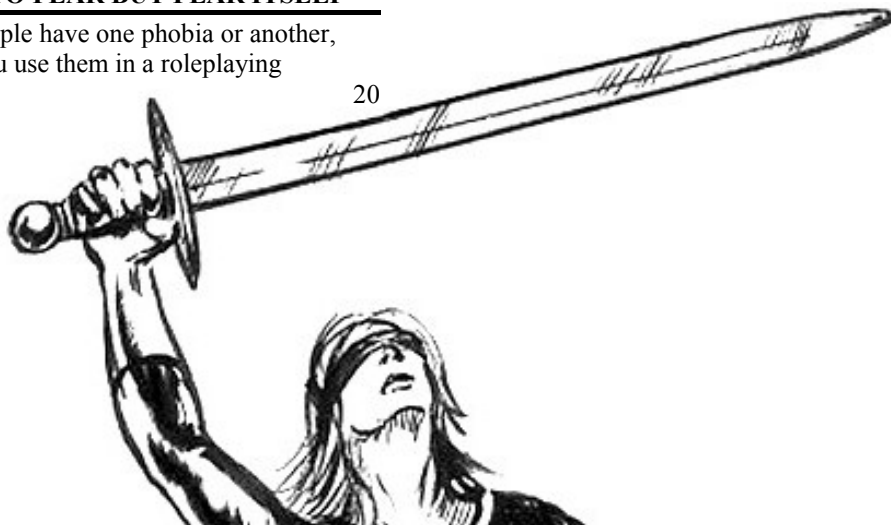
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DIGITAL HERO

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Issue #4 (October 2002)



When We Last Left Our Heroes...

by Steven S. Long

Things have been fairly quiet here at Hero Games since last issue. After the hectic convention months of July and August, a slow September is just what we needed!

Thanks to a few delays at the printer, our September books ran a bit behind, but hopefully we're more or less back on track. The *HERO System Resource Kit* shipped several days before this issue of DH hit "the stands," and *Champions Universe* should have printed and shipped by the time you're reading this column.

Meanwhile, work has progressed on our other titles. Next up in the Hero Hit Parade is *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*, which should ship from the printer in mid-late October. It's a 224-page enemies book for *Champions*, featuring 91 villains, plus assorted agents, vehicles, and such. Each villain comes complete with three plot seeds, a "campaign use" section discussing how to use the character in your game (including how to increase and decrease the character's power to make him fit your game better), and all the usual information you expect from a Hero enemies book. Additionally, Andy and I have filled the book with colorful quotes, text boxes containing useful tidbits of information, and other such goodies. Rounding out the book is a large summary chart describing the villains by type and modus operandi so you can easily pick just the right one for the scenario you have in mind. We'll have a few outtakes from the book here in *Digital Hero* in next month's issue.

To The Stars...

November should see the release of our second genre book, *Star Hero*. Written by renowned game designer and SF author Jim Cambias, *Star Hero* is chock-full of science fiction gaming goodness. It starts with a review of the major subgenres, elements, and themes of the genre – Low SF, Space Opera, Military SF, Cyberpunk, time travel, utopias and dystopias, meta-genres, mixing genres, and so forth. Next comes a big, meaty character creation chapter with dozens of Package Deals suitable for a wide variety of SF settings, plus extensive notes on using the elements of the *HERO System* to design just the sort of character you want. Following character creation are several chapters devoted to setting creation – the nuts and bolts of designing galaxies, stars, planets, aliens, and alien civilizations for a *Star Hero* game. These chapters include lots of random generation tables for GMs who want to quickly "roll up" part of their *Star Hero* universe.

The next two chapters touch on technology. The first looks at the subject in general, with discussions of how to establish "tech levels" for your game, the role of technology in *Star Hero* campaigns, how characters interact with technology, and so forth. It reviews the major types of technology found in SF settings, and shows how to create them in *HERO System* terms. If you want to know how solar power stacks up against fusion power, the difference between a laser pistol and an ion blaster, or how to create an energy blade, *Star Hero* tells you how! The tech chapter also has suggested guidelines for pricing equipment in *SH* games. The second tech chapter covers starships, other types of vehicles, and space stations, including expanded rules for starship combat, with information on both "dramatic" and "realistic" portrayals and use of ships and their tech.

The last three main chapters of the book cover time travel, psionics, and gamemastering. The GMing chapter includes information on *Star Hero* environments, establishing campaign guidelines and standards, GMing Disadvantages in a science fiction setting, creating appropriate NPCs and villains, and other great stuff. Last but not least, the book has a chapter detailing ten sample characters – five heroes (the roguish explorers and merchants of Argos Exploration) and five of their adversaries. These characters all come from Hero's Terran Empire setting, the subject of our first *Star Hero* supplement (which is also being written by Jim Cambias).

And Coming Soon...

After *Star Hero* there are plenty of other cool books coming up – *Ninja Hero*, *The Ultimate Vehicle*, and lots more. But you'll have to wait until next month's column to learn about them. ☺

– Steven S. Long
HERO System Line Developer



HEROglyphs by Steven S. Long

A Lucky Break

PROBABILITY ALTERATION IN THE HERO SYSTEM

In the *HERO System 5th Edition*, there are two primary ways you can create abilities reflecting a character's unusually high level of luckiness or unluckiness – the appropriately named Power *Luck* and Disadvantage *Unluck*. Both are a lot of fun (well maybe *Unluck*'s only fun if your enemies have it...) and add a lot of flavor to the game.

These game elements suffer from a few difficulties. First, they're more reactive than proactive – they sort of abandon the character to his fate, in the hopes he'll get the right roll he needs (or bad roll he doesn't want) to be lucky/unlucky. (Of course, that's not necessarily inappropriate, given the subject matter!) Second, the result of using them, if they succeed, is somewhat vague. Unless you use some of the optional rules described on 5E 128, the elements are pretty much left up to the GM to resolve as he sees fit, which isn't always satisfying. Third, it's difficult to find ways to apply them to other characters – sometimes-awkward constructions involving *Usable By Others* and Transform (normal person to person with *Unluck*, a Major Transform) are required. It's also possible for characters to buy suites of powers, including Skill Levels of various sorts, and use "luckiness" as a special effect, though again that strikes many gamers as a little "clunky."

However, the power to alter probabilities – whether consciously or unconsciously – is a relatively common one in the inspirational literature. Comic book superheroes have the mutant power to "manipulate fate"; fantasy wizards can cast curses that inflict bad luck (or the gods can bless a deserving hero with good fortune all his life); daring pulp heroes seem to possess an instinctual ability to tip the odds in their favor through clever tactics or dumb luck. Although it's already possible to simulate these abilities with the existing *HERO System* rules, in the interest of ease of use it might be fun to try to come up with a better way, one with more specific rules for the effects of the ability.

As I started thinking about this, a couple of incidents occurred that sort of spurred my thought process. First, my good friend Greg Smith, well-known to most of you as a member of Hero's All-Star Artist Squadron, called me with a rules question. One of the players in his games wanted to give his character the ability to re-roll missed rolls – not every roll, necessarily, just some rolls. This is a fairly common

mechanic in many roleplaying game systems, but there's no precedent for it in the *HERO System*.

Greg's player had tried to achieve the same result with a rather convoluted use of Duplication, and Greg wanted to know my thoughts on the matter. I suggested that the player should instead try a Limited form of Extra-Dimensional Movement to travel back in time a millisecond or two and re-roll the missed roll. However, while better than the Duplication solution, that still didn't leave me satisfied.

Second, I had the chance to play a game of *HeroClix*, the Marvel Comics-based miniatures game from WizKids; I'm sure many of you are familiar with it. Some of the characters in *HeroClix*, such as the Black Panther and the Scarlet Witch, have probability-altering powers. The former has *Outwit*, which allows him to strip a power away from another figure temporarily (the special effect being "special maneuvering and tactics on the other team's part"); the latter has a *Probability Control* power through which she can grant re-rolls to her teammates, or force her opponents to make them. It occurred to me that it might be interesting to try to model similar abilities in *HERO System* terms.

So, after giving the matter some thought, here's what I came up with, just as a sort of experiment:

PROBABILITY ALTERATION

Special Power
Instant
Self Only

A character with this Special Power has the ability to alter probabilities affecting him, making it more likely he will succeed at tasks. Some examples of Probability Alteration include a mutant superhero's extraordinary super-luck, a wizard's power to alter fate with a spell, or a pulp adventurer's unending string of "lucky breaks."

Probability Alteration costs 10 Character Points. It allows a character to re-roll any one roll during a game session. (At the GM's option, he may change this to "an adventure," "a scenario," "per day," or some other unit of time more acceptable to him.) A character may re-roll any roll – a Skill Roll, Characteristic Roll, PER Roll, Attack Roll, damage roll, Effect Roll, or the like – unless the GM specifically forbids the character to apply the power to a given roll for some reason. For each additional +10 Character Points, the character may re-roll one more roll during the game session. (The GM may establish restrictions on how many re-rolls a character can



have per session.) Probability Alteration costs END to use.

Every roll a character makes counts as a separate and distinct roll for purposes of being modified with Probability Alteration. For example:

- ♣ for a Killing Attack, the Attack Roll, BODY damage roll, and STUN Multiplier roll are all separate rolls
- ♦ if a character wants to make a Complementary Skill roll, both the roll for the Complementary Skill, and the roll for the Skill the character wants to use, are separate rolls (a character cannot use Probability Alteration to modify a Complementary Skill roll made by another character on his behalf unless his Probability Alteration is Usable On Others, but he could still modify his own roll)
- ♥ if several characters make Teamwork rolls, each roll counts as a separate roll
- ♠ if a character has to make two Required Skill Rolls to activate a single power, each counts as a separate roll

Using Probability Alteration is an action which takes no time. A character must declare that he wants to use it immediately after the roll in question is made, before the effects of that roll are applied to a character or otherwise brought into play.

A character using Probability Alteration must accept the second roll made, regardless of whether it's better or worse for him than the first roll. The fates are not always kind. However, a character who has more than one re-roll per game session may use additional re-rolls to take a third, fourth, or further try at getting the result he wants on a given roll.

ADVANTAGES

Always Favorable (+1, +2): Probability Alteration with this Advantage always favors the character using it. For a +1 Advantage, if the re-roll creates a worse result for him than the original roll, he may use the original roll instead. For a +2 Advantage, the character's re-roll must be better than the original roll; if it is not, he may keep re-rolling (without using up any addition re-rolls he's bought) until he gets a better result.

If this Advantage is applied to Probability Alteration Usable As Attack, reverse the effects: for a +1 Advantage, the target has to use the worse of the two rolls; for a +2 Advantage, the target has to keep rolling until he gets a result worse than the original roll.

Area Of Effect, Autofire: Characters cannot apply either of these Advantages to Probability Alteration; see *Usable By Others*, below, for information on affecting multiple persons with this Power.

Continuous: Characters cannot apply this Advantage to Probability Alteration.

Usable By Others: Characters often apply the *Usable By Others* Advantage to this Power to create the ability to influence the probabilities affecting other characters. If bought with Usable By Other, the character can grant a re-roll to another character if that character wants it. This does not, however, change the overall number of re-rolls a character can make per session – every one re-roll he grants another character is one less he can make himself. Buying Probability Alteration as Usable Simultaneously is not possible, since only one character ever makes a given roll. (At the GM's option, a character might be able to apply Usable Simultaneously and affect one roll by each of several persons during the Phase in which he activates the power.) If Probability Alteration is bought Usable As Attack, it allows a character (if he succeeds with an Attack Roll, per normal for such powers) to force another character to re-roll a roll he succeeded at.

LIMITATIONS

Charges: Characters should not take this Limitation on Probability Alteration without the GM's permission. The power already defines the number of rolls a character can make in a specific time period. The GM might, however, allow a character with multiple re-rolls per game session to apply Charges to restrict how many times the character can make re-rolls during each game day, or allow Charges with Burnout.

Probability Alteration Cost: 10 Character Points for the ability to re-roll one roll per game session.

Luck And Power Modifiers

Another interesting issue related to the concept of luck, as embodied in the *Luck* Power, concerns Power Modifiers. Not all Advantages and Limitations should apply to Luck, and some apply in unusual ways.

ADVANTAGES

The following Advantages are generally inapplicable to Luck: Armor Piercing, AVLD, Autofire, BOECV, Damage Shield, Does BODY, Does Knockback, Double Knockback, Duration Advantages, Explosion, Hole In The Middle, Indirect, Invisible Special Effects, MegaScale, NND, Penetrating, Personal Immunity, Range Advantages, Ranged, Reduced Endurance, Transdimensional, and Uncontrolled.

Affects Desolidified: This Power Advantage isn't necessary for Luck. The results of a Luck roll can already affect Desolidified characters (if appropriate), and he can already grant Usable By Other Luck to a Desolidified character normally.

On a related point: a Desolidified character's Luck does not need the *Affects Physical World* Advantage to "rub off" on solid characters if he rolls four or more levels of Luck.

Area Of Effect: This Power Advantage is inapplicable to Luck. If a character wants to allow other characters to use his Luck, he should take the *Usable On Others* Advantage for the Power (see below), or buy four or more Luck dice so he can achieve enough levels of Luck for them to "cascade" down to other people.

Cumulative: At the GM's discretion, a character might be able to apply Cumulative to Luck to add the Luck dice together, instead of simply looking for sixes. Every six total points rolled equals one level of Luck. For example, ordinarily a roll of 3, 4, and 2 means no Luck effect, since the character didn't roll a 6 on any one die. With Cumulative, that roll equals one level of Luck, because the numbers add up to 6 or more. Had the dice rolled 4, 5, and 5, totaling 14, the character would have gotten two levels of Luck, since he got 12 total points' worth of effect. If the GM allows this, characters cannot increase the maximum effect they can roll on the dice by buying additional +¼ Advantages.

Delayed Effect, Time Delay, and Trigger:

These Advantages might apply to lucky talismans, luck spells, potions of good fortune, and other such items.

Sticky: Ordinarily, only powers with a "physical special effect" can be made Sticky (*HERO System 5th Edition*, page 173). However, at the GM's option, a character can apply this Advantage to Luck, so that anyone who comes into contact with him in the same Phase he succeeds with a Luck roll also receives the benefit of the roll. This could cause game balance problems, so GMs should be wary of allowing it... but on the other hand, it can just easily benefit the character's enemies as his friends....

Usable On Others: Characters may apply *Usable By Other* or *Usable Simultaneously* to grant Luck to others, or create a form of Luck that affects several people at once. Luck *Usable As Attack* is possible, but since it only makes an opponent luckier, it's rarely (if ever) bought.

Variable Advantages: A character may apply this Advantage to Luck at the +¼ level to allow him to switch between any of the Advantages indicated here as being allowable for Luck.

Variable Special Effects: The outcome of a successful Luck roll can take many forms, involving many different physical objects or types of energy. Variable Special Effects is not required because of this.

LIMITATIONS

Most Limitations can apply to Luck in the normal manner. Here are notes on some special applications:

Limited Power: The *5th Edition* provides, on page 128, two example Luck powers that both include a *Limited Power* Limitation. Typically, a Limited Power applied to Luck restricts the times or places when the character can use his Luck. For example, a Luck-charm provided by faeries might only apply as long as the character remains in the enchanted forest, or a Luck-blessing from a god might only work while the character performs a specific mission for the god.

One interesting Limited Power specific to Luck is *Karmic* (-½). This signifies a form of Luck that depends on a character's good and proper conduct. The character has to have a specific code of conduct to follow, as defined by his player and GM; typically, these codes involving having to "perform good deeds" or otherwise act in a heroic fashion. As long as the character does what he's supposed to, he has "good karma" – his Luck works in the normal fashion. If he doesn't follow his code, or if he tries to skirt around its restrictions, his Luck works less well: he may get to roll fewer Luck dice, or no dice at all, or he could even acquire some temporary Unluck!

Gamemasters should be wary about letting characters apply Limitations like *Self Only* or *Others Only* to Luck. The effects of Luck are often broad enough to benefit an entire group generally, even if a character only rolls three or fewer levels of Luck, so such Limitations often are not sufficiently restrictive to qualify as valid Limitations.

Requires A Skill Roll: As noted in the rulebook, characters can take a Luck roll as a Required Skill Roll. In this case, typically the character can make the Luck roll whenever he wants to activate the power – but a successful roll simply activates the power, it doesn't also provide any Luck effect. If the character can only make the Luck roll when the GM allows (as is normally the case with Luck), he should get an additional $\frac{1}{2}$ value for the Limitation.

The main difficulty with Requires A Luck Roll is determining how to apply the Active Point penalty. For most forms of this Limitation, characters should take the “no Active Point penalty” modifier. If that's not appropriate, the player and the GM should work out a way that fits the power and special effects. Typically, the best method is to determine what the normal Active Point penalty would be (-1 per 10 Active Points), and then subtract one die of Luck for a certain increment of penalty (maybe -1 die per -1 penalty, or -3 penalty, or the like). As a default rule, subtract one die of luck for every -2 worth of penalty. If the character only subtracts one die for every -4 worth of penalty, the Limitation is worth $\frac{1}{4}$ less value; if he subtracts one die for every -1 worth of penalty, the Limitation is worth $\frac{1}{2}$ more value; if there's no Active Point penalty, the Limitation is worth $\frac{1}{2}$ less value.

Side Effects: Unluck is a common Side Effect for Luck – if the character's not lucky, he's unlucky. That makes Luck a real gamble... but in some ways, that's the whole point.



HERO Universe

by Darren Watts

Hello again, Hero Fans, and welcome to another installment of *Hero Universe*, the column that fills in the gaps in the Official Record of Hero History. Our subject today is a villain who rated only a cursory mention in *Champions Universe* but deserves a second look: the lethal Lemurian known as Leviathan!

Campaign Power Level: 200+150

Active Period: 1976-current

Leviathan

Background/History: Leviathan (whose birth name he has long forgotten) is a Lemurian, a member of the ancient subterranean race who sank their own continent accidentally many thousands of years ago (see *Champions Universe*). Leviathan himself is over a hundred years old, which makes him a callow youth by Lemurian terms. However, Leviathan is a rare throwback to the ancient stock of his people before the Cataclysm. Standing over eight feet tall, with dark scaly skin rippling with muscles, Leviathan from an early age towered over his peers and therefore had great status within the Lemurians' warrior-based culture. Even before reaching his full growth, he was being groomed by the training academy to be a general in the army and eventually to lead Lemurian forces in wars against humanity and their protectors, the Emypreans.

However, fate had other plans for the young warrior. In 1976, a complicated plot by the Lemurian priest Leptor required an assault on the undersea city of Atlantis, and due to his unique mutations, Leviathan was chosen to lead it. Unfortunately, the attack came at a time when the Fabulous Five were visiting Queen Mara, and with their aid, the attack was repulsed and Leviathan himself was defeated in personal combat by Diamond. Leviathan was temporarily imprisoned in Atlantis, but escaped along with several other criminals when Atlantis was subsequently attacked by the mad scientist Professor Morlak. Striking up a friendship with his fellow aquatic villain Moray, Leviathan chose not to return to Lemuria but instead live among the far more entertaining humans. He began accepting mercenary assignments, working as a henchman or bodyguard for various powerful supervillains. Though he's battled any number of superheroes, he's rarely been cleanly defeated, and on those few occasions he's usually avoided lengthy incarceration (save for one two-year stint in Stronghold, which did little to rehabilitate him but did introduce him to a number of new potential employers.) Very few people are aware that Leviathan is actually not human – most assume he is a mutate of some sort.

Personality/Motivation: For all of Leviathan's alien qualities, he's actually not a hard guy to get along with. He enjoys drinking, fighting, and hanging out with the guys; it's just that "the guys" he hangs out with tend to be supervillains. He isn't stupid, though he's not very well educated, and he has enough common sense and general knowledge of tactics to occasionally surprise a hero with a clever ploy. He has a childish sense of honor, and will be surprisingly hurt if someone he thought was a friend or ally turns on him. He pushes around the weak because that's what the strong are supposed to do. He selects what jobs he will accept based on the likelihood of entertaining conflicts and slugfests, especially if a rematch is promised with somebody he's tangled with before. He has little use for most of the money he earns on his jobs, since he lives in an underwater cave off the coast of Los Angeles – he only insists on payment because it makes him look more "professional."

Quote: "Hey, Ironclad! This time I'm gonna knock you into next week!"

Powers/Tactics: Leviathan is mostly a straightforward brick, who prefers to go toe-to-toe with similar opponents. However, he's bright enough to realize that his comfort underwater gives him a tactical edge on most opponents, and he'll try to maneuver as many of his fights into the nearest body of water as he can. When working in the ocean, he will use his summoning powers to travel with a pack of sharks or orcas for companionship as well as combat support. (He genuinely enjoys the company of these creatures and will be particularly angry if they are killed or harmed).

Campaign Use: Leviathan makes a handy lieutenant for a master criminal working on or near the water – he's brighter and tougher than most henchmen, and may surprise the PCs both with his strength and resourcefulness. Although he has little love for his fellow Lemurians, he might return to their aid if they faced a crisis. And he particularly doesn't care for Prince Marus, who has beaten him on a couple of occasions.

Leviathan would be likely to hunt a PC if he felt that individual had treated him unfairly or beaten him by luck (which accounts in his mind for most of his defeats.) The more public and humiliating a defeat was, the more likely Leviathan would seek some sort of revenge.

Leviathan

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
65	STR	55	22-	Lift 200 t; 13d6 HTH
17	DEX	21	12-	OCV: 6/ DCV: 6
35	CON	50	16-	
23	BODY	26	14-	
11	INT	1	11-	PER Roll: 11-
13	EGO	6	12-	ECV: 4
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
				Total: 28 PD (20 rPD)
25	ED	18		Total: 25 ED (20 rED)
5	SPD	23		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
20	REC	0		
70	END	0		
75	STUN	1		

Total Characteristics Cost: 228

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Swimming: 22"/44"

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Thick Blubbery Skin:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%	0
20	<i>Toughness:</i> Damage Resistance (20 rPD / 20 rED)	0
20	<i>Claws:</i> 1d+1 HKA (2½d6 with STR)	2
8	<i>Underwater Adaptation:</i> Life Support: Safe Environments (High Pressure, Intense Cold), Expanded Breathing (Underwater)	0
25	<i>Super-swimming:</i> Swimming +20" (22" total), Reduced Endurance (½ END, +¼)	1
27	<i>Hypersensitive Sonar:</i> Detect Physical Objects, Targeting, Sense, Increased Arc of Perception (360 Degrees), Active	0
15	<i>Regeneration:</i> Healing 2d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (1 Turn, -1¼), Self Only (-½)	0
4	<i>Lemurian Lifespan:</i> Longevity (Ages at 1/16 normal rate)	0
65	<i>Calling The Terrors Of The Deep:</i> Summon 8 250-point Sea Creatures, Any Sea Creature (+½), Loyal (+½); Creature Must Inhabit Locale (-½), Creature Arrives Under Its Own Power (-½)	0
25	<i>Speaking With Sea Creatures:</i> Mind Link with Any Sea Creatures, Up To 8 Minds	0

Perks/Talents

- 4 Environmental Movement (Underwater)
- 4 Contact: Arvad, King of Lemuria (Very Useful, Contact Has Significant Contacts Of His Own, 8-)

Skills

- 16 +2 with All Combat
- 10 +2 with Hand-to-Hand Combat
- 3 AK: Lemuria 12-
- 2 AK: Oceans of the World 11-
- 3 Language: English (Fluent with Accent), Lemurian native
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 3 Survival 11-
- 3 Tactics 11-
- 2 WF: Common Melee Weapons

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 292

Total Cost: 520

200+ Disadvantages

- 20 Distinctive Features: Enormous Scaly Monster (Not Concealable, Extreme)
- 20 Enraged: When Cheated or Betrayed (Uncommon, go 14-, recover 11-)
- 20 Hunted: Archon 8- (Mo Pow, Imprison)
- 15 Hunted: Prince Marus 8- (As Pow, Imprison)
- 20 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (As Pow, NCI, Imprison)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Clumsy, Clawed Hands (-2 to DEX rolls involving fine manipulation) (Frequent, Great)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Inconvenient Size (8 feet, 700 pounds) (Frequent, Slight)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Bully (Common, Moderate)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Overconfident (Common, Total)
- 20 Vulnerability: 1½ x STUN & BODY from Fire Attacks (Common)
- 150 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 520

To scale Leviathan down for a lower-point campaign, simply reduce his strength and remove his Damage Reduction. Conversely, it's easy to scale him up simply by adding strength and increasing his Damage Reduction to 50% or even more.

Appearance: Leviathan is a huge scaly monster, standing eight feet tall and weighing over seven hundred pounds. His skin is a dark, mottled green and covered in sharp scales. His back has a ridge of short horns running along his spine, and his hairless skull has a pronounced brow ridge. His hands and feet have thick, blunt claws that make fairly effective weapons.



Leviathan



A NOTE TO MY READERS

Although I have tried to touch on some of the more interesting portions of Alexander VI's life in this article, his eleven-year papacy was so politically byzantine, so insanely violent, and so socially complex that I advise further reading to more fully understand this wicked and puzzling man. If you go to crimelibrary.com and type "Borgia" into their search, you will find some excellent (if racy) additional material.

ON LUCREZIA BORGIA

"She is of middle height and graceful of form; her face is rather long, as is her nose; her hair is golden, her eyes gray, her mouth rather large, the teeth brilliantly white, her bosom smooth and white and admirably proportioned. Her whole being exudes good humor and gaiety."

– Niccolo Cagnolo, courtier in the court of Ferrara



You Gotta Have Character

by Jason Walters

"Life is lived forwards, but understood backwards" – Kierkegaard

"Once he became Pope Alexander VI, Vatican parties, already wild, grew wilder. They were costly, but he could afford the lifestyle of a Renaissance prince; as vice chancellor of the Roman Church, he had amassed enormous wealth. As guests approached the papal palace, they were excited by the spectacle of living statues: naked, gilded young men and women in erotic poses. Flags bore the Borgia arms, which, appropriately, portrayed a red bull rampant on a field of gold. Every fete had a theme. One, known to Romans as the Ballet of the Chestnuts, was held on October 30, 1501. The indefatigable Burchard describes it in his Diarium. After the banquet dishes had been cleared away, the city's fifty most beautiful prostitutes danced with the guests, "first clothed, then naked." The dancing over, the "ballet" began, with the Pope and two of his children in the best seats. Candelabras were set up on the floor, scattered among them were chestnuts, "which," Burchard writes, "the courtesans had to pick up, crawling between the candles." Then the serious sex started..."

– William Manchester's *A World Lit Only by Fire: The Medieval Mind and The Renaissance* (1992)

Pope Alexander VI has become an almost mythical historical character with countless legends attached to his name. He was a villain of the grandest sort, an ingenious perverted criminal mastermind who ascended to the most powerful position in Renaissance Europe through a combination of bribery, nepotism, and murder. His exploits (along with those of his son Cesare) served as an inspiration to Nicolo Machiavelli when he composed his now infamous work *The Prince* (1513). Modern historians generally agree that during Alexander VI's pontificate the Catholic Church was brought to the lowest level of degradation in its two thousand year history... and it was certainly clear to all of 15th Century Italy that he regarded the papacy entirely as an instrument of his family's criminal schemes, giving almost no thought to the position's spiritual aspects. Strangely enough, he was also one of history's great patrons of the arts, for it

was during this same corrupt papacy that a new architectural era was initiated in Rome with the coming of the builder/artist Bramante. In addition, the great Renaissance painters Raphael, Michelangelo, and Pinturicchio all worked on various projects for Alexander VI. It is a curious contrast in human nature that a man so firmly steeped in greed, vice, and crime could take pleasure in the most exquisite works of art his civilization could produce.

Background/History: Pope Alexander VI was born Rodrigo Borgia in 1431 near Valencia, Spain. His uncle, Alfonso de Borgia, became Pope Callixtus III when he assumed the throne of Saint Peter in 1455. Seventy-seven and stricken with gout, Callixtus' candidacy was a "safe" compromise between two competing factions of cardinals within the Church. What serious harm, they probably thought, could an old and sick man possibly do in the few years left to him? The answer: if he's a Borgia, plenty.

As soon as he became Pope, Callixtus III immediately began to organize an, ah, "crusade" to liberate Christian Constantinople from the heathen Turks. To pay for this project, he began to sell off various "minor" household Vatican items (like solid gold artwork and priceless ancient books) before offering indulgences, cardinalates, annulments, and grants of papal territories in exchange for money. He followed this up by imposing extra taxes upon the population of the Papal States (the church's private country). Yet for some strange reason his "crusade" somehow never seemed to get off the ground.

Meanwhile Rodrigo, whom Callixtus III had made a cardinal at the age of twenty-five (1456) and then promoted to vice-chancellor of the Holy See (1457), was busy amassing enormous wealth. He lived an openly promiscuous life, fathering at least seven children while still a cardinal. Of the many mistresses he was to have throughout his life, the one for whom his passion proved greatest was a certain Vannoza dei Cattani (b. 1442) – a widower of three successive husbands (all of whom died under mysterious circumstances). She bore him four children, which he publicly acknowledged as his own: the unlucky Giovanni (duke of Gandia; b. 1474), the infamous Cesare (b. 1476), the beautiful Lucrezia (b. 1480), and the unremarkable Goffredo (b. 1481). Things got so out of hand at one point that Pius II, who eventually succeeded Callixtus III, had to warn the young cardinal to refrain from his practice of participating in orgies. It was, as Pius expressed it, "unseemly."

artwork by Jason Walters

By the time he died, Callixtus' heavy-handed methods of raising money, his blatant nepotism, and his racist pronouncements against European Jews had created opposition to his papacy in France, Germany, and even his own native Spain. As soon as his body was cold, the Italians turned on all of Callixtus' Spanish generals, administrators, and cronies (who fled Rome in terror). All, that is, except for his clever nephew, Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, who completely avoided the wrath of the populace. He was to enjoy the support (or at least the tolerance) of four different Popes over his thirty-four-year career of profitable graft as vice-chancellor before taking a stab at the Throne of Saint Peter in 1492. According to Church historians, in no previous or subsequent election of Pope have such immense sums of money been spent on bribery; the bargaining was fierce, and when the votes were finally counted, his victory hinged on the purchase of the vote of a senile ninety-six-year-old cardinal who, apparently, wasn't too crazy to understand the value of cold hard cash. At age sixty-one, Rodrigo Borgia was reborn at Pope Alexander VI, leader of the largest organized church in the entire world.

The first thing Alexander did as Pope was eliminate simony – which was, of course, the very means by which he had purchased the papacy in the first place. That unseemly matter out of the way, Alexander was free to concentrate his efforts on his principal interests: the acquisition of gold, the pursuit of women, and the promotion of his family. He made his son Cesare, then only eighteen, a cardinal, along with the older brother of his *15-year-old mistress* Alessandro Farnese. He then arranged in rapid succession three profitable marriages for his teenage daughter Lucrezia, annulling the first to Giovanni Sforza (money but no title) when it was no longer useful. With the help of his ever-ruthless son Cesare, he “disposed” of the second husband Prince Alfonso of Aragon (title but no money), conveniently making Lucrezia a widow. She finally settled down with the Prince of Ferrara, Alfonso d'Este (title AND money) – a strong silent type, whose interests included artillery, music, and brothels. Proving far too tough for her father and brother to bump off, she remained happily married to him for the rest of her life... except for the odd fling with the poet Pietro Bembo, who wisely hoofed it out of Ferrara before her husband could get his hands on him.

Alexander was keenly interested in expanding his political influence, traveling throughout the Papal States and the conquered nation of Romagna (he and Caesar conquered it *while he was the Pope*). Lucrezia was often left officially in charge of running the entire Catholic Church while Alexander and Caesar were

otherwise occupied – which generally meant they were busily experimenting with what we would now call a “corrupt police state.” Under the Borgias, the condition of Rome began to deteriorate rapidly. The city swarmed with Spanish adventurers, assassins, prostitutes, and informers. Politically motivated murder and robbery were committed with near impunity, while heretics, Jews, and Muslims were admitted into the city upon payment of bribes. The Pope himself quickly cast aside all show of decorum and lived a nearly secular life. He chased young women, danced with prostitutes, acted in stage plays, and hosted magnificent orgies. One of his good drinking companions was Jem, the brother of the Ottoman Sultan, who had been detained as a “hostage” of the church. Their prowls through Rome's cathouses were the stuff of legend.

In spite of all of these demanding extra-curricular activities, Alexander still found time to involve himself in a series of self-serving political intrigues, which helped contribute to the misery of the Italian people. During the 15th and 16th Centuries, the Italian peninsula was broken up into a variety of tiny, constantly bickering nations such as Naples, Genoa, and Venice – as well as a number of city-states, independent baronies, and papal holdings. These political entities were, in turn, controlled by competing “great” families (of which the Borgia were but one) who constantly fought amongst themselves for position across national borders. This chaotic, near-medieval situation left the Italians ripe for conquest and exploitation by the newly emerging nations of Spain and France, both of which had recently been unified under strong monarchies. By constantly playing one side off against another, Alexander embroiled both the Church and the Papal States in a series of military conflicts involving France, Spain, Naples, Milan, Florence, and Venice. Alexander, always ready to seize any opportunity to promote himself and his family, carried on a constant double policy by temporarily allying with whatever faction, house, or nation seemed strongest at any given moment. This complicated, self-centered scheming eventually resulted in France's short-lived conquest of the entire peninsula in a 1495 campaign which, while producing absolutely no long term material gain for anyone involved, left the land and its people ravaged by war.

The personal lives of the Borgias were no less turbulent, constantly filled with violent episodes (usually, but not always, Cesare's), chaotic love affairs (usually, but not always, Lucrezia's), and nearly constant financial greed (always Alexander's). Soap-opera like drama was commonplace since Alexander liked to forge alliances by marrying his volatile children into various great houses. For instance, he linked his power to that of Naples by marrying Lucrezia to

OH, BROTHEL

“The Papal Palace had literally become a house of prostitution where harlots sit upon the throne of Solomon and signal to the passerby. Whoever can pay enters and does what he wishes.”

– Friar Girolamo Savonarola, shortly before Alexander condemned him as a heretic, had him publicly castrated, hanged, and finally burned in the Plaza Della Signoria

FORTUNE SMILES

“So died Pope Alexander, at the height of glory and prosperity.... There was in him, and in full measure, all vices both of flesh and spirit.... There was in him no religion, no keeping of his word. He promised all things liberally, but bound himself to nothing that was not useful to himself. He had no care for justice, since in his days Rome was a den of thieves and murderers. Nevertheless, his sins meeting with no punishment in this world, he was to the last of his days most prosperous. In one word, he was more evil and more lucky than, perhaps, any other Pope for many ages before.”

– Francesco Guicciardini, Chamberlain and Borgia Crony

SOME OF THE EVIL WHICH CESARE BORGIA HATH DONE

Conquered the small nation of Romagna with an unprovoked attack in February 1500. He dragged the Lady of Romagna Caterina Sforza through the streets of Rome in golden chains.

Cut off the tongue and hand of a drunken reveler for insulting him.

Sentenced to drowning in the Tiber a Venetian who had written a pamphlet criticizing him.

Slept with one brother's wife, then stabbed another brother seven times before slitting his throat and dumping his body in the Tiber

Strangled his brother-in-law as he was recovering from wounds incurred during an earlier attempt on his life by Cesare's henchmen.

SCANDAL

"The latter [Popes] are forgiven nothing, because everything is expected from them, wherefore the vices lightly passed over in a Louis XIV become most offensive and scandalous in Alexander VI."

– De Maistre speaks of Popes in his great work *Du Pape*

Prince Alphonso of Aragon, an important principality within that nation. Then, when that alliance proved no longer important, he had Cesare first mug, then strangle, his son-in-law (Burchard recorded in his diary "Since Don Alfonso refused to die of his wounds, he was strangled in his bed.") Earlier, he had attempted to solidify his position with the kingdom of Aragon and Naples by marrying his younger son, Goffredo, to Sancia of Aragon – who, unfortunately, cheated on her young husband with both of his older brothers, Cesare and Giovanni. Which got even more complicated when a jealous Cesare sent Giovanni floating down the Tiber with a slit throat after an unfortunate family dinner in 1493.

It's not that every action taken by Alexander during his time as Pope was *completely* self-serving... but it seemed to be actually difficult for him to do anything without putting a personal slant on it. For example, in 1493 Alexander attempted to draw a line of demarcation between Spanish and Portuguese spheres of influence in the New World. This was an important achievement, which prevented a potentially disastrous world war between two of the superpowers of the day. But even this far-reaching political act had to be modified in 1494, since, in its original form, the decree greatly favored his native Spain. He also had the privilege of being the pontiff during the Jubilee year of 1500, a magnificent demonstration of the depth and universality of the Catholic faith in which thousands of devout tourists flocked to Rome. The capacity of the Eternal City to house and feed such a large number of visitors from throughout Europe was taxed to the utmost – but Alexander spared no expense to provide for the best possible security and comfort for these pilgrims. Which made sense as he conducted a brisk business personally selling indulgences to wealthy but guilt-ridden pilgrims during the festival, infusing Cesare's war chest with enough funds to launch a military conquest of the cities of Camerino and Urbino.

Shortly after the eleventh anniversary of his "acquisition" of the papacy in August of 1503, Alexander and Cesare dined with their mutual enemy Cardinal Adrian Corneto in the latter's villa outside of Rome. Intending to make Corneto their next victim, Alexander poisoned his wine using a little slight of hand. Unfortunately for the Pope, the eighty-two-year-old Cardinal was also a master of intrigue; he switched the glasses when they weren't looking. Thus, the unsuspecting Alexander and Cesare both drank freely from their own poison. Within a few days, Cesare recovered, but his father grew weak and died at the age of seventy-seven... which, for most people, would be the end of the

story. Then again, very few of us (thankfully) are Borgias.

Burchard (Alexander's loyal servant and an inveterate diarist) reported that while the Pope was still on his deathbed Cesare's men broke into the Vatican and made off with all the treasure they could carry. As soon as Alexander died, his servants immediately plundered his bedroom. After Burchard had prepared the body, palace guards drove off the priests that were guarding the remains of the dead Pope from possible desecration by the wildly celebrating Roman populace (the Borgias weren't very popular). Burchard then had the body moved to a small chapel for protection, where it remained unattended, slowly rotting in the humid August weather then gripping Rome. At the funeral, the attending priests once again took on the palace guards, turning the entire event into a brawl of epic proportions. When they were finished fighting, the assembled dignitaries realized that the coffin had been made too short for Alexander's body, so they removed his miter before forcing the corpse into shape with a few blows from a sledgehammer.

Personality/Motivation: Greed. Lust. Revenge for slights (real or imagined). Paranoia. Hypocrisy. Megalomania. Egomania. Sociopathic behavior. Natural love of family... *unnatural* love of family. These are all components of Alexander VI's behavior and, when they are combined with heavy doses of both patience and brilliance, make for the sort of villain who just might manage to take over the world... or, at the very least, make the world a less pleasant place for *you* to live in. His goals are really quite simple: to directly control as much territory as possible, to gather as much wealth as is feasible from any available source, to sleep with as many young women as imaginable, and whenever possible to promote his own family at the expense of all others. Alexander proved to be unbending in his devotion to these goals.

An extremely charming man, Rodrigo is well mannered, multilingual, exceptionally convincing, and utterly self-serving. The Venetian ambassador Giustiniani commented that "in him were combined rare prudence and vigilance mature reflection, marvelous powers of persuasion, skill and capacity for the conduct of the most difficult affairs." His love of art, especially architecture, was legendary – during his papacy some of the most exquisite buildings ever to be constructed sprung up in Rome. He is both worldly and uniquely open-minded, possessing none of the prejudices which were common to Western Europeans of his time. This is probably because he wasn't a religious man... in spite of being the Pope.

Quote: “We resolve to amend our life and reform the Church. We renounce all nepotism. We will begin the reform with ourselves and so proceed through all levels of the Church till the whole work is accomplished.”

Powers/Tactics: Alexander VI is the leader of the largest organized religion in the world, commanding millions of adherents. His personal fortune could buy and sell most European kings several times over. His personal army consists of ten thousand battle-hardened mercenaries, led by a son who is arguably one of the most skilled soldiers alive. His is also an expert poisoner, a practiced tactician, a master politician, and a first rate diplomat.

If that wasn't bad enough, God *seems to actually be* on his side.

Campaign Use: Pope Alexander VI may genuinely be the blueprint for many of the great villainous masterminds of fiction because he is such a well-documented epic villain of history. Only the most motivated, careful, intelligent, self-serving, and immoral of men could ever hope to match his accomplishments. In nearly any game setting, Alexander's character sheet could be used almost “as is” for any ultra-wealthy mob boss, evil religious leader, or third-world dictator (or some combination of all three... like Alexander) who works solely behind the scenes, using others as his chess pieces.



Appearance: As a young man, Rodrigo was described as tall, handsome, and charming by his contemporaries. They praised his imposing, athletic figure, his cheerful character, persuasive manners, brilliant conversational abilities, and his intimate mastery of the habits of polite society. In his letters, papal secretary Sigismondo de Conti speaks of him as a large, robust man, with a sharp gaze, great amiability, and “wonderful skill in money matters.” Others admired his florid complexion, dark eyes, and full mouth – sensual hallmarks which have come to be associated with members of the Borgia family (along with greed, violence, and poisonings). By the time he became the Pope, however, Rodrigo – who was already in his early sixties – seems to have lost most of his physical charms. The two verifiably accurate portraits of him that still exist (a Papal State coin and a Vatican oil painting) depict a bald, corpulent man with just the hint of a knowing smile upon his broad face.

Bibliography:

- The diary of Alexander's master of ceremonies, Johannes Burchardus, edited by L. Thuasne (Paris, 1883-1884)
- The dispatches of Giustiniani, the Venetian ambassador, edited by P. Villari (Florence, 1876)
- Paolo Cappelli's “Diarii” in E. Alberi's *Relazioni*, Series 1 and 3
- A World Lit Only by Fire: The Medieval Mind and The Renaissance* (1992) by William Manchester
- The Chronicle of Popes* (1997) by P.G. Maxwell-Stuart

ROMAN BUILDINGS CONSTRUCTED DURING THE PAPACY OF ALEXANDER VI

- The Tempietto (designed by Bramante for Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain)
- Palace of the Cancellaria (built by Cardinal Riario)
- Santa Maria dell' Anima (for Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian by his ambassador)
- Trinita dei Monti (by the French Cardinal Bricconnet)
- Santa Maria Maggiore (by Alexander VI using some of the first gold Columbus brought back from the New World)
- The *Appartamento Borgia* in the Vatican (designed by Pinturicchio for the Borgia family)

Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5 /DCV: 5
15	CON	10	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
25	INT	15	14-	Per Roll: 14-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
16	COM	3	12-	
5	PD	3		Total: 5 PD (0 rPD)
5	ED	2		Total: 5 ED (0 rPD)
4	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
5	REC	0		
30	END	0		
30	STUN	5		

Total Characteristics Cost: 107

Movement: Running: 8"/16"
Swimming: 4"/8"

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>God Is On My Side:</i> Luck 6d6	0
10	<i>Strong Will:</i> Mental Defense (10 points)	0
4	Running +4" (8" Total)	2
2	Swimming +2" (4" Total)	1

Perks

- 10 Fringe Benefit: Head of Papal States
- 10 Fringe Benefit: Head of Catholic Church
- 15 Money: Filthy Rich
- 15 Reputation: The Pope (Western Europe) +5/+5d6
- 14 Contact: Cesare Borgia 16-
- 14 Contact: Lucrezia Borgia 16-
- 6 Contact: Emperor Maximilian of Holy Roman Empire (Austria) 8-
- 6 Contact: King Ferdinand of Spain 8-
- 6 Contact: King Charles VIII of France 8-

Talents

- 5 Eidetic Memory
- 5 *Rules Monger:* +5 Resistance to Bureaucracies
- 5 *Blasé:* +5 Resistance to Oratory
- 5 *Immovable:* +5 Resistance to Persuasion
- 5 *Hard Bargainer:* +5 Resistance to Trading

Skills

- 3 Acting 14-
- 3 AK: Italy 14-
- 7 Bribery 16-
- 5 Bureaucracies 15-
- 3 CK: Rome 14-
- 3 Concealment 14-
- 5 Conversation 15-
- 3 Forgery (Legal Documents) 14-
- 3 Gambling (Cards) 14-
- 5 High Society 15-

- 3 KS: Cardinals 14-
- 3 KS: Poison 14-
- 3 Linguist
- 0 Language: Spanish (Native Language)
- 1 Language: French (Fluent Conversation)
- 1 Language: Latin (Fluent Conversation)
- 1 Language: Italian (Fluent Conversation)
- 1 Language: Arabic (Fluent Conversation)
- 3 Oratory 14-
- 9 Persuasion 17-
- 7 PS: Accountant 16-
- 3 PS: Politician 14-
- 1 PS: Priest 11-
- 3 Riding 12-
- 11 Seduction 18-
- 3 Slight of Hand 12-
- 5 Streetwise 15-
- 3 Tactics 14-
- 5 Trading 15-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 273

Total Cost: 380

100+ Disadvantages

- 5 Age (60+, but unnaturally healthy)
- 10 DNPC: Lucrezia Borgia 14-, Slightly Less Powerful, Useful Noncombat Skills
- 10 DNPC: Cesare Borgia 14-, Slightly Less Powerful, Useful Noncombat Skills
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Egomaniac (Common, Moderate)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Greedy (Common, Moderate)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Lustful (Common, Moderate)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Paranoid (Common, Moderate)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Common, Moderate)
- 20 Reputation: Scheming Amoral Manipulator 14- (Extreme)
- 5 Reputation: Murdering Sociopath 8-
- 15 Social Limitation: The Pope 8- (Occasionally, Severe)
- 165 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 380



Have At Thee, Sir!

by Theron Bretz

Adding Realism to Medieval Combat in the HERO System

One of the most common conventions of the fantasy genre is combat with archaic weapons. Portrayals of such encounters cover a wide range of details and accuracy, depending as much on the needs of the story as the knowledge of the author. Over the years, fantasy gaming has developed its share of conventions about how combat works, some accurate, some based on outdated or faulty information, others still from the imaginations of game designers and take as gospel truth.

This article is aimed at players and GMs who wish to add additional realism to their fantasy combats. It introduces little in the way of new rules or techniques, but instead offers observations on the realities of medieval combat as it is understood by the leading scholars on the subject today, along with the author's own twenty years of hands-on experimentation. While real combat is too vast a topic for any game system to cover comprehensively, the *HERO System's* versatility does allow a good deal of freedom in implementing these ideas without bogging the game down overmuch.

ARMOR WORKS

This point cannot be stressed strongly enough. Medieval warriors used armor because it was an efficient way to protect them from harm. Even a mere quarter inch of cuir-boilli can stand up to a tremendous amount of impact and resists all but the sharpest edge. A man in 13th Century maille, with a full-face helm, was effectively invulnerable to the weapons of the day. The greatest dangers he faced were taking a lance while on the charge or an arrow through his eyeslot. Otherwise, the best chance one had of doing him serious harm was to wrestle him down, pull off his helm, and cut his throat. Given this, there is little wonder that a properly armed knight was more than a match for the average rabble.

Not surprisingly, plate armor offers commensurately greater protection. However, it should be remembered that the weapons of the age of plate were also more effective than those used in the age of maille. As such, a very real stalemate existed between the best armor of the day and the best weapons of the day.

ARMOR IS (RELATIVELY) LIGHT

This is another common misconception of the genre, where iron clad warriors lumber about trading mammoth blows and creaking under the weight of their harnesses. In fact, a fully-armored knight from the mid-thirteenth Century wore about seventy pounds of padding, maille, and plate. This is comparable to the equipment carried by a fully armed infantryman today, and less than that carried by a WWII paratrooper. Plate armor is comparable in weight to maille, but easier to wear, as it better supports its own weight and can be distributed over the body with lacings and straps.

Do not look at most SCA or reproduction armors and assume the medieval product was identical. Most modern maille is made by butting the links together, which requires thicker wire be used to allow the armor to hold up to long-term use (it's also a good deal easier and faster to make this way). Medieval maille, on the other hand, typically used riveted links, which allowed a much higher level of overall protection along with a good deal less weight, as thinner wire could be used in the manufacture of the armor.

Remember, the people who used these items trusted them with their lives. Combat is a terribly pragmatic business: a professional warrior class does not use something for hundreds of years if it doesn't work well.

ARMOR IS EXPENSIVE

Once again, this is an often-missed point, especially in fantasy games. A maille shirt, open-faced helmet, and a spear cost approximately £10 in twelfth Century England, as much as an urban merchant earned in a year, and comparable to the price of a trained war horse, and that for what amounts to "off-the-rack" purchases. Properly made and tailored armors were tremendously pricey, the equivalent of buying a high-end luxury sports car today.

In a fantasy setting playing up these truths, by making better armors proof against common weapons, lightweight, and expensive, GMs can separate the adventurer from the common man. In such a setting, even a "normal" shirt of maille is a thing to be treasured.

WEAPONS ARE LIGHT

Oftentimes in fantasy fiction, the lumbering iron-clad warrior is burdened with a mighty twenty pound broadsword. The reasons for this misconception are varied, but generally come down to poor research and shoddy guesswork. Most people aren't very good at estimating weights, and tend to guess high when asked how much something weighs. Also, because these weapons are made largely of metal, there's a tendency to assume they must be heavy.

However, a little research shows things in a very different light. A medieval longsword (or bastard sword) weighed about three and a half pounds. A greatsword weighed in the neighborhood of seven to eight pounds, but it was primarily intended as a support weapon, used to attack pike formations. The medieval sword was a masterpiece of efficient balance and strength, not some enormous cleaver.

WEAPONS ARE DEADLY

While this may seem self-evident, it's a point sorely missed when one looks at the paltry damage done by small weapons in many fantasy RPGs: a dagger is an extremely dangerous weapon under the right circumstances. The human body is very ill-equipped to deal with sharp objects, and players and GMs looking for realism should keep this fact in mind.

In a "realistic" *Fantasy Hero* campaign, Hit Locations should always be used to reflect the dangers of armed combat. Without this option, it's far too easy for the heroes to discount "lesser" weapons such as daggers and shortswords.

MEDIEVAL SWORDS WEREN'T PARTICULARLY SHARP

On the surface, this particular observation seems to fly in the face of popular media and literary portrayals. However, in light of current research it appears to be the case. A razor-sharp edge will do little against metal armor other than chip or dull rather quickly, leaving its wielder in a dangerous situation. As a result, most medieval swords were probably sharpened to an edge similar to a modern cold chisel rather than to the sharpness of a knife for most of the blade length. For slashing and cutting, the last six inches near the point might be sharpened down a bit more to make the weapon more effective against unarmored foes.

While something like this doesn't have a lot of direct application in game terms, understanding it allows many real-world maneuvers such as "half-swording" (see below) make more sense.

AXES, HAMMERS, AND POLEARMS WERE THERE FOR A REASON

As mentioned previously, armor existed in a general stalemate with the sword in terms of protection versus deadliness. Axes, hammers, and polearms were the tools that broke the stalemate. While a hammer might not pierce armor (although some certainly could), it could transmit sufficient force through the armor to stun a man or even knock him unconscious.

Incidentally, a medieval warhammer didn't look much like a hammer; it had a fairly small head, with a case-hardened pick on one end and a flat hammer head on the other. The idea behind many of these weapons was to concentrate a massive amount of force in a very small area. Recent excavations at Towton, the site of a 15th Century battle of the Wars of the Roses, found many bodies that had suffered horrific wounds from hammer-blows and the spiked ends of polearms.

In a realistic game, swords should do damage on average that is slightly less than the protection provided by optimal armor. Axes, warhammers, and pole arms should do more damage on average, or have advantages such as Armor Piercing available.

SHIELDS AND THEIR (OVER- AND MIS-) USE

Many fantasy RPGs list shields as a standard defensive item regardless of time period. Furthermore, they are treated as an extra layer of armor, often being made entirely of metal.

Historically, shields got smaller in size and less-prevalent as armor improved. By the end of the 15th Century, the shield was used in jousting tournaments and little else. Further, shields were largely constructed of wood, and considered a disposable part of the knight's defensive array. The edges were often left untreated so as to trap a blade or a spear point, aiding the user in disarming an opponent.

The one type of shield that remained in use throughout the medieval period was the buckler. Most prevalent among soldiers and those with less-than-optimal armor, the buckler was designed to stand up to long-term use, typically made entirely of metal or a combination of metal and cuir-boilli.

In a realistic game, one would want to consider what sort of shields, if any, are appropriate to the warrior class. The more prevalent plate armor is, the less likely a shield is still part of a warrior's ensemble.

TWO-WEAPON COMBAT WAS VIRTUALLY UNHEARD OF

Of all the observations in this article, this is the one that seems to set off more debate than all the others combined. After all, it's a staple of the genre, particularly in gaming, and plenty of fighters in the Society for Creative Anachronism do it successfully, and Kali/Escrima teaches a two weapon style, and Musashi taught a two-sword technique, didn't he? So what is the problem, one might ask?

Simply put, it's one of evidence.

Specifically, it's a problem of evidence in medieval European combat, which is the main focus of this article. In short, there really isn't any. There's the mention of Sir Balin of the Two Swords in Arthurian legends, but he never fights with two swords, he merely carries a second weapon to remind him of a past misdeed. The ancient Franks carried multiple axes into battle, but used them as throwing weapons. There's a depiction in early Irish literature of a hero fighting with what are clearly described as two knives, but there's a huge gap between fighting with two short stabbing weapons and swinging two swords in battle. Without evidence to support such a practice, there's little reason to believe it existed.

Turning our attention to the modern SCA, and to Kali/Escrima, there's a tremendous difference between using rounded wooden sticks and using a flat piece of metal. The sticks will land more or less properly regardless of the angle of impact. A sword edge is a good deal less forgiving in this regard. Never mind trying it with something like an axe or a hammer.

While Musashi clearly taught a two-sword technique, he also clearly used weapons of mismatched sizes. Even so, there's nothing to indicate his techniques were known to medieval Europe (especially since medieval Europe had become renaissance Europe well before Musashi's birth), therefore excluding his teachings from the matter at hand.

Speaking of the renaissance, there is, in that period, certainly a precedent for two-weapon combat, both with the rapier and dagger, or "a case of rapiers." While this is true two-sword fighting, combat with a rapier is significantly different than combat with a broadsword. As such, it's hard to draw comparisons between renaissance fencing and medieval swordplay in all but the most general terms. Given the inherent pragmatism of medieval warriors and faced with the lack of evidence for two-weapon fighting, one has to assume that it was either deemed ineffective by the conventional wisdom of the day, or proven so by the crucible of battle.

Of course, this doesn't mean such a technique can't still have a place in fantasy gaming. The realistic approach would be to limit it to weapons easily used one-handed with an emphasis on stabbing. Daggers, knives, and short swords could all be wielded in this manner. Perhaps two-weapon fighting is a lost or secret technique only known to a select few, instead of being available to anyone with two hands and two swords.

MEDIEVAL COMBAT WAS SOPHISTICATED

This is another prime example of how assumptions can get in the way of truth. The stereotypical portrayal either shows two heavily armored men hacking at one another ineffectively, or slicing each other apart like the Black Knight in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Neither image reflects the true nature of combat in the Middle Ages. Medieval fighting was a well-codified martial art, with many moves quite comparable to those of the Far East. Unfortunately, most of the evidence for this has only come to light in the past twenty years or so in the form of fechtbuchs, or fencing manuals that have survived from the middle ages. The translation and study of these works is some of the most exciting research being done in the field of medieval history today.

While most of these works date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a few have surfaced from earlier periods. What they show is a remarkable commonality of technique that represents a clearly thought-out and well-understood means of self-defense with swords and other weapons. The techniques shown are bio-mechanically sound, and in the hands of a skilled practitioner, quite effective.

One of the more interesting aspects of these manuals is the emphasis on grappling and wrestling. This makes a good deal of sense when one considers that an armored man was basically impervious to harm so long as he kept his feet. Also interesting is the way the sword is used in these combats. Against armored opponents, it is almost never used to strike directly with the edge. Instead, it sees work as a lever to unbalance the opponent, as a tool for binds and disarms, grasped halfway up the blade (the aforementioned "half-swording" technique) and used to stab for vulnerable areas, such as the face, armpits, and groin. The sword is seen held reversed by the blade, and swung using the cross-guard or quillons as a hammer to bludgeon the opponent, and we see the pommel used for a quick, brutal strike to the face (the latter is, in fact, the origin of the word "pommel").

In a realistic campaign, the GM should consider making Martial Arts maneuvers available to experienced warriors. Weapons Combat, Kampfringen, and Arte dell'Abbraciare, are all appropriate choices. Additionally, Find Weakness with swords (perhaps limited to armored opponents) should be considered as a means of simulating attacks to weak points in an opponent's armor.

Furthermore, by incorporating the medieval techniques of Kampfringen and Arte dell'Abbraciare from *The Ultimate Martial Artist*, GMs and players can simulate the "mission kill" mentality of a medieval battle. Allowing the wrestling techniques to be used while armed simulates the use of the sword as a leverage tool, as it was in the period.

COMBAT TO THE DEATH WAS RARE

While this may seem paradoxical to a warrior class, the medieval knight generally did not fight to kill his opponents if they were of his social rank or higher. Murder was considered a mortal sin, and self-defense was not considered a mitigating factor by the medieval Church. Further, a dead nobleman was worthless, but one who'd been beaten into submission could be ransomed, often for a great deal of money. Bertrand du Guesclin, a Constable of France in the fourteenth Century was once ransomed by the King of France for 100,000 marks of gold (about \$100 million by modern values). Thus, it was certainly in one's economic interest, if not one's spiritual, to keep a fallen foe alive.

As such, a good deal of medieval combat focuses on what the modern military calls "mission kills," the rendering of an opponent harmless as efficiently as possible. Many of the throws and grappling techniques (mentioned above) incorporated breaking techniques that would leave a grown man disabled, with dislocated or broken limbs. Such a fallen opponent ceases to be much of a threat, and can be captured once any similar threats are dispatched.

The closest one comes to medieval knights fighting to the death is the judicial duel, which was fought to prove a person's guilt or innocence of a crime. As these duels were only fought over the most serious charges, the loser would be executed should they not be killed outright during the fight. As such, judicial duels were often extremely brutal.

In a "realistic" fantasy campaign, the GM can use this information to make fallen foes an important source of income. A ransomed nobleman could be worth a fortune to a band of intrepid heroes, but he could also serve as a springboard of a series of adventures. What if his ransom isn't in coin, but a map or a mysterious tome? What if he's utterly rude and obnoxious, but so filthy rich the characters have to put up with him until his ransom arrives?

ALMOST EVERYTHING HOLLYWOOD KNOWS ABOUT MEDIEVAL WARFARE IS WRONG

Perhaps at this point, such things go without saying, but there are a few commonly-held myths that films like *Braveheart* perpetuate. First, medieval cavalry, as a rule, did not charge infantry. Horses won't charge into a closely-ordered wall of people that holds its ground, especially if that wall is holding lots of long, sharp objects. What cavalry would do on occasion was charge *at* an infantry formation, hoping to get the footmen to break before the units collided. Unorganized infantry are relatively easy to mop up from horseback, at least until they get themselves re-set. In the few cases history tells of cavalry charging well-established blocks of infantry, the result is invariably disastrous for the horsemen.

Considering that the average medieval knight saw warfare as a means to glory and wealth, attacking infantry makes very little sense. After all, there's neither glory to be had from cutting down the lower classes nor wealth to be gained from their capture. On the other hand, both wealth and glory were readily available in the form of enemy knights and noblemen. As a result, most medieval engagements involved cavalry fighting cavalry and infantry fighting infantry in a combined arms action that worked well in concert.

Regarding infantry, it's important to note that medieval armies were not made up of peasants. Not typically, anyway. Peasant levies were an absolute last resort, as they were far more valuable as farmers than as soldiers, and of little value in combat. Most medieval infantry consisted of townsmen (the merchant classes) who were responsible for their own equipment and training. Town militias generally trained a few times each month (not unlike the modern Reserves or National Guard). By comparison, many knightly companies (such as the *convois* of Crusader Syria) trained three times per week (much like our modern active duty armed forces).

In a “realistic” setting, the average warrior would be well aware of what works and doesn’t work on the battlefield. He would know that charging infantry with cavalry is sheer folly. Attacking a town militia would not necessarily be a walk in the park, since the opposition would be well-trained, and familiar with one another’s tactics. Such individuals might have levels in coordinating attacks or special maneuvers that only work when fighting as a unit.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

So, what does a realistic medieval warrior look like in *HERO System* terms? More importantly, how does he fight? Most likely, he has the Weapons Combat maneuvers, and a grappling technique as well. He very likely either has Skill Levels to offset Hit Location penalties or a form of Find Weakness against armored foes. He may or may not carry a shield, depending on the quality of his armor and the time period the campaign mimics. If he doesn’t use a shield, he almost certainly uses a bastard sword. His backup weapon (and there’s no reason for him not to carry one) is a dagger.

When he engages in combat, he looks for the quickest means of rendering his opponent harmless. If this means grappling and throwing, he will do so, using his sword as a means of defending himself (Martial Block) while setting up a throw, a grapple, or perhaps even a bind or a disarm. If his opponent is cautious, he might use defensive strikes to draw him out before closing to take him down. If his opponent is armored, he’ll look for vulnerable points (Find Weakness or apply Skill Levels against Hit Location penalties) or perhaps reverse his bastard sword and use it like a hammer (a Normal Attack), striking his opponent in the head, attempting to stun him into submission.

Once his opponent is down, he’ll waste no further time on him. If the situation demands the opponent’s life, he’ll finish him off with the dagger. If not, he’ll demand his surrender.

IN CONCLUSION

This article is not meant to be the last word on medieval combat, by any means. It is, at best, a general overview of the realities as historians currently understand them, distilled in a manner that gamers can put into practice. As new evidence becomes known, some of the conclusions here will doubtlessly be contradicted. But in the meantime, they can go a long way to adding levels of realism to fantasy combats without bogging things down with extra rules.

ANNOTATED SOURCES:

Arms and Armor of the Medieval Knight, by David Edge and Miles Paddock. Crescent Books, 1993

If I could only keep one book on the subject, it would be this one. It’s neither the most in-depth nor scholarly, but it provides the best overview on the subject and is chock-full of useful illustrations and photographs.

Medieval Combat, by Mark Rector. Greenhill Press, 2000

This is the first full translation in English of Hans Talhoffer’s 1467 fechtbuch. Talhoffer was a member of the Marxbrudern, a guild of fencing masters that flourished in the German states of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries. He was a professional trainer of professional soldiers and this manual served as handbook for the Duke of Swabia’s soldiers.

The Medieval Soldier: 15th Century Campaign Live Recreated in Colour Photographs by Gerry Embleton and John Howe, Crowood Press, 1995.

A remarkable book that shows the real value of living history in bringing the past to life. The authors are members of the Company of Saynte George, a Swiss group devoted to recreating fifteenth Century campaign life. The book looks like someone took a camera back to the 1450s and started snapping away. No aspect of late fifteenth Century military life is overlooked, from weapons and armor, to underwear and medicine, to toilet facilities. A great visual resource for GMs who like to point to a picture and say, “You see this.”

Medieval Swordsmanship: Illustrated Methods and Techniques, by John Clements, Paladin Press, 1998.

A reasonably priced and readily available book that should be taken with a grain of salt. The author provides a good overview of his topic, but many of his conclusions are at variance with the majority of medieval martial arts practitioners today.

The Academy of European Medieval Martial Arts (www.aemma.org).

The AEMMA is dedicated to re-creating the martial traditions of medieval Europe. Their website is a treasure trove of period manuals, essays, and videos of re-creators in action. If you want to see what this sort of fighting really looked like, this site is well worth visiting.

Circa 1265 (www.bumply.com/Medieval).

Circa 1265 is a medieval re-enactment group focusing on the late thirteenth Century. The photographs of a knight arming clearly illustrate the level of protection the medieval warrior enjoyed.



Nothing To Fear But Fear Itself

by Ken Zieger

Phobias, irrational fears or hatreds, are common. In fact, 5.1 to 11.5 percent of the American population suffer from phobias. For *HERO System* players, phobias make excellent character Disadvantages because they provide a hint of a background and make a character more interesting. They are not genre-specific; a superhero is just as likely to have a phobia as a barbarian. Two characters with the same fear react to it differently. This article will give useful information for the Game Master and player by presenting the most common phobias, showing the most used treatment, defining phobias in *HERO System* terms, providing ideas for roleplaying fears, and finally, giving a list of phobias.

COMMON PHOBIAS

The most common phobias encountered today are acrophobia (heights), agoraphobia (open spaces), ailourophobia (cats), asterophobia (thunder), ceraunophobia (lightning), claustrophobia (enclosed spaces), cynophobia (dogs), equinophobia (horses), mysophobia (dirt, germs, contamination), nyctophobia (darkness), ophidiophobia (snakes), potamophobia (running water), pyrophobia (fire), topophobia (stage fright), and zoophobia (animals).

People can develop a phobia because of a specific incident or object that symbolizes a fear. A person locked in a closet by a parent could develop claustrophobia. To another claustrophobe, an enclosed area represents his own loneliness. Just as the cause can be different, the same phobia can have different activating circumstances, called triggers. Acrophobia might be triggered when the sufferer climbs a ladder but not when in an elevator, for example.

In a simple phobia, a person suffers from a single fear. In a complex phobia, the sufferer has two or more fears. The phobias may or may not be related in a complex phobia. Some phobias have sub-versions, which apply to specific triggers. Cremonophobia (fear of precipices) is a sub-fear of acrophobia which is only triggered when the sufferer stands near a balcony or anywhere that has a drop-off.

TREATMENT

Exposure Therapy, also called desensitization, is the systematic exposure of the sufferer to his trigger. The exposure starts at the first level that causes anxiety. The exposure time is gradually increased until the patient relaxes. The level then is increased and the process repeats. For instance, an acrophobe starts by standing on a box. The next level would be a

stepladder. The third step might use a regular ladder, and so on. Parents often use this method to dispel their children's fears.

For a severe fear or minor simple phobia, a sufferer could treat himself with a high degree of success. Stronger simple phobias, and any complex phobias, must generally be treated with the aid of a therapist.

Agoraphobia and panic sufferers often use therapist-assisted exposure coupled with drug therapy. Mild sedatives are used to keep the patient calm during exposure. Often, the patients must take prescribed sedatives for the remainder of their illness.

Another treatment, usually incorporated with one or both of the previous ones, involves family or marriage counseling. The theory behind using counseling looks at the family as a unit acting as mutual supporters for each member. However, counseling alone only relieves the stresses of the relationship, but does nothing to relieve the phobia.

Flooding, another form of desensitization, involves subjecting the sufferer to the full effects of his phobia until he reaches a comfortable state. A claustrophobe would be placed in a closet for an ever-increasing amount of time until he reaches a comfortable state. Only therapists should use the Flooding technique, because of the high possibility of making the phobia worse.

USING PHOBIAS IN YOUR GAME

The *HERO System* uses Psychological Limitations to simulate phobias. Generally, the limitation is based on the frequency of affliction and the intensity of the fear. However, most phobia sufferers unconsciously avoid the triggers of their fears. Some people, due to employment, obsessiveness, or social constraints, face their triggers often. An accountant with acrophobia would have his disadvantage as Uncommon, because he could easily avoid heights. However, an acrophobe house painter would have it as Common as his job requires ladders and scaffolds. An acrophobic construction worker could have it at Very Common.

A Moderate intensity equals a strong fear or minor simple phobia, based on the above treatments. A Strong intensity might be a severe simple phobia or a complex phobia. Total intensity indicates the sufferer might need to be on drug therapy.

The player, when deciding on a phobia, should also indicate the trigger. If there isn't a trigger, it is a generalized fear. Acrophobia without a specific trigger makes the character nervous at any type of height. For the Game Master, treat the phobia appropriately. A thief

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with a general fear of heights will suffer when climbing ropes, but one with a trigger of ladders wouldn't.

A character with a Very Common, Total phobia should be rare, although it is possible. A character with this disadvantage knows he has a fear, what causes it, and probably actively seeks out the trigger because he doesn't want to appear cowardly or weak.

The Disadvantage may or may not be bought off, depending on the GM and player. Desensitization works by regular, controlled exposure. Even the Very Common, Total character is utilizing a form of therapy. However, it might take years of constant exposure to eliminate a phobia. In the case of Flooding, it could even get worse. One way to play the gradual lessening of a phobia is to pay the disadvantage down slowly. A Total intensity could be bought down to Strong. Once the intensity reaches Moderate, the frequency could be bought down. The written rules for buying off disadvantages still apply to phobias. The character must spend game time trying to overcome them. A Total or Strong intensity requires the character attend therapy sessions. This can also be used as plot points. The hero's therapist could be kidnapped. Or, even worse, the therapist could be working against the hero. Instead of helping solve his phobia, the therapist could be making it worse, or causing another one.

ROLEPLAYING A PHOBIA

Sufferers feel embarrassed of their fear. They are afraid the phobia means they are crazy or might become crazy. Fearing ridicule, they are also afraid to let others know they have it. Remember, phobia sufferers worry incessantly about their fears.

Some sufferers act nonchalantly when facing their triggers. People with aerophobia (fear of flying) often list the inconveniences of flying, i.e., hijackings, crashes, lost luggage, cost, security hassles, etc. A fighter afraid of ladders might suggest breaking through the main gate of the keep, rather than climbing over the wall. When asked, he won't say he's afraid of heights. He'll say something to the effect of, "I hate sneaking about."

Other people become anxious. They exhibit symptoms of anxiety: sweating, nervousness, nausea, lightheadedness, dizziness, headaches, and hyperventilation. If the character has a Total intensity phobia, he might have a panic attack. The character will suddenly stiffen, faint, or even become combative to get away from his fear.

Usually, in a roleplaying game, the situation is stressful, so a sufferer can hide his problem. However, he will relax considerably when not facing his fear. A person afraid of narrow places

(stenophobia) will be nervous in a corridor, but not in the main hall and facing several guards.

Some people develop obsessive behaviors while dealing with a phobia. A construction worker with a Moderate fear of falling might obsessively check his safety harness and lines. A mysophobe may obsessively wash his hands or clean his house. A belonophobe (a person afraid of needles and pins) might be compelled to pick up any needle or pin she finds. Often, a phobia sufferer will isolate himself from others, not just situations which could cause a trigger to his fear. He will then start to become depressed because of the isolation.

This article primarily focused on the fear reaction of phobias. However, phobias can also indicate an intense hatred of something. An anglophobe might hate anything and anyone British. The treatments are the same for a hatred. The game mechanics are the same. But the roleplaying aspects differ.

PHOBIAS

The list on the following pages is compiled from *Fears and Phobias: What They Are and How to Overcome Them*, by Dr. Tony Whitehead.

There are over two hundred phobias listed in this article. I've included only a small selection of fears. New phobias, like UFO phobia, are being discovered and treated each year. Phobias do not have to rule a person's life. They can be cured successfully if the sufferer wants to treat it.

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- HERO System, Fifth Edition* by Steven S. Long. 2002 DOJ, Inc., San Francisco, CA.

COMMON PHOBIAS

Animals	Zoophobia Auroral
Lights	Auroraphobia
Bacteria	Bacteriophobia
Beards	Pogonophobia
Becoming homosexual	Homophobia
Bees	Apiphobia
Being afraid	Phobophobia
Being alone, oneself	Autophobia
Being beaten (punishment)	Rhabdophobia
Being bound	Merinthophobia
Being buried alive, graves	Taphophobia
Being dirty	Automysophobia
Being loved, falling in love	Philophobia
Being scratched	Anychophobia
Being stared at	Scopophobia
Birds	Ornithophobia
Blood	Hematophobia
Blushing	Ereuthophobia
British people, things	Anglophobia
Books	Bibliophobia
Cancer	Cancerophobia
Cats	Ailourophobia
Chickens	Alektorophobia
Childbirth	Tocophobia
Children, dolls	Pediophobia
Choking	Pnigophobia
Cholera	Cholerophobia
Churches	Ecclesiaphobia
Clouds	Nephophobia
Cold	Frigophobia
Colors	Chromatophobia
Corpses	Necrophobia
Crossing a bridge	Gephyrophobia
Crowds	Ochlophobia
Crystal, glass	Crystallophobia
Dampness, moisture	Hygrophobia
Darkness	Nyctophobia
Dawn	Eosophobia
Daylight	Phengophobia
Death	Thanatophobia
Deformity	Dysmorphophobia
Demons, devils, evil spirits	Demonophobia
Dentists	Dentophobia
Depth	Bathophobia
Dirt, germs, contamination	Mysophobia
Disease, illness	Nosophobia
Disorder	Ataxiophobia
Dogs	Cynophobia
Draught	Anemophobia
Dreams	Oneirophobia
Drink	Potophobia
Drinking	Dipsophobia
Drugs	Pharmacophobia
Dust	Amatophobia
Electricity	Electrophobia
Empty rooms, void	Kenophobia
Enclosed places	Claustrophobia
Everything	Panphobia
Eyes	Ommatophobia

COMMON PHOBIAS

Failure	Kakorrhaphiaphobia
Fatigue	Ponophobia
Feathers	Pteronophobia
Feces, excrement	Coprohobia
Fire	Pyrophobia
Fish	Ichthyophobia
Flogging	Mastigophobia
Flood	Antlophobia
Flowers	Anthophobia
Flutes, flute players	Aulophobia
Flying	Aerophobia
Fog	Homichlophobia
Food	Sitophobia
Foreigners, strangers	Xenophobia
Freedom	Eleutherophobia
French people and things	Gallophobia
Fur, animal skins	Dorophobia
Gaiety	Cherophobia
German people and things	Teutophobia
Ghosts	Phasmophobia
God	Theophobia
Going to bed	Clinophobia
Gravity	Barophobia
Growing old	Gerascophobia
Hair	Chaetophobia
Heart disease	Cardiophobia
Heat	Thermophobia
Heaven	Ouranophobia
Heights	Acrophobia
Heredity	Patroiophobia
Home	Domatophobia
Home surroundings	Ecophobia
Horses	Equinophobia
Human beings, society	Anthropophobia
Ice, frost	Cryophobia
Ideas	Ideophobia
Imperfection	Atelophobia
Infection	Mysophobia
Infinity	Apeirophobia
Injections	Trypanophobia
Insanity	Lyssophobia
Insects	Entomophobia
Itching	Acarophobia
Jealousy	Zelophobia
Justice	Dikephobia
Knees	Genophobia
Lakes	Limnophobia
Leprosy, lepers	Leprophobia
Lice	Pediculophobia
Light	Photophobia
Lightning	Ceraunophobia
Machinery	Mechanophobia
Making false statements	Mythophobia
Many things	Polyphobia
Marriage	Gamophobia
Meat	Carnophobia
Men	Androphobia
Metals	Metallophobia
Meteors	Meteorophobia

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COMMON PHOBIAS

Mice	Musophobia
Microbes	Bacilliphobia
Mind	Psychophobia
Mirrors	Eisoptrophobia
Money	Chrometophobia
Monstrosities	Teratophobia
Mother-in-law	Pentheraphobia
Motion	Kinesophobia
Nakedness	Gymnophobia
Names (specific)	Nomatophobia
Neglect of duty	Paralipophobia
Narrow places	Stenophobia
Narrowness	Anginaphobia
Needles, pins, sharp objects	Belonophobia
Noise, loud talking, speaking aloud	Phonophobia
Odors	Osmophobia
Odors (body)	Osphresiophobia
One thing	Monophobia
Open spaces	Agoraphobia
Pain	Algophobia
Parasites	Parasitophobia
Physical love	Erotophobia
Places	Topophobia
Pleasure	Hedonophobia
Points	Aichurophobia
Poison	Toxiphobia
Politicians	Politicophobia
Poverty	Peniaphobia
Precipices	Cremnophobia
Pregnancy	Maieusiophobia
Punishment	Poinophobia
Railways	Siderodromophobia
Rain	Ombrophobia
Responsibility	Hypegiaphobia
Reptiles	Batrachophobia
Ridicule	Katagelophobia
Rivers	Potamophobia
Robbers	Harpaxophobia
Ruin	Atephobia
Running water	Potamophobia
Rust	Iophobia
Sacred things	Hierophobia
Satan	Satanophobia
School	Scholionophobia
Sea	Thalassophobia
Sea swells	Cymophobia
Sex	Genophobia
Sexual intercourse	Coitophobia
Sexual perversion	Paraphobia
Shadows	Sciophobia
Shock	Hormephobia
Sinning	Peccatophobia
Skin	Dermatophobia
Skin diseases	Dermatosiophobia
Sitting idle	Thaasophobia
Sleep	Hypnophobia
Slime	Blennophobia
Smell	Olfactophobia

COMMON PHOBIAS

Smothering	Pnigerophobia
Snakes	Ophidiophobia
Snow	Chionophobia
Solitude, stillness	Ermophobia
Sound	Akousticophobia
Sourness	Acerophobia
Speaking	Halophobia
Speech	Lalophobia
Speed	Tachophobia
Spiders	Arachnophobia
Stage fright	Topophobia
Standing upright	Stasiphobia
Stars	Siderophobia
Stealing	Cleptophobia
Stings	Cnidophobia
Stooping	Kyphophobia
String	Linonophobia
Sun	Heliophobia
Surgical operations	Ergasiophobia
Swallowing	Phagophobia
Syphilis	Syphilophobia
Taste	Geumatophobia
Teeth	Odontophobia
Thirteen	Triskaidekaphobia
Thunder	Asterophobia
Touching, being touched	Haphophobia
Travel	Hodophobia
Trees	Dendrophobia
Trembling	Tremophobia
Tuberculosis	Phthisiophobia
Unidentified flying objects	U.F.O. phobia
Vehicles	Amaxophobia
Venereal disease	Cypridophobia
Vomiting	Emetophobia
Walking	Basiphobia
Wasps	Spheksophobia
Water	Hydrophobia
Weakness	Asthenophobia
Wind	Anemophobia
Women	Gynophobia
Words (specific)	Logophobia
Work	Ergasiophobia
Worms	Helminthophobia
Wounds, injury	Traumatophobia
Writing	Graphophobia
Young girls	Parthenophobia



Meriquai Falls: Totem Hunters by Dale Robbins

Totem Hunters: Modern Roleplaying in Meriquai Falls

Welcome to the third installment in a series that details the city of Meriquai Falls. In this issue, we will look at running a heroic campaign in Meriquai Falls. The campaign setting, *Totem Hunters*, focuses on heroic characters who regularly face down the machinations of totem spirits and either appease their mysterious demands or defeat their vengeful plots.

This article consists of three sections. The first details the *Totem Hunters* venue in a format similar to the genre descriptions in “The Hero System Genre By Genre” document. The second section briefly details the town of Revolution, the focus of all of this mysterious totem spirit activity. The third section offers a short adventure to introduce players to the *Totem Hunters* venue.

THE TOTEM HUNTERS VENUE

Totem spirits can be a fickle lot. Just ask any scholar of Native American spiritualism. They are as chaotic and unpredictable as the elements of nature they embody. On average, they seek balance in all things and thus are as likely to hinder man as to help him. More often than not, it is not clear as to whether their activities are benevolent or malign.

That is where the PC heroes come in.

Since the rise of the Meriquai terrorist known as the Manitou, the city of Revolution has seen a rise of totem spirit activities. Most people do not understand that totem spirits are at work; the average person on the street would state that Revolution is simply a city where weird things happen, assuming he is even paying attention to news in the B-section of the paper.

The PCs know better. Whether it be by virtue of some gifted sight, pride in their Meriquai heritage, or open scholarly minds, the PCs understand that totem spirits are afoot. And that the spirits are not so easy to deal with as finding them and killing them....

CAMPAIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

In the *HERO System*, *Totem Hunters* characters are invariably Heroic. How Heroic is entirely up to the GM and his players. Typically, *Totem Hunters* characters are built as Standard Heroic characters, as detailed on the charts on page 15 of *HERO System 5th Edition*. However, the GM may want his players to play characters who are the best in their fields in the Meriquai Falls region, letting his players design characters using the Powerful Heroic guidelines.

Totem Hunters characters will usually have little in the way of actual Powers. That’s not the focus of the venue. However, equipment is bought with money, not Character Points. Most Character Points will be spent on Characteristics, Skills, Talents, and Perks. Normal Characteristic Maxima is imposed without awarding Disadvantage Points. Therefore, more powerful *Totem Hunters* characters will generally have more Skills, Talents, and Perks. Skill Levels of all types are not inappropriate, either, although Combat Skill Levels are much rarer than normal Skill Levels. Totem Hunters tend to be scholars, not soldiers.

VENUE CONVENTIONS AND FEATURES

The Truth Is Out There: The primary goal of the PCs is to discover the truth behind various unexplainable situations. While the police are willing to write off a mysterious death as a suicide, the PCs might be more curious about the victim’s parents’ comments about the “strange lights” that hovered outside their son’s bedroom window at nights. While city officials may be perfectly comfortable with closing a park whose plantlife is dying out, the PCs may investigate the fact that the dying foliage occurs in a not-so-random pattern across the park.

Public Ignorance/Apathy: Hardly anyone knows about the totem spirits that guide and manipulate their lives. Even most Meriquai themselves believe the totem spirits are a belief system and not actual spiritual entities. And if a PC were to tell the average person on the street that totem spirits really existed, that person would either laugh or call the PC crazy.

Cover-Ups and Conspiracies: People who *are* “in the know” about these strange occurrences (such as the FBI, PRIMUS, and various civilian concerns) most often choose to *not* allow other people to know about them. After all, if everyone suddenly found out that Native American spirits were “terrorizing” the city, utter chaos and hysteria would break out across the populace. What this means to the PCs is that, most often, they have to cut through incredible amounts of red tape, lies and counter-lies, and layers upon layers of cover-ups to get close to finding the *real* truth behind a situation.

Totem Spirits are Chaotic: Totem spirits are a fickle lot. One adventure may feature the spirits subtly guiding the PCs to a truth that can save a life or clear an innocent name while the next adventure may feature spirits seeking revenge

artwork by Brad Parnell

DIGITAL HERO #4

from some wrong, either recent or ancient. One of the challenges the PCs must face is determining whether the spirits are the ally or the enemy.

Totem Spirits are Not Fantasy-Genre

Monsters: Totem spirits are not “monsters” that the PCs must hunt down and kill. At almost any level, the spirits *cannot* be killed! Instead, the PCs must follow the clues and subtle hints the spirits (intentionally or not) lay out, and deduce the tasks that must be carried out to appease the spirits. Clearing an innocent name, cleansing a polluted parkway, avenging a festering wrong – these are the goals of the *Totem Hunter* character, not the rampant extermination of spiritual entities.

CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

Totem Hunter characters tend to come from all walks of life. Whether they are government agents, civilian scholars, or everyday people thrust into extraordinary circumstances, one thing makes them common: they know totem spirits are real and are guiding everyone’s lives.

The Computer Hacker

The Computer Hacker is a necessity to anyone who wants to find information quickly. Accessing a restricted database, using a classified surveillance satellite, opening an electronic lock on a door, or researching the Internet on subjects, the Computer Hacker is the person to turn to. Without a Computer Hacker, many groups are doomed to failure.

Computer Hackers, like Scholars, have higher mental Characteristics than physical Characteristics. Computer Programming, Cryptography, Electronics, Security Systems, and Systems Operations are practically mandatory Skills. The Computer Link Perk is also extremely good for this Archetype.

The Government Agent

One of the most common archetypes for *Totem Hunter*, these characters come onto the scene backed with the authority of one government agency or another. Be he a police officer, a PRIMUS agent, a federal “Man in Black,” or an IRS auditor, the character is on the scene to discover the truth, solve the problem, and make sure it stays quiet.

Government Agents tend to have good Characteristics across the board, an even spread of Skills and Talents, and often an incredible level of Perks, especially Membership and Security Clearance.

The Meriquai Shaman

The Meriquai have always been a people close to the natural spirits in the world around them. Although most Meriquai pay homage to

totem spirits as part of their belief system, the Meriquai Shaman intimately knows the totem spirits and what makes them tick. It is the Meriquai Shaman who is most likely to make contact with the spirits and appease them.

Meriquai Shamans have decent Characteristics, decent Skills, and decent Perks (considering they are civilians). Meriquai Shamans, however, are allowed to take Powers. Most *Totem Hunters* Powers are weak and unreliable at best, though. They represent the rituals that Meriquai Shamans conduct to contact the spirits. Thus, shaman rituals cannot be anything flashy or damaging. Acceptable Powers in *Totem Hunters* are Telepathy (totem spirits only), Clairsentience, Enhanced Senses, Mental Illusions (only with No Conscious Control), and Dispel (totem spirit effects only). No Power can have more than 20-50 Active Points and *must* be built using the Limitations: Concentration, Extra Time, Focus (fetishes), Gestures, Incantations, Requires a Meriquai Ritual Magic Skill Roll, and Side Effect.

The Scholar

Whether government or civilian, Scholars are people who are extremely knowledgeable in esoteric fields that no one else will study. They are the ones who do the less than glamorous job of researching past events and indigenous mythologies to help the Agents or Troubleshooters put two and two together. Outside of Meriquai Shamans, Scholars are the best authorities on what the spirits are and why they act as they do.

Scholars tend to have much higher mental Characteristics than physical Characteristics. They also tend to have an incredible number of Knowledge Skills in favor of many other Skills. Skill Enhancers are almost a must! Though Scholars usually have few Perks, Membership or Security Clearance are good ones to consider for access to restricted information.

The Troubleshooter

As opposed to a Government Agent, a civilian Troubleshooter seeks the same goals as the Government Agent without the pomp, circumstance, and red tape. Although most Troubleshooters agree that the public is not yet ready for the truth, they find Government Agents too altruistic and self-serving all at once. For their part, Government Agents find Troubleshooters too arrogant, flamboyant, and disrespectful.

Troubleshooters tend to have better physical Characteristics than mental Characteristics. They are often more specialized in their skills than Governments Agents (again, more physical than mental). And Troubleshooter Perks tend more towards Reputations, Money, and Contacts than Fringe Benefits.

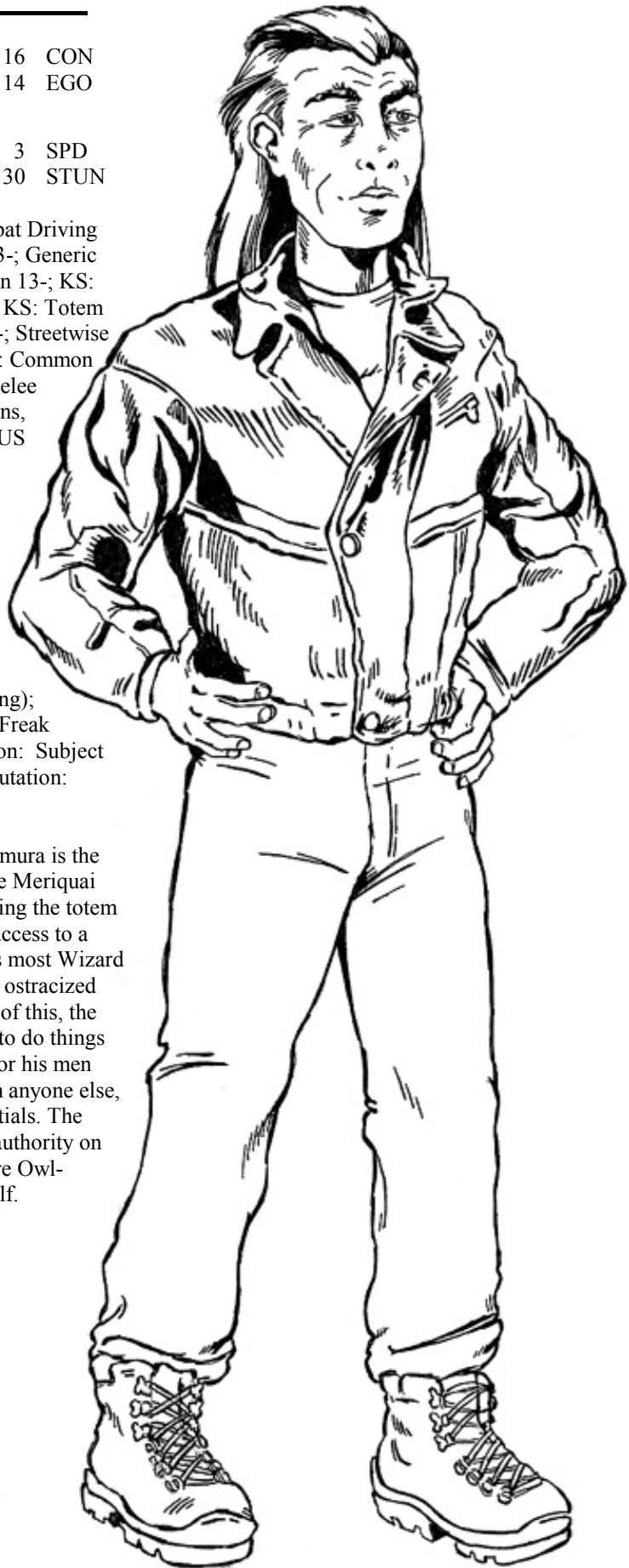
SAMPLE CHARACTER**Clayton “Silver-Wolf” Okamura**

14	STR	16	DEX	16	CON
12	BODY	18	INT	14	EGO
18	PRE	14	COM		
3	PD	3	ED	3	SPD
8	REC	32	END	30	STUN

Abilities: Bureaucraties 13-; Combat Driving 12-; Criminology 13-; Deduction 13-; Generic Martial Arts; KS: City of Revolution 13-; KS: Federal Law 13-; KS: Origami 13-; KS: Totem Spirits 13-; PS: PRIMUS Agent 13-; Streetwise 13-; Tactics 13-; Tracking 13-; WF: Common Martial Arts Weapons, Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Small Arms; Fringe Benefit: PRIMUS Wizards Membership (5); Fringe Benefit: Security Clearance to PRIMUS Files (5).

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features: Gray, Wolfish Hair (Easily Concealable); DNPC: Girlfriend 8- (Normal); Hunted: VIPER 8- (As Pow, NCI); Hunted: PRIMUS 8- (As Pow, NCI, Watching); Psychological Limitation: Control Freak (Common, Strong); Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Frequently, Minor); Reputation: Maverick Operative 11-.

Notes: Clayton “Silver-Wolf” Okamura is the head of the PRIMUS Wizards in the Meriquai Falls region, in charge of investigating the totem spirit incidents in the area. He has access to a crack team of Wizard agents but, as most Wizard agents are, Okamura is pretty much ostracized from the rest of PRIMUS. Because of this, the 50-something-year-old agent tends to do things *his* way or no way at all. He cares for his men very much, but takes little flak from anyone else, regardless of background or credentials. The Silver-Wolf is considered the best authority on totem spirit lore outside of Theodore Owl-Speaker, the Meriquai Chief, himself.



The Town of Revolution

HISTORY

Revolution was founded in October of 1864. During much of the American Civil War, Confederate General Wilford McKenzie had coordinated morally ambiguous assaults against the anti-slave citizens of the Meriquai Falls region. Women and children were not exempt in his military tactics. McKenzie's goal was clear; he was to prove that the slave-supported troops of the Confederacy were tactically superior to the spineless troops of the Union. Any resource whose loss could weaken the Union soldiers, including family members, were fair game as far as McKenzie was concerned.

This didn't last for long. Frasier Davenport was a retired Union soldier injured in battle in 1863. He had charisma and a natural magnetism that made him a popular speaker and leader during the turbulent times of the Civil War. Seeing the unethical warfare waged by General McKenzie, Davenport rallied the people and set up a camp just south of the Missouri River, near the delta of the Meriquai River. Here, one of the most important Civil War battles of the region was fought. Despite McKenzie's sneaky tactics, Davenport second-guessed the Confederate general and led the people to a Union victory. McKenzie died during the battle at Davenport's riflepoint.

The people of the camp decided to settle on the battlefield, to honor and remember their victory for all time. Initially, the proposed name for the town was the Town of Davenport. But Frasier Davenport balked at what he saw as self-indulgent vanity. Instead, Davenport spoke passionately with other camp leaders about how the new town would represent the revolution of the human spirit that led them all to victory. Taking a cue from the speech, the leaders of the new town named their town Revolution. Davenport was, of course, its first mayor.

Revolution has gone on to play extremely important roles in the political development of the region. Revolution is the largest suburb of the City of Meriquai Falls, having annexed South Meriquai Falls in 1901. Revolution is the birthplace of no less than three State governors and six Presidential candidates. It has one of the most complete libraries of the Midwest (the Frasier Davenport Historical Library). And it hosts no less than 20 different historical monuments, sites, and museums centered around the Civil War conflicts.

The fact that the Meriquai Falls Zoo and the Historic Midwest theme park are both in Revolution helps boost the economy. Each year, during the autumn season, the city also hosts a highly popular Renaissance Festival to benefit the Frasier Davenport Historical Library. There

are also several Civil War festivals and battle reenactments throughout the year.

THE TRUTH OF REVOLUTION

What no one knows about Frasier Davenport is that he had to strike a deal with the Meriquai totem spirits. Their aid helped carry the day during the battle against General McKenzie. Davenport had promised the spirits that, for their aid, he was in return to work tirelessly to ensure the Meriquai people receive equal standing and equal lands within the town of Revolution. But Davenport died of pneumonia in 1884, before he could finish his promise to the spirits.

The City of Revolution has since been haunted by the totem spirits of the Meriquai people since the day Davenport died. Slowly, surely, subtly... the totem spirits have been influencing the people of Revolution in order to open their eyes to natural balance and equality. However, human beings being as they are, this has been a tedious process at best.

Until 1974, the tactics of the totem spirits had been extremely subtle and relatively few. However, when the Manitou awoke and began his terrorist attacks against the miners of the Blue Hills, the "strange occurrences" that Revolution was quietly famous for spiked. Most people wrote the occurrences off as more of the Manitou's scare tactics. But the Manitou had nothing to do with the totem spirits of Revolution. Grandmother Spider had simply revived *all* of the totem spirits that resided there and instructed them to seek out balance in the world more aggressively.

The vigilantes Blood Shadow and Shotgun Rider were the first to encounter the totem spirits' strange tactics. However, the two superheroes soon learned that their direct approaches to solving problems did nothing to deter the spirits. So Blood Shadow called upon the resources of his alternate identity, Sebastian Robinson of Impulses Unlimited. Robinson formed a team of heroic-level specialists who could deduce the spirits' needs and deal with them. These specialists, calling themselves the Totem Hunters, were subsumed in the PRIMUS Wizards department in 1999 by Clayton "Silver-Wolf" Okamura.

Almost no one believes that the "strange occurrences" in Revolution are due to supernatural causes. Most people are too absorbed in their daily lives or the super heroic action north of the river to even *want* to see the causes. Only Mayor Striker, the Silver-Wolf, Crimson-Hawk, the Manitou, Theodore Owl-Speaker, and a small handful of private individuals are aware of the real situation in Revolution.

The PCs are considered to number amongst these people.

REVOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Size:

📍 213 sq. km. (82 sq. mi.)

Population:

📍 120,000 (50,000 households, 60,000 registered voters)

Government:

📍 Mayor (Hon. Daniel Striker) with six District Council Members.

Services:

- 📍 1 Bus Route
- 📍 2 Daily Newspapers
- 📍 20 Radio Stations
- 📍 7 Public TV Stations
- 📍 3 Cable TV Services
- 📍 2 Hospitals
- 📍 2 Police Stations (230 officers)
- 📍 10 Fire Stations (170 firefighters)
- 📍 500 Paved Streets
- 📍 5 Electrical Power Stations
- 📍 650 Water Mains

TOTEM HUNTERS

Agent Clayton Okamura, code named Silver-Wolf, stood in front of the abandoned building. All the clues led here. The odd dead mouse bodies, always stood up in a begging position, had all seemed disconnected at first. But Nathan Eagle-Eyes had seen it, had read the omens from the surrounding scenes.

All of the mouse bodies were facing towards a single landmark: the old McVannie Bottling Company building.

Okamura sighed. Eagle-Eyes was conducting a quick ritual to bless his fetishes, in case they were needed.

Donnelson was prepping his laptop, hacking into the national surveillance satellite to gain a top-down view. And Drake was doing a last once-over on his silenced Desert Eagle to make sure it was in working order.

"We're going in, men," Okamura finally said. "You got the link, Donnie?"

"Up and ready to go, chief," Donnelson responded. "I'm doing an infrared scan of the building. So far, nothing."

Sample Adventure: Bottler of Destruction

INTRODUCTION

This is a sample adventure for the *Totem Hunters* setting. In it, the PCs will discover a sinister crime that occurred nearly 70 years ago. The PCs must appease the totem spirits by putting the victim to rest.

OTHER GENRES

Although this adventure is designed for the *Totem Hunters* campaign setting, it can fit quite easily into any *Dark Champions* or *Pulp Hero* setting where the supernatural is rare but still existent. The scenario, with some modification, would work really well in a space opera-esque *Star Hero* setting. The gritty realism of big business dealing with big crime would also make this adventure well suited for a *Cyber Hero* setting. With some work, and perhaps some beefing of the Ghost stats from *The HERO System Bestiary*, this adventure might even work well in a four-color *Champions* campaign... nothing like a good mystery to get away from the grind of everyday combat!

SCENARIO BACKGROUND

In 1926, Eddie McVannie bought into the bottling industry that was booming. It was the Roaring '20s and life seemed right in the world. McVannie made his fortune easily bottling for all the popular soft drinks of the time.

Then the Great Depression hit.

The Italian Mafia was there to help McVannie. All they wanted was a means to transport their illegal gains without arousing the suspicion of the Feds. In exchange for the financial aid the Mafia provided to McVannie, McVannie would bottle alcohol, illegal drugs, and whatnot. The Mafia would then transport the bottles just as if they were bottles of soda.

But the Feds weren't as dense as McVannie had hoped. He was inspected by federal authorities several times. Although the Mafia were sure to have McVannie's bottling plant clean before each inspection, McVannie knew it would only be a matter of time before he was found out. So he became stressed and paranoid.

According to the newspapers, in February of 1939, McVannie was found dead, apparently another suicide in the wake of the economy of the Great Depression.

The truth is that the Mafia killed him. But not because he was going to squeal. Had the Mafia Don of the time, Vincent "Vin Vinny" Vincetti, had his way, McVannie would have stayed a useful tool for years to come. But McVannie had taken to drinking to relieve the stress of his life. One night, Vin Vinny's 12 year

old daughter, Margaret, sneaked down to the bottling plant to play. McVannie, in a drunken stupor, mistook the little girl for a Federal mole and killed her. Of course, Vin Vinny wasn't going to let that one slide by. McVannie was killed in a way that made it look like suicide. And the plant was shut down.

Two years later, Vin Vinny was incarcerated. He was never able to tear down the plant.

Nearly 70 years later, Margaret Vincetti's ghost still haunts the bottling plant, crying for her daddy.

And the totem spirits have decided it's high time her spirit was put to rest.

INVOLVING THE HEROES

The PCs could become involved in a number of ways. If they are Government Agents, the PRIMUS Wizard coordinator, Silver-Wolf, could contact them with the starting information. If they are Troubleshooters, the Revolution police department might contact them as experts, trying to nail down a ring of practical jokers. Maybe the PCs hear about the dead rats on the evening news, hear it on the radio, or read about it in cult-based Internet sites.

Whatever the case, the PCs should find out about the rats (see below).

PLAYER INFORMATION

However way the PCs find out, they will discover a string of "practical jokes" where dead rat bodies have been found in homes in prominent places, propped up in a begging position. They seem to be in random homes and businesses throughout Revolution. A successful KS: Totem Spirits Skill check will allow the character to deduce that these are actually set up by totem spirits under the guidance of Rat, a minor but important totem spirit.

If the PCs investigate more than three sites (and the GM is encouraged to roleplay through each site, being as deviously annoying as he likes concerning the residents), they should be allowed a Skill check at a -3 penalty (either Perception or Deduction, whichever is better). If they continue to visit sites, each additional site beyond the third will allow another Skill check first at a -2 penalty, then a -1 penalty, and so on, until a check is actually successful. A successful check will allow the PC to realize that rats are all facing towards the same geographic point. By triangulating from all of the rats' positions, the PCs will discover that the focal point is the abandoned McVannie's Bottling Company plant.

PLOTLINE

Upon first getting to the plant, the PCs will discover the conveyors running. The PCs may at first think this is the work of the totem spirits trying to guide them, but this isn't the case. This is the ghost of Eddie McVannie himself trying to scare away intruders. McVannie's ghost is still under the impression that the Feds will show up to shut him down and throw him in jail. So he will do everything in his power to stop the PCs. If the PCs are Government Agents, he'll be especially nasty.

At first, McVannie will be content with scare tactics. Turning on the conveyors (apparently on their own volition) is usually enough to scare away the average person. But the PCs are anything but average. So he'll move on to obstructing their progress with falling crates, broken bottle "caltrops," and the like. If the PCs prove undeterred after this, McVannie will resort to trying to separating the party and killing each character one by one.



If a physical confrontation with McVannie is inevitable, use the stats for the Ghost in the *HERO System Bestiary*, pages 120-121. It should become apparent that physical combat won't be the answer.

At some point in the PCs' adventure in the bottling plant, they should also run into the ghost of Margaret Vincetti. When they do, she will usually be crying miserably, calling out for her daddy to come and find her. If the PCs quietly observe Margaret, she will continue to sob uncontrollably, eventually moving on to another part of the plant. If Margaret discovers the PCs (she has a Perception of 13-), she will immediately scream in abject terror and bolt down the nearest hallway. If the PCs give chase, she will inadvertently lead them to McVannie's office before disappearing entirely.

If the PCs never encounter Margaret (highly unlikely), have the totem spirits leave subtle hints as to where to go. Maybe the PCs will think of checking the plant's files without any hints. If they do, grant each of them an additional +1 experience point. If not, have them start finding more rat bodies. Allow the PCs to make Perception or Deduction Skill checks after finding three rat bodies, just as above. Once a PC succeeds in a check, the PCs will be led to McVannie's office.

GOALS

If the PCs find McVannie's records (a Perception check at no penalties if they are actively searching McVannie's office), they will be treated to articulately maintained records of all of McVannie's business dealings... including those with the Mafia. Another Perception check (at a -3 penalty, although the PCs may use Extra Time if they're taking their times searching the office) will reveal a private journal written by McVannie. The last few pages will detail, in gory detail, how McVannie murdered Margaret Vincetti and how insanely scared he was that the Mafia would seek retribution in equally gory zeal. The PCs should figure out at this point that the Mafia must have sought that retribution.

Once all of this is discovered, PCs with any occult-based Knowledge Skill should be allowed a Skill check. If no PC possesses an appropriate skill, allow a Computer Hacker to make a Computer Programming Skill check to do some Internet research. Either way, the PCs should be allowed to learn that ghosts can be put to rest by relieving them of whatever is binding them to the world.

For McVannie, this is as simple as destroying the records. Without the records, he cannot be convicted of any crimes. Released of his fears, McVannie will move on to the next world.

"Either this is a false alarm or we're dealing with bogeymen again," Drake snarled, holstering his Desert Eagle and drawing his Bowie knife. He plucked a hair from his head and let it drift down onto the knife. "I don't like either option."

"They are 'bogeymen,'" Eagle-Eyes replied, rather unemotionally. "They are children of Mouse... and they want something. They want something concerning this place, or perhaps something connected to this place."

"The last time we took on these things, I got more pleasure out of slicing my thumb open than I did watching you talk Injun talk to them," Drake hissed, prompting Donnelson to pick up his laptop and scoot five feet further away.

"Watch what you're saying, Drake," Okamura replied, shouldering his duffle bag. "Double-E is a Meriquai shaman... and not a half-bad one at that. Donnie, you got anything?"

"I've switched to motion sensors, Clayton," Donnelson stated. "And I'm getting motion... lots of motion. Shikes! Clayton, it's the bottling conveyors! Those things have infested the bottling conveyors."

“They’re pointing us to something,” Eagle-Eyes concluded, gathering his fetishes. “They want us to see what it is. I think we should follow.”

“Just give me something to shoot at and I’ll be happy,” Drake smiled, tracing his eyesight over the length of his Bowie blade to look at the building.

“Pack up, Donnie,” Okamura said, patting his duffle bag reassuringly. “I want Drake to take point while I take up the rear. Donnie, you and Double-E stay in the middle in case anything happens. We’re going to crack this mystery tonight.”

With that, Silver-Wolf and his Hunting Pack moved in.

Okamura stepped last into the building, behind Donnelson and Eagle-Eyes. Drake, who was taking point, kept his Desert Eagle at the ready. Just like Eagle-Eyes, neither Drake nor Okamura were letting anything escape their notice. Every creak, every fluttering shadow, every fluxing light drew the three men’s attentions. Donnelson, for his part, kept his eyes firmly glued to his electronic equipment, searching for abnormalities.

“The conveyors seem to be in motion, but nothing is on the treads,” Donnelson confirmed.

Margaret Vincetti is trickier. She wants her daddy, desperately. This will take some creativity on the PCs’ parts. Perhaps one of them could masquerade as Vin Vinny, reassuring the young lass that everything will be all right. More cold-hearted PCs might opt for making Margaret face the truth that her daddy is now dead and no longer able to help her. The latter method might have temporary yet terrifying backlash effects, but either way will allow Margaret to let go of this world and move onto the next. It’s important to remember that because of her fear for him, McVannie *must* have moved on before Margaret will move on.

Once both McVannie’s and Margaret’s spirits have been put to rest, the PCs have successfully ended the adventure. A generous GM might have the totem spirits orchestrate some kind of reward, tangible or not.

OPTIONS

The PCs might not even go to the bottling plant, even once they find out that is where the totem spirits want them to go. Perhaps the PCs want to track down the totem spirits themselves. If that is the case, have the totem spirits leave a merry trail of clues forcing the PCs to trudge through sewer mains and power conversion plants until they eventually make it to the bottling plant anyway. Just don’t force the characters to the plant until they *want* to go to the plant.

The scenario above assumes that the PCs will discover the truth behind the murders by finding McVannie’s records and journal. However, creative PCs might actually establish communication with either McVannie or Margaret, or even both! If this is the case, the GM is encouraged to roleplay both characters to the hilt. McVannie is paranoid, freakish, jittery, half-drunk, and temperamental. He will whine and woe about what the “Mob” is going to do to him now that he’s killed Margaret. He will never come straight out and say it, but eventually PCs should pick up from McVannie’s babbling the story behind the Mafia’s “business dealings” with McVannie. Margaret is much harder to communicate with, as her death at McVannie’s hands has made her extremely paranoid of anyone who isn’t “Daddy.” However, if someone does somehow calm her down, she will be able to talk about how she snuck into the plant and how McVannie chased her down and killed her, but she won’t be able to say much else of use. Even if the PCs learn this information from the ghosts themselves, they still need to destroy McVannie’s records in order to allow his spirit to move on.

Another twist may occur if the PCs decide *not* to destroy McVannie’s records and instead turn them over to the authorities. This would

give the PCs some publicity and give them great contacts with the authorities if they didn’t have them already. But then McVannie will still be a ghost... an extremely vengeful ghost at that! If this occurs, the GM should have fun setting up several adventures centered upon McVannie’s revenge. And because McVannie has not passed on, neither will Margaret. Margaret will continue to haunt the bottling plant.

One surefire way to solve the entire issue would be to tear down the bottling plant. Nothing destroys records like an exploding, collapsing building. McVannie, knowing he would never be convicted after that, would be able to move on. Assuming, of course, the records were still in the building when the building was destroyed. If not, well, McVannie will be seeking his revenge.

An especially cruel GM may allow McVannie to move on, but not Margaret, after destroying the building. After all, Margaret’s anchor in unlife is her search for the safety of her daddy. Nothing says “unsafe” like a collapsing building coming down on top of you. Margaret may well cling to unlife to seek her own revenge on the PCs for putting her in danger like that.

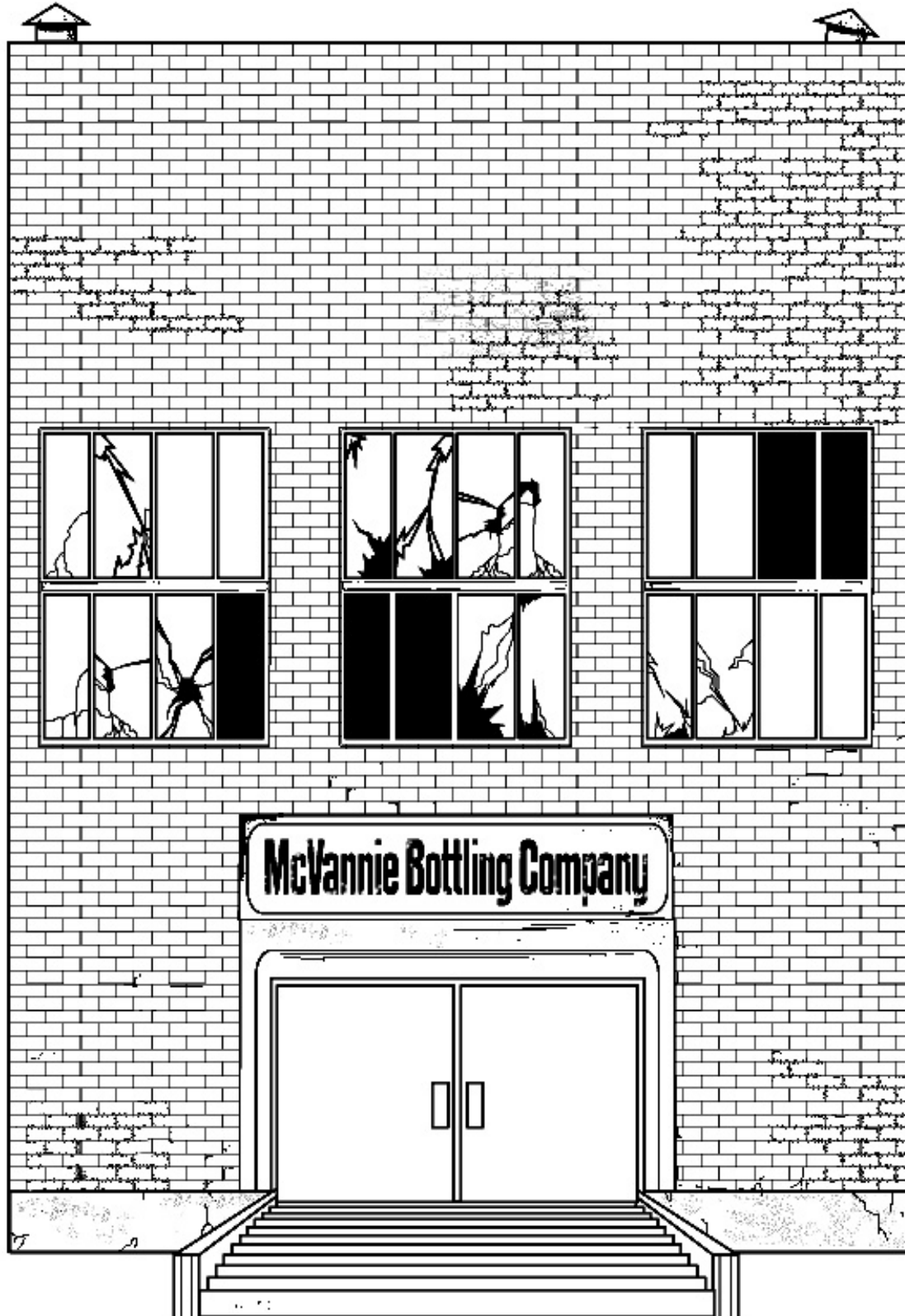


DIGITAL HERO #4

EXPERIENCE

Extra experience points can be earned by several means. If the players deduce that the rats are pointing them somewhere without the use of Perception or Deduction Skill checks, if the

players think of checking the plant's files without hints or being led there, or if the PCs somehow make contact with the ghosts and learn of their stories through their own mouths, the PCs should earn an extra experience point.



Okamura nodded firmly in acknowledgement. Eagle-Eyes brought out a feather fetish and began shaking it, chanting quietly to himself. Drake mumbled something about the lack of moving targets and spun from one corner to another with his gun aimed.

"It seems odd that they would lead us all the way here just to show us old machinery," Okamura thought aloud.

"Donnie, you wanna check out this place's public records?"

"Three steps ahead of you, boss," Donnelson replied, punching at his hand-held computer.

"There doesn't seem to be any records before 1974. And the bottling company bellied-up in '69."

"Well, we're just going to have to find those missing records, aren't we?" Okamura smiled.

The Chosen (of Abraxas) by W. Jason Allen

Long has religion been at the center of human cultures. The Chosen are agents of the cult of Ouroboros, a religion that has its roots in the time of Christ. They serve the serpent god Abraxas, whom Christians know as Satan. Followers of Abraxas have been enlightened to the truth that Jehovah is the true god of evil and that Abraxas serves the Supreme God by leading souls back to unity with the Supreme God. The Chosen are just that, chosen by Abraxas to help the leaders of Ouroboros bring enlightenment to the world – by any means necessary. For more details on the Ouroboros cult, see *The Ultimate Mystic* (formerly *The Ultimate Super Mage*), page 256-263.

Members: Cardinal Bastion (leader), DarkFang, Imp, Lady Medusa (second), Wight

History: The Ouroboros cult's success has been interrupted and curtailed many times, largely through the efforts of superheroes. Weary of failure, the Archimandrite consulted with the great god Abraxas to learn His will. The response was simple – meet these heroes on their own terms with a select band of warriors, empowered by the touch of Abraxas Himself through magic ritual.

Summoning his Cardinals to council, the Archimandrite posed the problem to them. “Gentlemen, fools who think they know what is best for humanity continue to thwart us. Even our strongest magics have failed to achieve our goals, thanks to the misguided efforts of self-styled heroes. Abraxas has made His wishes known to me, but I wish to hear your thoughts on how to solve this dilemma.”

Bastion, one of the Archimandrite's best Cardinals, spoke. “My lord, I see but one path. If our own powers are not enough, and the powers of the ancient creatures we have brought to life again are not enough, then we must find a way to meet these “heroes” on their own terms. We are strong of mind and skill; they are strong of body and power. We must find warriors with strength who have the wisdom and determination to join us and help us succeed.”

“Wise words, Bastion. That you offer the same solution as what Abraxas commanded me makes me reconsider sacrificing you for your failures. Instead, you shall be the leader of this group, and direct its efforts in the service of Abraxas. But you will redeem yourself in this, Bastion, or your life is forfeit.”

“I understand, Your Eminence. Abraxas shall have His chosen warriors.”

“See that you do, Bastion. Without those “chosen” warriors, our continued existence lies in question. Failure is not an option. Now as to your

own empowering, I believe something fitting your name is in order....”

Bastion took a slow, deep breath, knowing the coming ritual would be anything but pleasant.

Objectives: Completely loyal and motivated to succeed, The Chosen serve as the primary weapon of the Ouroboros cult, performing any task assigned them. They answer only to the Archimandrite and his Cardinals.

When left to their own devices, they amuse themselves with standard villainous activities, such as robbery, causing property damage and riots, and similar pastimes. The Cardinals seldom approve of these actions, but do little to stop them, realizing the Chosen are more useful when they blend in as regular supervillains. Because of this, most of their true missions have succeeded completed unopposed, simply because no one knew those missions were taking place.

Relations: One thing binds the Chosen together – dedication to Abraxas. Cardinal Bastion uses both power and persuasion to keep the inevitable arguments from getting out of hand, though the team usually gets along fairly well.

Tactics: Members of The Chosen work well together. Their main shortcoming is the specialized nature of their attacks. DarkFang is limited to Hand-to-Hand combat, while Imp and Wight both focus on Adjustment Powers. Only Cardinal Bastion and Lady Medusa have extensive combat options. To compensate for this, they utilize any available advantage when fighting opponents, including non-combat tactics such as taking hostages. They also don't have anyone specializing in mental abilities, aside from a few of Cardinal Bastion's spells.

Base and Equipment: The Chosen do not maintain any significant equipment not related to the worship of Abraxas. For details on their base, the Fane of the Stone Dragon, see its write-up.

Campaign Use: Cardinal Bastion usually has two or three plots going at any one time, and The Chosen's seemingly ordinary crimes often further the Cardinal's plans in some way. The devious Cardinal excels at distracting and misleading those who would interfere with his plans.

One of Cardinal Bastion's current projects involves the mass transformation of the campaign city's populace into Ophites, reptilian humanoids fanatically loyal to Abraxas (see the Ophite brief). Current rituals can only transform at most a few dozen people at one time; Cardinal Bastion seeks a way to transform several thousand people at once.

artwork by Dave Collins

DIGITAL HERO #4

Cardinal Bastion

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15+25*	STR	5	12-/17-	Lift 200 kg (6400 kg); 3d6 (8d6) HTH [1(4)]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
20	CON	20	13-	
14	BODY	8	12-	
25	INT	15	14-	PER Roll: 14-
23	EGO	26	14-	ECV: 8
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
16	COM	3	12-	
6+5*	PD	3		Total: 18 (36) PD (12 (25) rPD)
6+5*	ED	2		Total: 18 (35) ED (12 (24) rPD)
5	SPD	17		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	2		
60	END	10		* from Density Increase
40	STUN	8		

Total Characteristics Cost: 168

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Leaping:	3"/6"
	Teleport:	25"/50"

Cost Powers END

17	<i>Stone Form:</i>	EC, 50-point powers; all OIHID (-1/4), Only Works While Character Is Touching The Ground (-1/4)	
17	1) <i>Stone Skin:</i>	Force Field (13 PD/12 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Persistent (+1/2); OIHID (-1/4), Only Works While Character Is Touching The Ground (-1/4)	0
17	2) <i>Stone Body:</i>	Density Increase (3,200 kg mass, +25 STR, +5 PD/ED, -5" KB), 0 END (+1/2), Persistent (+1/2); OIHID (-1/4), Only Works While Character Is Touching The Ground (-1/4)	0
17	3) <i>Earth Passage:</i>	Teleportation 25"; OIHID (-1/4), Only Works While Character Is Touching The Ground (-1/4)	5
34	<i>Dragon Rod Spells:</i>	Multipower, 76-point reserve, OAF (personal; -1), Incantations (-1/4)	
2u	1) <i>Greater Scrying:</i>	Clairsentience (Sight and Mental Groups, Normal Hearing), 256x Range (32,000"); OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4), Concentration (0 DCV, Concentrate throughout; -1)	7
2u	2) <i>Death Curse:</i>	Drain BODY 1d6, Delayed Return Rate (5 points per 6 hours; +1/4), BOECV (target chooses whether standard defense or Mental Defense applies; +3/4), Continuous (+1), Does BODY (+1), Invisible Power Effects (Fully Invisible; +1), Ranged (+1/2), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Uncontrolled (removable with Dispel Magic, Simplified Healing, or Healing BODY, lasts 24 hours; +1/2);	

	OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4), Only Works Against Living Organic Creatures (-1/2), One Hour Intervals Between Drains (-1)	0	
3u	3) <i>Mystic Bolt:</i>	Ego Attack 6d6, Reduced Endurance (1/2 END; +1/4); OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4)	3
3u	4) <i>Rod Strike:</i>	HA +6d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-1/2), Cannot More Than Double HA Damage With STR (-1/4) plus Sight Group Flash 4d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4), Linked (-1/2)	0
3u	5) <i>Dominate:</i>	Mind Control 15d6; OAF personal (-1), Incantations (-1/4)	7
2u	6) <i>Contact Abraxas:</i>	Mind Scan 10d6, Transdimensional (Astral Plane targets; +1/2); OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4), Concentration (0 DCV, must Concentrate throughout; -1), Extra Time (Extra Phase; -3/4), Only To Contact Abraxas (-0)	7
3u	7) <i>Dragon's Kiss:</i>	RKA 5d6; OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4), Extra Time (Full Phase; -1/2)	7
3u	8) <i>Summon Lesser Demon:</i>	Summon 4 200-point Demons, Any Lesser Demon or Creature of the Dragon (+1/4), Friendly (+1/4); OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4), Extra Time (Full Phase; -1/2)	7
3u	9) <i>Sigil of Set (type 1):</i>	Suppress Characteristics 6d6, Variable Effect (any two Characteristics; +1/2), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Uncontrolled (removed with Dispel Magic, lasts 5 minutes; +1/2); OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4)	0
3u	10) <i>Sigil of Set (type 2):</i>	Suppress Characteristics 3d6, Variable Effect (any two Characteristics; +1/2), Area Of Effect (10" Radius; +1/4), Continuous (+1), Personal Immunity (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Uncontrolled (removed with Dispel Magic, lasts 5 minutes; +1/2); OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4)	0
3u	11) <i>Mind Speech:</i>	12d6 Telepathy, Reduced Endurance (1/2 END; +1/4); OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4)	3
2u	12) <i>Home Gate:</i>	Teleportation 10", Area Of Effect (One Hex; +1/2), Continuous (+1), MegaScale (1" = 1000 km; +1), Usable On Others (+1/4); OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4), Gate (-1/2), Only To Fixed Location (-1) plus 1 Fixed Location (Fane of the Stone Dragon)	7
19	<i>Warding Band:</i>	Force Field (12 PD/12 ED); IIF (-1/4)	2
4	<i>Talisman Ring (ruby):</i>	Mental Defense (10 points); IIF (-1/4)	0

<p>4 <i>Talisman Ring (emerald)</i>: Power Defense (5 points); IIF (-1/4) 0</p> <p>95 <i>Noncombat Ritual Spells</i>: Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 90 base + 45 control cost; Can Only Be Changed With Bulky Spell Book (-1/2), Only Magic (-1/4), Only One Spell Can Be In The Pool At A Time Regardless Of Real Cost (-1), Extra Time (at least 5 minutes; -2), Gestures (throughout, both hands -3/4), OAF Arrangement, Expendable, Fragile, Personal (-13/4), Incantations (throughout; -1/2); Only Works Under A Full Moon (-2) var</p> <p>17 <i>Magesight</i>: Detect Magic (Mental Group), Discriminatory, Range, Sense 0</p> <p>12 <i>Worship Ritual</i>: Mind Link, any willing target of up to 32 minds, any distance, any dimension; Concentration (0 DCV, must Concentrate throughout; -1), Extra Time (1 turn; -11/4), OAF (Dragon's Head Rod; -1) 0</p> <p>35 <i>Enchanted Leather Backpack</i>: Extra-Dimensional Movement (one location in a 100 cubic hex "pocket dimension" defined by the bag), Usable as Attack (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); OAF (-1), Only On Nonresisting Objects (-1/4), Only Works On Items Small Enough To Fit Through Bag's Mouth (-1), Concentration (1/2 DCV; -1/4), Incantations (-1/4) plus Extra-Dimensional Movement (back to the user's hand in this dimension), Usable As Attack (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Transdimensional (bag's dimension targets; +1/2); OAF (-1), Concentration (1/2 DCV; -1/4), Incantations (-1/4), Linked (-1/4) 0</p> <p>Perks</p> <p>59 <i>Fane of the Stone Dragon</i>: Base, 285 points plus Disadvantages</p> <p>40 <i>Cultists</i>: 64 Followers, 50 points plus Disadvantages</p> <p>5 Fringe Benefit: Cult Leader</p> <p>6 Reputation: Powerful Mage-Priest of Abraxas (within the occult/supernatural world) 11-, +3/+3d6</p> <p>5 Wealth: Well Off, \$500,000 per year</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>16 +2 with All Combat</p> <p>3 Acting 13-</p> <p>3 Cryptography 15-; Translation Only (-1/2)</p> <p>3 High Society 13-</p> <p>3 Linguist</p> <p>24 Languages (completely fluent): Ancient Egyptian, Ancient Greek, Ancient Hebrew, Demon's Speech, French,</p>	<p>Gaelic, German, Greek, Latin, Old English, Old French, Welsh</p> <p>3 Oratory 13-</p> <p>3 Persuasion 13-</p> <p>3 PS: Professor 14-</p> <p>3 Scholar</p> <p>2 1) KS: Ancient Egyptian History 14-</p> <p>2 2) KS: Hellenistic Era History 14-</p> <p>2 3) KS: History 14-</p> <p>2 4) KS: History of Religion 14-</p> <p>2 5) KS: Medieval European History 14-</p> <p>2 6) KS: Occult/Supernatural World 14-</p> <p>2 7) KS: Ouroboros Doctrine 14-</p> <p>2 8) KS: Roman Era History 14-</p> <p>2 9) KS: Scholastic World 14-</p> <p>2 10) KS: Western Magic Traditions 14-</p> <p>2 11) KS: Western Occultism 14-</p> <p>2 12) KS: World History 14-</p> <p>3 SS: Linguistics 14-</p> <p>3 SS: Research 14-</p> <p>3 Teamwork 14-</p> <p>Total Powers & Skills Cost: 537</p> <p>Total Cost: 700</p> <p>200+ Disadvantages</p> <p>10 Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)</p> <p>10 Hunted: Abraxas 11- (Mo Pow, Watching)</p> <p>5 Hunted: Archimandrite 11- (As Pow, Watching)</p> <p>15 Physical Limitation: Can be possessed by Abraxas at any time (Infrequently, Fully Impairing)</p> <p>15 Physical Limitation: Only has spells allowed by Abraxas (All The Time, Slightly Impairing)</p> <p>25 Psychological Limitation: Loyal to Abraxas (Very Common, Total)</p> <p>20 Psychological Limitation: Dislikes Christianity (Very Common, Strong)</p> <p>15 Psychological Limitation: Power Hungry (Very Common, Moderate)</p> <p>15 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Very Common, Moderate)</p> <p>10 Psychological Limitation: Arrogant (Common, Moderate)</p> <p>5 Reputation: powerful mage-priest of Abraxas, limited group (occult/supernatural world), 11-</p> <p>15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frequently, Major)</p> <p>15 Susceptibility: to Dragon Rod being struck, 3d6 Damage (Uncommon)</p> <p>325 Experience Points</p> <p>Total Disadvantage Points: 700</p>
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DIGITAL HERO #4

SAMPLE RITUAL SPELLS

These are spells that Cardinal Bastion currently has access to. The materials required to cast them are rare enough that he can't try casting one at each full moon, but when he is able to, he will.

Demonhorde: Casting this spell unleashes a small band of demons from Hell.

Demonhorde: Summon 64 150-point Demons, Any Lesser Demon or Creature of the Dragon (+¼), Friendly (+¼) (90 Active Points); 1 Charge (-2). Total cost: 9 points.

Sunblot: A mighty curse, this spell blocks out the sun's light for a hundred years. Only the caster is able to see through the maddening darkness.

Sunblot: Darkness to Sight Group 2" radius, 1 Continuing Charge lasting 1 Century (removed by destroying focus; +2), MegaScale (1" = 10,000 km; +1¼), Personal Immunity (+¼) (90 Active Points); Only Affects Normal Sight and Ultraviolet Perception (-¼). Total cost: 11 points.

Planar Gate: This spell opens a doorway to another dimension. Cardinal Bastion selects the dimension when he formulates the spell, and cannot change the selected dimension without refiguring the entire spell. The gate operates both ways – to and from.

Planar Gate: Extra-Dimensional Movement (one location in one dimension), Increased Weight (400 kg), Area Of Effect (One Hex, Expanded; +¾), Continuous (+1), Usable By Other (+¼) (90 Active Points); 1 Continuing Charge lasting 6 hours (removed by destroying focus; -0). Total cost: 11 points.

Create Ophites: This dark ritual transforms humans (willing or not) into Ophites (see character brief).

Create Ophites: Major Transform 2d6 (humans into Ophites, heals back with Dispel Magic), Area of Effect (6" Radius; +1), Continuous (+1) (90 Active Points); Limited Target (humans; -½), 1 Continuing Charge lasting 5 Minutes (removed by destroying focus; -¾). Total Cost: 10 points.

Death Fog: This spell creates a red mist that spreads slowly from its point of origin. Even high-quality mystic shields do not provide complete protection. The mist must be breathed in to take effect.

Death Fog: Drain BODY 2d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), MegaScale (1" = 100 km; +¾), Continuous (+1), Armor Piercing (+½), Penetrating (+½), Personal Immunity (+¼) (90 Active Points); 1 Continuing Charge lasting 20 Minutes (removed by destroying focus; -½), Does Not Penetrate Closed Buildings (-½), Does Not Affect Characters With LS: Self-Contained Breathing (-¼), Limited Power (expands slowly, 10 km per Minute; -¼), No Range (-½). Total cost: 9 points.

Create Stone Golem: Using large amounts of prepared earth and stone, a mindless servitor (*i.e.* an automaton) is created to serve Cardinal Bastion. Use the Stone Golem in *The HERO System Bestiary*, p 79-80, adding an additional +2 Hand-To-Hand levels. Note that Golems are Automations, and automatically follow their creator's orders.

Create Stone Golem: Summon 8 365-point Stone Golems (90 Active Points); 1 Charge (-2). Total cost: 9 points.

Background/History: Louis DeCray grew up in a conservative Christian middle-class home. Early in life, he discovered his love of language and history. His pastor knew the language of the ancient Hebrews as well as any man not born to it may, and taught it to young Louis. In a year's time, Louis could speak and read ancient Hebrew and began learning ancient Greek. Impressed with his studiousness, his parents began making plans for Louis to attend a seminary college.

In high school, Louis became disillusioned with Christianity from studying its history. Knowing that his parents would not approve of his loss of faith, he pretended to believe while quietly searching for truths better suited to his own mind – a mind that began to hunger for power. Power to repay the bullies at school, power to study as he wished, power to do with as he pleased.

The night Louis graduated from high school, his parents showed him a letter of acceptance from the best seminary school in the state. Stating he loved history and language, not theology, he calmly declined the acceptance. His father exploded in fury, ranting about the plans they had made, how strong Christ was with him,

CARDINAL BASTION PLOT SEEDS

☠ A good friend of the PCs attends one of Dr. DeCray's history classes and gets caught up in his cult. It's up to the PC to get him out of the cult – if he even wants to leave.

☠ Having finally found the spell elements he needs, Cardinal Bastion attempts to turn a large portion of the city's population into Ophites. But something goes wrong, and instead, a large portal opens in the middle of the city. Where does the portal lead, and how can the heroes close it before something comes through? What caused Bastion's spell to go so horribly awry? Of course, he'll likely blame the heroes for his failure....

☠ After having stopped one of Cardinal Bastion's plans before, it is once again the full moon. What fiendish spell will he unleash to exact his vengeance?

and that any other path would be a waste of Louis's God-given talent. "You will be a preacher, Louis, and that's final," his father said.

Louis stared at his parents a moment before responding. "Is this how followers of Christ behave? Yelling and screaming at their child when his desires run contrary to their own? I will attend college to study language and history. I plan to become a professor. I'm sorry if my plans don't agree with yours, but it's my life, and *that* is final." His parents disowned him, and he them.

Louis attended New York University, earning a PhD in History and an MS in Linguistics before his 30th birthday. While at the university, he also found the religion he had been seeking for so long, a religion of power – the Ouroboros cult. The thrill of learning that magic was real secured his loyalty, and for his strength of faith Louis earned the name Bastion.

Shortly after earning his PhD, Louis was named a Cardinal, second only to the Archimandrite, and brother to the other Cardinals. For nearly 5 years he has been a Cardinal and leader of his own cult group. He will allow nothing to take away what he has earned, and any who try to will earn his undying enmity.

Personality/Motivation: Cardinal Bastion is a complex, powerful man. Kind with his followers, even when they must die, he has no mercy for his enemies. Though short of patience, he engenders trust and loyalty – and a touch of fear. He exudes power, and those who witness his wrath do not wish it turned against them. When The Chosen are engaged in "normal" supervillain pastimes, he prefers not to accompany them unless it in some way relates to one of his ongoing plots.

Bastion's wrath knows no bounds, and is usually reserved for those who try to interfere with his plans or offend Abraxas in some way. At such times, he is cold, efficient, and brutal. In his youth, he abhorred physical violence; after receiving his empowerment he learned the joys of brute strength.

Though Bastion works hard to be the "perfect leader," he is quite willing to sacrifice the world if it means a significant gain for Abraxas and himself. Ruthless and determined, he truly cares for his followers, but they are expendable if need or Abraxas dictates.

In his normal identity, Bastion is an excellent teacher, efficient and professional while kind and personable. Many of his followers are carefully selected from his classes.

Quote: "Fools. Behold *true* power!"

Powers/Tactics: Bastion prefers to play a supporting role in combat, avoiding direct conflict when possible. If acting as support is

impractical or he is attacked directly, he will activate his Armor and Density Increase and wade in, swinging his rod and blasting with the Dragon's Kiss. It takes a Full Phase action to activate his stone form (per OIHID guidelines).

Bastion usually keeps his Dragon Rod (a walking stick made from lacquered black oak, carved to resemble a dragon's head) and his worship garments, and often several books, inside the Enchanted Leather Backpack. Seldom without this bag, he is careful not to let anyone witness its use. Anything he puts inside goes into the pocket dimension. When he reaches into it, what he wants comes to his hand.

His two talisman rings are inscribed with Celtic knot work and adorned with a small ruby and emerald, respectively. On his right wrist is his warding band, a silver bracelet with Egyptian hieroglyphs and symbols of power.

Campaign Use: Cardinal Bastion could be a major villain for any campaign, especially with The Chosen behind him. Powerful and versatile, his ambition knows no bounds. Though not as deeply evil as many villains, he will do anything to accomplish his goals. In his Secret ID, Bastion could easily be involved with PCs and DNPCs, either as a teacher or source of scholarly information.

Vengeful to no end, Cardinal Bastion, will Hunt anyone who thwarts his plans consistently. He will send the Chosen to attack his foes, summon demons to lie in ambush, and otherwise make his enemy's life hell. Striking out at loved ones is also a favored tactic for Bastion's vengeance.

To boost Cardinal Bastion's power, increase his Stone Form EC, DEX, EGO, and STUN, as well as his focused defenses (Warding Band and Talisman Rings). Boost his Dragon Rod Spells only if necessary. To lessen his ability, drop the Dragon Rod Spells to 65 Active Points (this may require the removal of some Advantages) and reduce his Stone Form to 40 or even 30 Active Points.

Appearance: Though of average physique by appearance, Bastion's strength, health, and reflexes have been enhanced by magic ritual. His light brown hair is professionally short; he sports a mustache, and sometimes a full beard in winter. He wears dress shirts and jeans, with a tie if he's in the mood to wear one.

Cardinal Bastion's costume consists of a sleeveless white robe with magic symbols in red silk thread on gold trim. Over this, he wears a midnight blue hooded cloak treated to repel water. While the hood is up, his face is hidden in impenetrable shadow. The hood can only be removed if Bastion wills it, or if the cloak is destroyed (which can only happen out of combat).

Cardinal Bastion



DarkFang

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
60	STR	50	21-	Lift 100 t; 12d6 HTH [6]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
30	CON	40	15-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
14	INT	4	12-	PER Roll: 12-
13	EGO	6	12-	ECV: 4
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
4	COM	-3	10-	
28	PD	16		Total: 28 PD (16 rPD)
23	ED	16		Total: 23 ED (16 rED)
5	SPD	19		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
16	REC	0		
60	END	0		
60	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 217

Movement:

Running:	12"/24"
Leaping:	12"/24"
Flight:	22"/44"

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Claws:</i> HKA 2d6 (4d6 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½); Restrainable (-½)	4
29	<i>Wings:</i> Flight 22"; Restrainable (-½)	4
16	<i>Thick Hide:</i> Damage Resistance (16 PD/16 ED)	0
5	<i>Strong Will:</i> Mental Defense (8 points)	0
12	<i>Swiftness:</i> Running +6" (12" total)	2
10	<i>Claws:</i> Clinging	0
5	<i>Wings and Tail:</i> Extra Limbs	0

Skills

10	+2 with Hand-To-Hand Combat
10	+5 with Flight
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Climbing 13-
4	Language: Spanish (native accent)
3	Scholar
1	1) KS: Ancient History 11-
1	2) KS: English Literature 11-
1	3) KS: Fantasy & Science Fiction Literature 11-
2	4) KS: Occult & Horror Literature 12-
1	5) KS: Occult World 11-
1	6) KS: Ouroboros Doctrine 11-
1	7) KS: Role-Playing Games 11-
1	8) KS: World History 11-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Streetwise 14-
3	Teamwork 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 158

Total Cost: 375

150+ Disadvantages

15	Distinctive Features: Seven-foot Tall Gargoyle (Concealable; Always Noticed)
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10	Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
15	Enraged: when takes BODY damage (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 11-
15	Hunted: Law Enforcement Agencies 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
10	Hunted: Cult Leaders 11- (Mo Pow, Watching)
25	Psychological Limitation: Loyal to Abraxas (Very Common, Total)
15	Psychological Limitation: Short-Tempered (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Protective of Friends (Common, Moderate)
10	Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Uncommon, Strong)
10	Reputation: rampaging beast, 8- (Extreme)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frequently, Major)
75	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 375

Background/History: Juan escaped his boring life through science fiction. He read it and watched it, and from talking with other fans at bookstores, learned of other fascinating things. Fantasy and horror were soon on his reading list, and he met with friends to watch movies and play games. He often defended his friends from bullies at school, earning the label "troublemaker" for getting in fights so often. School officials didn't care whether he fought only to defend his friends.

Juan's life improved when he gained admittance to the local university. English may have been his favorite class, but Dr. DeCray was his favorite teacher. He had anticipated a boring class of dates and names like in high school, but Dr. DeCray made history come alive for Juan, often seeming to speak only to him.

Juan quickly found new friends in the dorm. Before long, he found out that some of his friends were pagans, and they invited him to join them at their next meeting. Having nothing else to do that evening, he went, and was surprised to find Dr. DeCray was the leader of the pagan group! Before long, he was going to the meetings because he believed in what Dr. DeCray was teaching, and because deep inside, he wanted a taste of power for himself.

One day after class, Dr. DeCray asked Juan to stay after class a bit.

DIGITAL HERO #4

Juan Chavez

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	12-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH [2]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
15	CON	10	12-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
14	INT	4	12-	PER Roll: 12-
13	EGO	6	12-	ECV: 4
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
16	COM	3	12-	
9	PD	5		Total: 19 PD (10 rPD)
8	ED	5		Total: 18 ED (10 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
7	REC	0		
30	END	0		
31	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 70

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 4"/8"

Cost	Powers	END
75	<i>Become DarkFang:</i> Multiform (change into 375-point gargoyles)	0
20	<i>Flame Blast:</i> EB 10d6; OIF (Ouroboros ring; -½), Incantations ("Flame"; -¼), 4 Boostable Charges (-¾) [4bc]	
20	<i>Magic Sword:</i> HKA 1d6+1 (2d6 with STR), +4 STUN Multiplier (+1); OAF (-1) 4/8	
23	<i>Ward of the Faithful:</i> Force Field (10 PD/10 ED/10 Mental Defense/10 Power Defense); IIF (Ouroboros ring; -¼), Concentration (½ DCV; -¼), Incantations ("Shield me!" -¼) 4	
5	<i>Strong Will:</i> Mental Defense (8 points) 0	

Skills

4	+2 with Flame Blast
2	+1 with Magic Sword
3	Breakfall 12-
3	Climbing 12-
4	Language: Spanish (native accent)
3	Scholar
1	1) KS: Ancient History 11-
1	2) KS: English Literature 11-
1	3) KS: Fantasy & Science Fiction Literature 11-
2	4) KS: Occult & Horror Literature 12-
1	5) KS: Occult World 11-
1	6) KS: Ouroboros Doctrine 11-
1	7) KS: Role-Playing Games 11-
1	8) KS: World History 11-
3	Stealth 12-
3	Streetwise 12-
3	Teamwork 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 180

Total Cost: 250

150+ Disadvantages

10	Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
5	Distinctive Features: Cult Costume and Jewelry (Easily Concealed)
10	Hunted: Cult Leaders 11- (Mo Pow, Watching)
10	Hunted: Local Authorities 11- (As Pow, NCI, Watching)
25	Psychological Limitation: Loyal to Abraxas (Very Common, Total)
10	Psychological Limitation: Protective of Friends (Common, Moderate)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frequently, Major)
15	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 250

"Juan, I am worried about something. I have a special project, and I'm wondering if you might be able to help me with it."

"What is it, Dr. DeCray? A research project?"

"Not quite, Juan. Let me explain...."

Juan smiled and agreed.

Personality/Motivation: Juan is your basic self-absorbed college student. The only things that concern him more than having fun are looking out for his friends and his loyalty to Cardinal Bastion and Abraxas. And between the two, he would sacrifice his friends in a moment if Cardinal Bastion commanded him to (though he'd feel bad about it later). Abraxas and Cardinal Bastion have given him more power than he ever dreamed possible, and he will do anything they ask of him. Even death is not too high a price to pay.

When Juan transforms into DarkFang, his personality takes on a much darker aspect, becoming more vicious and quick to anger. He is more cautious in combat in his human form, but as a gargoyles he does not hesitate to fight, relishing the thrill of combat. He is even beginning to develop a taste for blood.

Quote: "Now you've annoyed me. Stand still so I can shred you."

Powers/Tactics: DarkFang has one basic strategy – put them down hard and fast. He is strong and swift, and recovers quickly from most injuries. He employs his claws often (exclusively when Enraged), but will also punch, kick, bite, or throw convenient missiles at opponents (cars, trees, other people, or whatever else is handy). His claws are the ends of his fingers; if they're restrained or entangled it's difficult for DarkFang to use them. Also a skilled aerialist, DarkFang

DARKFANG PLOT SEEDS

☠ The PCs receive a report that DarkFang has broken into one of the shopping malls and is tearing up the place. What set him off? Is he stealing stuff or just making a big mess? Who takes advantage of the distraction DarkFang provides?

☠ Once again, homeless people are disappearing from the streets. After dismembered corpses are found and rumors of a winged monster surface, it seems DarkFang has finally given in to bloodlust. Or has he?

☠ Juan tracks down the PCs with a sad story. It seems he was under Cardinal Bastion's mental control the whole time, and deeply regrets the horrible things he's done. He wants to make it right and offers to take the PCs to Bastion's secret base, the Fane of the Stone Dragon. Is he sincere, or is it a deadly trap?

will often dive-bomb opponents from the sky, taking them by surprise to end the battle quickly.

If for some reason Juan is fighting without changing into DarkFang (a rare occurrence), he will try to stay at range, blasting with his ring. He'll use his sword only if backed into a corner.

Campaign Use: Juan could easily be known to PCs who frequent the local university. He is not shy at all, and will chat with anyone about anything. He wears a ring in the shape of a snake eating its tail, the classic Ouroboros symbol. He has actually brought a few people into the cult after they asked about the ring.

DarkFang isn't much for Hunting characters unless Cardinal Bastion sends him out for such a purpose, but will seek vengeance on those who've thrashed him if the opportunity presents itself.

To increase DarkFang's power, boost his physical characteristics, defenses, and HKA. If you want to improve Juan's fighting ability, boost his Flame Blast and defenses, and give him more skill levels with his attacks. To reduce his forms' abilities, reduce those same factors.

Appearance: Juan is muscular, of Mexican descent with dark hair and eyes. He usually wears jeans and heavy metal band t-shirts.

DarkFang resembles a classic gothic gargoye with gray stony skin, horns and elbow spikes, with pale gray eyes, clad in a simple leather loincloth.



DIGITAL HERO #4

Imp

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	Lift 150kg; 2½d6 HTH [1]
28	DEX	54	15-	OCV: 9/DCV: 9+
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 12-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
14	COM	2	12-	
9	PD	6		Total: 18 PD (9 rPD)
9	ED	5		Total: 18 ED (9 rED)
7	SPD	32		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
10	REC	6		
60	END	12		
40	STUN	14		

Total Characteristics Cost: 166

Movement: Running: 11"/22"
Teleport: 20"/40"

Cost Powers **END**

33	<i>Venom Blast:</i>	Drain STR, DEX, EGO, STUN 2d6, Variable Effect (all four Characteristics at once; +1), Ranged (+½); Only Against Living Organic Targets (-½)	5
40	<i>Phase Step:</i>	Teleportation 20"	4
40	<i>Imp Size:</i>	Shrinking (.125 m tall [about 4 inches], .025 kg mass, -8 to PER Rolls to perceive character, +8 DCV, takes +12" KB)	4
5	<i>Fortitude:</i>	Power Defense (5 points)	
10	<i>Swiftness:</i>	Running +5" (11" total)	
5	<i>See in the Dark:</i>	Nightvision	0

Perks

- 4 Contact: Fence 11-, useful resources, has contacts
- 3 Contact: Street Sneak 11-, has contacts

Talents

- 18 Combat Luck (9 PD/9 ED)
- 3 Lightsleep

Skills

- 3 Acrobatics 15-
- 3 Breakfall 15-
- 4 CK: Campaign City 14-
- 3 Climbing 15-
- 2 KS: Occult World 11-
- 2 KS: Ouroboros Doctrine 11-
- 3 KS: Street Gangs 12-
- 3 Language: Spanish (completely fluent)
- 3 Lockpicking 15-
- 5 Security Systems 13-
- 3 Shadowing 12-
- 3 Stealth 15-
- 5 Streetwise 13-
- 3 Teamwork 15-
- 3 WF: Blades, Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 209

Total Cost: 375

200+ Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
- 5 Distinctive Features: Cult Tattoo (Easily Concealed)
- 10 Hunted: Cult Leaders 11- (Mo Pow, Watching)
- 15 Hunted: Law Enforcement Agencies 8- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Loyal to Abraxas (Very Common, Total)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Petty and Cruel (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Power Hungry and Greedy (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Uncommon, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: dangerous criminal, 8- (Extreme)
- 5 Reputation: street thief, limited group (underworld), 11-
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frequently, Major)
- 10 Unluck: 2d6
- 25 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 375

Background/History: Kyle Marks grew up on the street, a pure-bred street rat and sneak thief. When he chose the wrong house to rob, he was in for a surprise. Dr. Louis DeCray was home, and quickly showed Kyle the error of his ways – with a painful lesson in magic. Kyle was nearly deprived of his life when DeCray paused, sensing an opportunity for gain. “Young thief, what god do you serve?”

“I don’t believe in no gods. Let me go!”

DeCray smiled dangerously. “You may not think so to look at me, but I serve a strong god. Let me show you my god’s power.”

Kyle struggled in fear as the strange man invaded his mind, and nearly soiled himself as he felt another presence through the man’s mind. It felt old and young, strong yet bound, and its mind was pure power. Paralyzed beyond thought, Kyle wondered what this could be.

“*I am Abraxas, as old as time and second only to the Creator, god of truth, knowledge, and power. Will you serve me, Kyle Marks?*” Kyle didn’t have time to wonder why Abraxas would want a pitiful thing such as himself before he was answered.

“*You have already learned the Truth of Self-Reliance, and by such alone are worthy. You also know the Truth of Cost, that nothing is free. I know before you think it that you wish returns for your service. And returns you shall have. I*

IMP PLOT SEEDS

☠ Imp's mission is the theft of a new exhibit from the museum, an artifact rumored to have been owned by a powerful sorcerer. What is the artifact? What powers does it hold? Is it magical at all?

☠ Having used Kyle as an information source before, he contacts the PCs with a hot tip. Seems VIPER is planning to set up a temporary base in a warehouse in preparation of building a new Nest in the area. Is this true? Or are the Chosen planning a vicious ambush?

☠ While happily cleaning out a small jewelry store, Imp observes the PCs stopping another criminal's activities. Deciding to follow, he learns the Secret ID of one of the PCs. What sort of fiendish blackmail will Imp think up, or will he inform Cardinal Bastion and make things even more unpleasant?

offer you, Kyle Marks, physical power in the mortal realm in exchange for service to me until the end of days. What is your answer?"

Kyle could feel the power of the great Abraxas and knew nothing was beyond Him. For service, he would gain power, and with power he could achieve great wealth. "Great Abraxas, I accept your offer."

"Then I grant you the power of the Imp, as it best suits your talent and nature. Pain is the price of power, and the power is your own, save when I require your service. Thus, the deal is made."

Kyle screamed in agony as his body and soul were ripped asunder and born anew.

Personality/Motivation: Kyle was never the religious type, and as far as his street friends know, he still isn't. But Kyle is as devoted to Abraxas and Cardinal Bastion as he is to himself, and his own well-being is his top concern.

The only time he will sacrifice anything is when he can profit from the sacrifice or when serving Abraxas requires it. Kyle is a thief, cheat, and liar, and is proud of his skill in obtaining the wealth of others. Thievery is a thrill-game to Kyle, and wealth the grand prize.

Before his empowering, Kyle would seek any escape from confrontation – running, lying, dirty tricks – anything. He was not skilled in fighting, and he knew it. Since his fortunate encounter with Cardinal Bastion, he has begun tracking down people who've attacked or otherwise offended him in some way, and extracting bloody revenge. Any who humiliate him now can expect the same treatment.



Quote: "Come on, wimp! You couldn't hit a parked mini-van!"



Powers/Tactics: Kyle has always been good at staying hidden and moving quickly. His Imp powers enhance those skills. Being able to shrink down to about 4 inches tall makes him very difficult to hit, and he enjoys the benefits of growth momentum. His venom blast steals away a person's strength, reflexes, willpower, and also stuns them, but only works against living, organic beings. The power he enjoys the most is his "phase step," in which he makes and steps through a small bend in space, effectively teleporting. Its range is limited, but useful for getting into otherwise secured areas or surprising an enemy from behind.

Kyle takes pleasure in using his new abilities for personal gain; he usually masterminds most of the team's robbery missions. If trapped, he will use any means necessary to escape, even if he must reveal his Secret ID. Those who witness it, however, are usually silenced – permanently. People who taunt him live long enough to regret it, but not much longer.

Campaign Use: Imp often works as a thief for hire when not working for Abraxas. Street heroes could seek rumors from Kyle Marks, who is known to be an excellent source of information, and expert burglar, despite his youthful 19 years.

Imp enjoys Hunting down those who've annoyed him. The vengeance he exacts usually matches the wrong done to him.

To increase his capabilities, boost Imp's DEX, defenses, and Venom Blast. To make him less powerful, reduce his DEX and remove the Ranged Advantage from his Venom Blast.

Appearance: Kyle is a street punk in attitude and appearance. T-shirts with punk logos, worn jeans, boots, and a leather jacket are his usual attire. When operating as Imp, he dons a demonic greenish-gray face mask that leaves only his eyes and mouth visible.

DIGITAL HERO #4

Lady Medusa

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
24	DEX	42	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
15	CON	10	12-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 12-
24	EGO	28	14-	ECV: 8
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
24	COM	7	14-	
10	PD	8		Total: 20 PD (10 rPD)
10	ED	7		Total: 20 ED (10 rED)
5	SPD	16		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	6		
40	END	5		
30	STUN	4		

Total Characteristics Cost: 149

Movement: Running: 15"/30"
Leaping: 2"/4"
Swimming: 5"/10"

Cost	Powers	END
27	<i>Magical Bow</i> : Multipower, 60-point reserve, all OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-1/4)	
2u	1) <i>Flame Arrow</i> : EB 12d6; OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-1/4), 12 Charges (-1/4)	[12c]
2u	2) <i>Cold Arrow</i> : EB 6d6, NND (not against Force Field or Safe Environment: Intense Cold; +1); OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-1/4), 12 Charges (-1/4)	[12c]
2u	3) <i>Light Arrow</i> : Sight Group Flash 8d6, Explosion (+1/2); OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-1/4), 12 Charges (-1/4)	[12c]
2u	4) <i>Lightning Arrow</i> : RKA 4d6; OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-1/4), 12 Charges (-1/4)	[12c]
27	<i>Serpent Wand Spells</i> : Multipower, 60-point reserve; all OAF personal (-1), Incantations (-1/4)	
2u	1) <i>Death Curse</i> : Drain BODY 1d6, Delayed Return Rate (1 point per hour; +1 1/4), Continuous (+1), Does BODY (+1), Invisible To Sight and Hearing Groups (+3/4), Ranged (+1/2), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Uncontrolled (removable with Dispel Magic, Simplified Healing, or Healing BODY, lasts 24 hours; +1/2); OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4), Only Works Against Living Organic Creatures (-1/2), One Hour Intervals Between Drains (-1)	0
3u	2) <i>Mystic Bolt</i> : Ego Attack 6d6; OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4)	6
2u	3) <i>Sigil of Set</i> : Suppress Characteristics 5d6, Variable Effect	

	(any one Characteristic; +1/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Uncontrolled (removed with Dispel Magic, lasts 5 minutes; +1/2); OAF (-1), Incantations (-1/4)	0
52	<i>Stoning</i> : Major Transform 7d6 (living creature to stone, heals back normally); Limited Target (living creatures; -1/4), Concentration (1/2 DCV; -1/4), Extra Time (Full Phase; -1/2)	10
16	<i>Warding Band</i> : Force Field (10 PD/10 ED); IIF (-1/4)	2
4	<i>Talisman Ring (ruby)</i> : Mental Defense (10 points); IIF (-1/4)	0
4	<i>Talisman Ring (emerald)</i> : Power Defense (5 points); IIF (-1/4)	0
17	<i>Magesight</i> : Detect Magic (Mental Group) 12-, Discriminatory, Range, Sense	0
18	<i>Swiftness</i> : Running +9" (15" total)	3
3	<i>Swiftness</i> : Swimming +3" (5" total)	1

Perks

2	Wealth: Well Off, \$200,000 per year
3	Fringe Benefit: Cult Lieutenant
3	Fringe Benefit: Corporate Executive in Human Resources Department, BioDyn
2	Reputation: Canon of Abraxas (within the occult/supernatural world) 11-, +1/+1d6

Skills

18	+2 with All Combat
6	Range Skill Levels: +2 vs. Range Modifier with All Attacks
3	+1 with Magical Bow
3	Breakfall 14-
3	Climbing 14-
3	Conversation 12-
3	Gambling (card games) 12-
3	High Society 12-
3	Language: Ancient Greek (completely fluent)
3	Language: Latin (completely fluent)
3	Oratory 12-
3	Persuasion 12-
3	PS: Corporate Executive 12-
3	Scholar
2	1) KS: Corporate World 12-
2	2) KS: Human Resources 12-
2	3) KS: Occult World 12-
2	4) KS: Ouroboros Doctrine 12-
2	5) KS: Stock Market 12-
2	6) KS: Western Magic Traditions 12-
2	7) KS: Western Occultism 12-
3	Seduction 12-
3	Stealth 14-
3	Teamwork 14-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 276

Total Cost: 425

200+ Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
- 15 Hunted: Law Enforcement Agencies 8- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 10 Hunted: Abraxas 11- (Mo Pow, Watching)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Can be possessed by Abraxas at any time (Infrequently, Fully Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Only has spells allowed by Cardinal Bastion (All The Time, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: In Love With Cardinal Bastion (Common, Strong)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Loyal to Abraxas (Very Common, Total)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Overconfident (Very Common, Moderate)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Power Hungry (Very Common, Moderate)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Vain, Self-Indulgent (Very Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Uncommon, Strong)
- 5 Reputation: Canon of Abraxas, limited group (occult/supernatural world), 11-
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frequently, Major)
- 10 Susceptibility: to Serpent Wand being struck, 2d6 damage (Uncommon)
- 30 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 425

Background/History: Phoebe Mayricks never mentioned her history professor to her parents. They were too busy with board meetings to care anyway. He had introduced her to the idea that religions other than Christianity and Islam can have a strong influence on society. She attended one of his cult meetings, and was fascinated enough to join the cult herself.

Louis DeCray and Phoebe became good friends. She was thrilled for him when he earned his PhD, and when he was promoted from Canon to Cardinal. Louis surprised her when he made her a Canon, and she justified his choice by learning the inner mysteries quickly.

After completing her Bachelors of Human Resources and MBA, Phoebe began her climb up the corporate ladder with the Human Resources department at Biological Dynamics Research Group. Her boss leered at her too much, but it was a good job.

A few months ago, Bastion told Phoebe about the Chosen project. She volunteered without hesitation, and was allowed her choice of abilities. The thought of turning people to

stone and smashing them appealed to her stone-hearted corporate mentality, prompting her to choose the stoning powers, and name, of Medusa.

Personality/Motivation: Early in her career, Lady Medusa was motivated by greed and corporate power. She has matured, and magic power is also on her list of ambitions. Professionally efficient in any task she undertakes, she'll step on you if you get in her way. Nothing personal; it's just business. If you strike back when she steps on you, though, she'll ruin your career and hound you to the grave. Being so corporate-driven, she takes great pride in her appearance. Only the finest apparel and brand-name products will do for her. Nothing is too expensive for her tastes.

Lady Medusa loves Louis DeCray so much she can't stand it. She finally realized it after her empowerment, and hasn't yet figured out how to tell him. They've been friends for years, but he's shown no hint of any romantic interest. She doesn't know how he would react if she told him.

Lady Medusa leads The Chosen when Cardinal Bastion is not present. When in charge, she is coldly efficient, though not cruel to victims unless angered.

Quote: "So the big hero wants to play rough? Pitiful. You're not even in my league."

Powers/Tactics: Lady Medusa got her first taste of power with the spells she learned as a Canon (the Serpent Wand Multipower). Since her empowerment, she prefers to use her Magical Bow. Her favorite arrows are the Flame and Cold Arrows. She saves the Lightning Arrow for enemies that have annoyed her or are resistant to her other attacks. The Light Arrow is used for signaling or as a distraction. She saves her Stoning power for particularly troublesome opponents, as it takes considerable effort to use.

Campaign Use: Phoebe Mayricks is a corporate executive for Biological Dynamics Research Group (more commonly known as BioDyn) a genetics research company on the cutting edge of development. Any PC with business or scientific dealings might have reason to contact her. Also, she frequents high-class clubs, and has lunch with her stock broker at least once a week.

Lady Medusa eagerly Hunts those who have wronged her, but she prefers subtle vengeance to just beating up her enemies (though she enjoys that too). If a hero comes home to find his pet a statue, he knows not only has Medusa gotten a measure of vengeance, but she knows his Secret ID, and life is going to get much more interesting....

DIGITAL HERO #4

To increase her power, boost Lady Medusa's Magical Bow and her skill with it, perhaps adding Autofire capabilities. Also increase her defenses and add more Serpent Wand Spells, patterned after Cardinal Bastion's (since he's who she would learn them from). To lessen her power, reduce the Active Points of her Magical Bow and Serpent Wand Spells Multipowers, and trim her Stoning power.

Appearance: With her long, jet black hair and deep green eyes, Phoebe is absolutely stunning. She carefully accentuates her natural beauty with subtle makeup and high fashion. Wearing only the finest suits and skirts, she never appears in public without looking her best. She's been approached to do modeling of office fashions, but so far has not accepted such offers. Never without her gold bracelet, set with several

different semi-precious stones (*i.e.*, her Warding Band), she makes certain it goes with all her outfits.

As Lady Medusa (she didn't like the sound of Canon Medusa), she dresses in a short white dress cut in the classic Greek style, with brown leather sandals laced almost to her knees. The dress is accented with gold trim and a finely tooled leather belt, from which hangs her Serpent Wand (a simple gold bar shaped like an undulating snake with ruby chips for eyes). She wears a white and gold domino mask to conceal her face. Occasionally she wears a midnight blue velvet cloak, usually during missions where stealth is required. Her Magical Bow is made of a gold-colored metal adorned with four large gemstones (ruby, sapphire, diamond, and topaz), about three and a half feet long, and unstrunged.



LADY MEDUSA PLOT SEEDS

☞ After a particularly bad downturn in the stock market, John Jergen, a stock broker, is found dead in his home. Clues indicate there was no struggle, so he apparently knew his killer. His wife was traveling on business at the time. His biggest client, one Phoebe Mayricks, is the prime suspect. Did she kill her stock broker because of a bad deal? Or is something less obvious the cause of his death?

☞ Hungry for more power, Lady Medusa tries to summon a demon lord and strike a bargain. The spell goes wrong and gives the demon possession of her body. The monster goes on a rampage, using Lady Medusa's Stoning power in addition to its own flame powers. The Chosen try to bring her under control, but are no match for it. Authorities call on the PCs for aid.

☞ Spurned by Cardinal Bastion after confessing her love, Lady Medusa abandons him and her place in his cult to seek aid from the PCs. Unable to use her Serpent Wand because Abraxas no longer favors her, she fears Bastion will seek her death. Can the PCs recruit her for the forces of good?

Wight

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10+10*	STR	8*	11-/13-	Lift 100 (400) kg; 2d6 (4d6) HTH [1(2)]
15+10*	DEX	15+24*	12-/14-	OCV: 5(8)/DCV: 5(8)
13+10*	CON	6+16*	12-/14-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
19	INT	9	13-	PER Roll: 13-
13	EGO	6	12-	ECV: 4
10 (40)	PRE	0	11-(17-)	PRE Attack: 8d6
18	COM	4	13-	
4+2*	PD	2		Total: 21 PD (15 rPD)
4+2*	ED	1		Total: 21 ED (15 rED)
3+2*	SPD	5+8*		Phases: 4, 8, 12 (3, 5, 8, 10, 12)
7+4*	REC	4		
26+54*	END	14*		
30+10*	STUN	5		* OIHID (-1/4)

Total Characteristics Cost: 133

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 2"(4")/4"(8")
Flight: 20"/40"

Cost Powers END

- 20 *Wight Powers:* EC, 50-point powers; all OIHID (-1/4)
- 20 1) *Ethereal Body:* Desolidification (affected by light or magic), Reduced Endurance (1/2 END; +1/4); OIHID (-1/4) 2
- 20 2) *Flight:* Flight 20", Reduced Endurance (1/2 END; +1/4); OIHID (-1/4) 2
- 22 3) *Dark Aura:* Force Field (15 PD/15 ED), Hardened (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); OIHID (-1/4) 0
- 20 4) *Invisibility:* Invisibility to Sight and Hearing Groups, Spatial Awareness, No Fringe, Reduced Endurance (1/2 END; +1/4); OIHID (-1/4) 2
- 35 *Life Draining Powers:* Multipower, 61-point reserve; all OIHID (-1/4), Only Works Against Living Organic Beings (-1/2)
- 3u 1) *Drain Life Force:* Drain STR, DEX, CON, BODY, END, and STUN 2d6, Variable Effect (all Characteristics; +2); OIHID (-1/4), Only Works Against Living Organic Beings (-1/2) 6
- 3u 2) *Steal Strength:* Transfer 3d6 (target's STR to character's STR), Can Transfer Maximum of 50 Points; OIHID (-1/4), Only Works Against Living Organic Beings (-1/2) 6
- 3u 3) *Steal Dexterity:* Transfer 3d6 (target's DEX to character's DEX), Can Transfer Maximum of 50 Points;

- OIHID (-1/4), Only Works Against Living Organic Beings (-1/2) 6
- 3u 4) *Steal Constitution:* Transfer 3d6 (target's CON to character's CON), Can Transfer Maximum of 50 Points; OIHID (-1/4), Only Works Against Living Organic Beings (-1/2) 6
- 3u 5) *Steal Body:* Transfer 3d6 (target's BODY to character's BODY), Can Transfer Maximum of 50 Points; OIHID (-1/4), Only Works Against Living Organic Beings (-1/2) 6
- 3u 6) *Steal Endurance:* Transfer 3d6 (target's END to character's END), Can Transfer Maximum of 50 Points; OIHID (-1/4), Only Works Against Living Organic Beings (-1/2) 6
- 3u 7) *Steal Stun:* Transfer 3d6 (target's STUN to character's STUN), Can Transfer Maximum of 50 Points; OIHID (-1/4), Only Works Against Living Organic Beings (-1/2) 6
- 13 *Shroud of Fear:* +30 PRE; OIHID (-1/4), Only to Cause Fear (-1/2), Linked (Dark Aura Force Field; -1/2) 0
- 21 *Life Energy Sense:* Detect Life Energy (Mental Group), Discriminatory, Range, Sense, Targeting; OIHID (-1/4), Only Perceives Organic Life (-1/4) 0
- 8 *Protected Life Force:* Power Defense (10 points); OIHID (-1/4) 0

Skills

- 6 +2 with Life Draining Powers
- 3 Inventor 13-
- 2 KS: Occult World 11-
- 2 KS: Ouroboros Doctrine 11-
- 3 KS: Scientific World 13-
- 3 PS: Research Chemist 13-Scientist
- 2 1) SS: Chemistry 13-
- 2 2) SS: Genetics 13-
- 2 3) SS: Inorganic Chemistry 13-
- 2 4) SS: Mathematics 13-
- 2 5) SS: Organic Chemistry 13-
- 2 6) SS: Physics 13-
- 2 7) SS: Research 13-
- 3 Stealth 12- (14-)
- 3 Teamwork 12- (14-)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 242

Total Cost: 375

200+ Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
- 10 Hunted: Cult Leaders 11- (Mo Pow, Watching)
- 15 Hunted: Law Enforcement Agencies 8- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)

DIGITAL HERO #4

- 10 Physical Limitation: Sensitive to Bright Light/Daylight (Frequently, Slightly; -2 to Sight Group PER Rolls, sunglasses reduce to -1)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Loyal to Abraxas (Very Common, Total)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Thrillseeker (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Scientific Curiosity (Common, Moderate)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Uncommon, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: life-stealing undead monster, 8- (Extreme)
- 5 Reputation: award-winning research chemist, limited group (scientific world), 11-
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frequently, Major)
- 15 Vulnerability: 1½x Effect from Light (Very Common)
- 25 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 375

Background/History: Sharon Peters' world was shattered. As an only child, she had no one to support her when her parents died in a car wreck. She went to live in an orphanage in the rough part of town, with her inheritance held in trust for her until she turned 18.

She attended college to earn a degree in chemistry, funded in part by her inheritance, but avoided social activities, not having the time (or courage) for them. Her history professor changed that, suggesting that she needed to find some faith.

"Some faith? In what?" she responded.

"Faith in the world. In humanity. In your reason for being alive. You are so absorbed with your chemistry that you see nothing else around you. Not even your bad test scores in other classes." His voice chastised her gently.

"I guess you're right, Professor DeCray. I prefer to be by myself, studying."

"There is such a thing as studying too much, Sharon. Join me for this social meeting. We talk about various religions and other matters of faith. You may learn something invaluable to your well-being."

"Okay. Why not? I have been cooped up too long, haven't I? Will you be there, professor?"

"Be there? My dear, I am the main speaker. I look forward to seeing you there."

Sharon enjoyed the discussion, and decided to join the cult that Professor DeCray led. It was a simple matter for him to convince her to join the Chosen. She was looking for a family, and Cardinal Bastion gave her a family that could never be killed as easily as her parents were.

Personality/Motivation: Sharon was a quiet, introverted girl with few friends and no social life. Since joining Ouroboros, though, her personality changed completely. While still fascinated by chemistry (she earned her BS and is currently employed by Random Technologies as a research scientist), she has discovered the joys of social activities. She goes to parties, has several friends, and takes an active role in Cardinal Bastion's cult. When he asked her to join the Chosen, she was thrilled at his confidence in her. She did not balk at the concept of fighting heroes, having never thought them very heroic anyway. She was leery about the type of powers chosen for her; draining someone's life-force away just seemed *wrong*. Bastion assured her it was for the best of causes, though, so she accepted.

Since her empowerment, she has become even more extroverted, even promiscuous. She now enjoys taking small risks, and has been picking up some of Imp's bad habits, like shoplifting and aggressive driving. Her qualms about sucking away someone's life force are also gone. It gives her a rush, and she's becoming addicted to it.

Quote: "How black is black? Let me show you oblivion, then you'll know."

Powers/Tactics: Through ritual, Sharon merged with a minor spirit from the Abyss, known in folklore as a wight. This merging gave her several life-draining abilities, in addition to defensive powers and flight. She usually uses the Strength, Dexterity, and Stun Transfers, as they are the most useful in combat. The Body Transfer is only used when she's really angry at someone. Drain Life Force affects all of the above statistics; she employs it when an opponent is particularly troublesome. Her Cause Fear ability is useful for intimidation, occasionally coupled with the Constitution Transfer.

Campaign Use: Sharon could be known to any PC familiar with the scientific world. On the job she is intently focused, and gives little hint of her extracurricular activities. If she meets a PC who is cute or interesting, she may ask him out for on a date.

Wight cares too much about having fun to actively pursue anyone unless Bastion commands her to do so. But if she runs into someone who's given her trouble in the past, she'll target him first.

To boost her abilities, increase the Active Points of her Life Draining Multipower, and perhaps broaden the characteristics she can affect. To reduce her power, decrease her multipower.

WIGHT PLOT SEEDS

☠ Wight, being high on a "life rush" as she calls it, is wandering the streets, using her Transfer powers indiscriminately on those she meets. Several people are dead, and she is stronger, faster, and tougher than normal. Is she just out having a good time, or did Cardinal Bastion need a distraction?

☠ Sharon accidentally discovers a chemical formula that robs a person of his free will, enslaving him to whoever first commands him.

Unable to make a large amount of the formula without attracting attention, Bastion sets her up in a lab so she can create enough to enslave the city. Will the PCs discover the plot in time?

☠ Out for a night on the town, Sharon comes across a PC doing the same and decides she wants to get to know him better – by any means necessary.

Appearance: A young, slender African-American girl with bright green eyes, Sharon wears her hair short, and enjoys showing off her athletic figure (discreetly at work; more blatantly otherwise). She often wears sunglasses, as bright light gives her a headache. Her clothing is fashionable but inexpensive.

As Wight, she is a solid black female figure with glowing red eyes, force field enfolding her in black flames. Her life draining powers engulf the victim briefly with dark flame, leaving only their effect and the faint scent of decayed flesh.



Cultists And Ophites

Cardinal Bastion's cultist followers have many different skills and backgrounds among them. However, for the purposes of most scenarios involving the cultists, those backgrounds and skills, and even the variations in stats that would normally occur, are irrelevant. Below is a generic character brief for the average cultist amongst Cardinal Bastion's following. Feel free to vary this write-up for specific plots that require it (see *The Ultimate Mystic*, formerly *The Ultimate Super Mage*, pages 177-179, for variation ideas).

Cardinal Bastion has, at any given time, approximately 60 cult followers. He has also created 8 Ophites (also below), cultists who allowed themselves to be transformed into reptile men so they could directly experience the glory of Abraxas. Bastion has not yet found a suitable "volunteer" from which to create a Dragon Warrior (see *The Ultimate Mystic*, formerly *The Ultimate Super Mage*, pages 262-263).

CULTIST

13	STR	14	DEX	13	CON
10	BODY	10	INT	11	EGO
13	PRE	10	COM		
8/28	PD	8/28	ED	3	SPD
6	REC	26	END	24	STUN

Abilities: *Magic Sword:* 1d6+1 HKA (1½d6 with STR), +4 STUN Multiple, OAF; *Chant of the Faithful:* +20 PD, +20 ED, Incantations (throughout), Not Against BODY of Normal Attacks (-½); Mental Defense (7 points); KS: Ouroboros Doctrine 8-; Stealth 12-; Teamwork 12-; +3 with Magic Sword

50+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features (Cult Costume & Ouroboros Jewelry); Hunted by Cult Leaders 11- (Mo Pow, Watching); Hunted by Local Authorities 11- (As Pow, NCI, Watching) Psychological Limitation: Religious Fanatic (Very Common, Total)

OPHITE

23	STR	18	DEX	20	CON
13	BODY	8	INT	14	EGO
15	PRE	2	COM		
10	PD	10	ED	3	SPD
10	REC	40	END	35	STUN

Abilities: *Reptile Powers:* EC, 22-point powers, 1) *Claw/Bite:* HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR), Armor Piercing; 2) *Scaly Skin:* Armor (8 PD, 8 ED), Visible; Martial Arts: Wrestling, Escape (+0, +0, STR 38), Hold (-1, -1, Grab 2 Limbs, 33 STR to hold), Slam (+0, +1, STR + v/5, Target Falls); Clinging (normal STR); +2 with Wrestling; Breakfall 12-; Teamwork 12-

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features: Reptile Man (Concealable, Always Noticed); Distinctive Features: Mystical Aura (Not Concealable, Always Noticed, Detectable Only With Unusual Senses); Hunted by Cardinal Bastion 11- (Mo Pow, Watching); Psychological Limitation: Religious Fanatic (Very Common, Total); Susceptibility: to Magical Adjustment Attacks and Transforms, 2d6

Fane Of The Stone Dragon

The Chosen's base, the Fane of the Stone Dragon, lies hidden beneath the basement level of a popular Mexican restaurant near the college where Cardinal Bastion works. A secret passage leads to a Shriner's Temple a few blocks away (the Shriners have no idea the passageway exists).

FANE OF THE STONE DRAGON

11 BODY
8 DEF
320" Size

Abilities: *Location:* City, Underground; *Emerald Eye Statues Magic Blast (8x):* EB 10d6, 0 END, OAF Immobile; *Silver Eye Statue Lightning Bolt:* RKA 5d6, No Range Modifiers, 0 END, OAF Immobile; *Protected Chamber:* +12 DEF, 35 hex area; *Protected Chamber:* Affects Desolidified and Cannot Be Escaped With Teleportation on 20 DEF, 35 hex area **plus** LS: Self-Contained Breathing, 35 hex area; Follower: Black Crystal Skull (computer); Followers: Ophites, 8x; Followers: Black Diamonds (computers), 8x; Concealment 15-; Disguise 15-; KS: Ouroboros Doctrine 12-; KS: Western Magic Traditions 12-; KS: Western Occultism 12-

290+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features: Evil Temple; Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura; Hunted: Archimandrite 11- (Mo Pow, Watching)

BLACK DIAMOND

10 INT
18 DEX
4 SPD

Abilities: *Psychic Communication:* Mind Link, with Black Crystal Skull, No Line Of Sight, Always On; *Mystic Sense:* Spatial Awareness; +5 with Statue Magic Blast; WF: Emerald Eye Statue Magic Blast; Programs: Attack and Destroy Targets as Assigned by Black Crystal Skull

60+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features: Black Diamond; Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura

BLACK CRYSTAL SKULL

23 INT
20 EGO
20 DEX
5 SPD

Abilities: *Psychic Communication:* Mind Link, specific group of up to 16 minds (followers of Abraxas and other Black Crystal Skulls, No Line Of Sight; *Magesight:* Detect Magic (Mental Group) 13-, Range, Sense; Normal Sight; Normal Hearing; *Reptile Statues With Green Gemstone Eyes:* Clairsentience (Sight and Mental Groups, Normal Hearing, Fixed Perception Points (8 points; $-\frac{3}{4}$); *Mystic Sense:* Spatial Awareness; Eidetic Memory; +5 with Statue Lightning Bolt; Analyze Combat Technique 14-; KS: Ouroboros Doctrine 14-; Languages: Ancient Greek, English (both native accent), Tactics 14-; WF: Silver Eye Statue Lightning Bolt; Programs: Alert Cardinal Bastion to Disturbances; Analyze Intruders; Attack and Destroy Target; Coordinate Resistance of Intrusions; Share Information With Other Black Crystal Skulls

175+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features: Hideous Crystal Reptilian Skull; Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura; Psychological Limitation: Loyal to Abraxas; Psychological Limitation: Must Obey Cardinals & Canons; Psychological Limitation: Secretly Monitors Cardinal Bastion and Cult Members

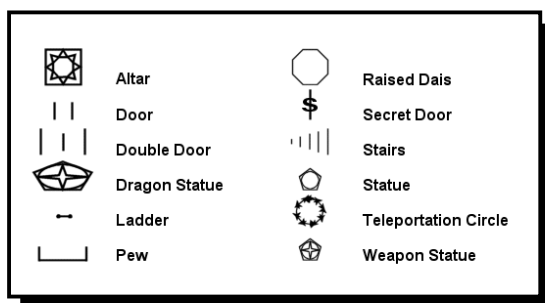
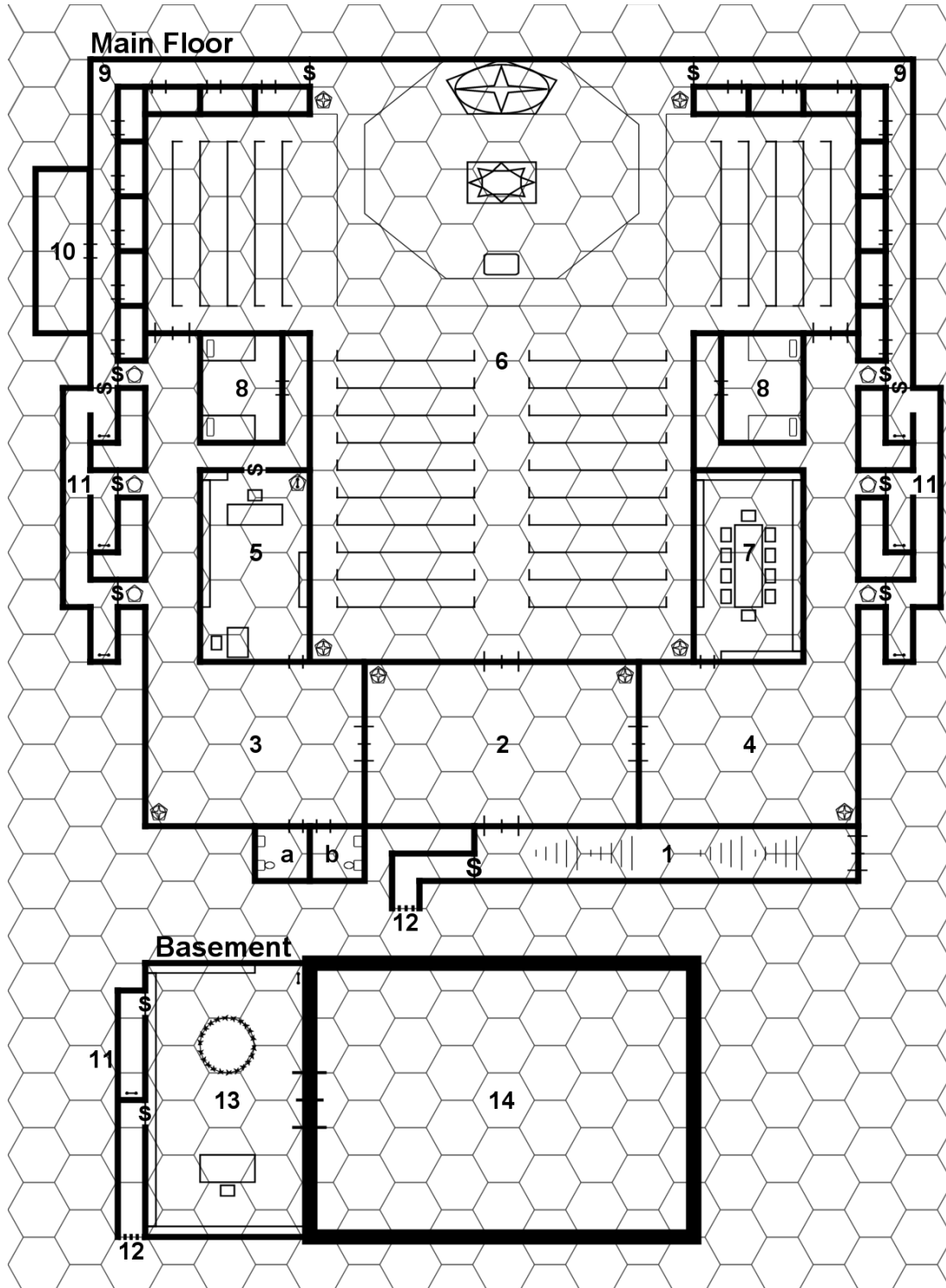
MAP KEY

- (1) **Entry Stairwell:** Located in the alley behind the Mexican restaurant, this stairwell leads from street level to a depth of 4 hexes before reaching the main entrance to the Fane. There are no distinctive markings on the door, and at least one cultist maintains guard duty here at all times. A successful Skill vs. Skill check against the base's Concealment (15-) is required to find the door to area 12.
- (2) **Entry Hall:** This hall is richly decorated to honor Abraxas; gold tracings and bright murals adorn the walls in a distinctly reptilian motif. Two meters tall, the statues resemble Ophites carved of dark marble with large emeralds for eyes. Each one holds a black diamond carefully in its claws. These statues are enchanted to attack intruders (see the Fane and Black Diamond character briefs).
- (3) **Left Hall:** Decorated as the Entry Hall, this area connects to the left half of the base. Restrooms are located here, a) ladies and b) gentlemen. The statue in the lower corner is enchanted to attack intruders, while those in alcoves conceal passages to area 11.

- (4) **Right Hall:** Decorated as the Entry Hall, this area connects to the right half of the base. The statue in the lower corner is enchanted to attack intruders, while those in alcoves conceal passages to area 11.
- (5) **Office:** This room serves as office to Cardinal Bastion and Lady Medusa. The statue slides toward the door to reveal a ladder down to area 13. A secret door behind Bastion's desk leads to area 3.
- (6) **Main Hall:** In contrast to the Entry Hall, this area is not painted or decorated save for the five statues and altar. The four smaller statues are identical to the ones in area 2, but the one at the back of the hall is of a dragon, nearly 6 meters tall. Its eyes are silver, is enchanted to attack intruders and holds a large reptilian skull carved from black diamond. This skull is intelligent, and monitors all activity within the Fane (see the Black Crystal Skull brief).
- (7) **Library:** Besides storing books on magical topics and Ouroboros history and doctrine, this area serves as a meeting place and study hall.
- (8) **Ophite Quarters:** The Ophites reside in these chambers, 4 per room.
- (9) **Holding Cells:** Sacrificial victims are held here prior to their torture and death.
- (10) **Storage Area:** Anything not used on a regular basis is kept here – folding chairs and tables, extra robes and other supplies, and the like.
- (11) **Escape Tunnels:** If the Fane is raided and the cultists overcome, they can escape into the sewers through these halls.
- (12) **Shriner's Tunnel:** These two hallways connect and lead to a hidden door in the basement of a Shriner's Temple a few blocks from the Fane.
- (13) **Private Study:** This area is Cardinal Bastion's sanctuary. The Chosen, other Cardinals, and the Archimandrite are permitted in this room; other visitors are an extreme rarity. He conducts most of his research here, while actual magical experiments are performed in area 14. The fixed location for his Home Gate spell is inscribed on the floor.
- (14) **Protected Chamber:** Enchanted heavily to ward against intrusion and escape, this vault is used for magical experimentation (including the summoning of demons) as well as practice combats between The Chosen.



Fane Of The Stone Dragon



Caress by W. Ross Watson

Background/History: Caress is very unsure of where she comes from: Her memories have been wiped out by the telepathic supervillainess Reverie. She has only vague recollections of existing at all, but occasional flashes of her true past haunt her.

Unknownst to herself, Helena Ramirez was once a fairly normal girl. She grew up in a traditional Catholic family, in the heart of a low-rent district of Hispanic immigrants in Los Angeles, California. Her life was shaken up when she reached puberty, and strange powers manifested that drove her family away: Helena was a mutant, and a powerful one.

Helena's powers frightened her... being based on her ability to touch people, they manifested in a way that hurt and scared people around her, making them weak as she absorbed their strength. It did not take long for Helena to be cast out by her family, her parents fearing she had been possessed by demons, and the young girl herself unsure of where her strange abilities had come from.

Helena wandered alone for some time, stealing to survive. She fell in with Los Lobos, a street gang that worked the upper west side of Los Angeles. Hector, the Lobos leader, was overjoyed to have a paranormal in his gang. With Helena's help, the Lobos quickly surged to new heights of power, absorbing many smaller gangs' turf and challenging the more established gangs in many areas. Hector and Helena were an item, although the relationship was strained because of Helena's mutant status.

One fateful day, a superhero interfered with a robbery Los Lobos were involved in. The superhero was easily able to deal with the normal gang members, but Helena decided to put her powers to the test and engaged the other paranormal in battle. She found the conflict exhilarating, and in the space of a few minutes she had the hero begging for mercy. As she touched him, however, she felt his life-force pulsing strongly. She reached out for it, and snuffed out the superhero's life in an instant.

Helena was initially horrified by what she had done, but Hector and the other Lobos praised her for her actions. Conflicted by her religious upbringing, Helena split from the Lobos and returned home to unburden herself to her parents and attempt to patch things up with her family.

Unfortunately, it was not to be: Helena's family had moved away and left no forwarding address. Utterly miserable, Helena was very vulnerable when a mysterious man willing to hire her for her "special talents" approached her.

Helena's employer was careful to work only through intermediaries, so she was never aware

of his true identity. Nonetheless, this enigmatic man paid handsomely for Helena to receive some special training, and within a few months, he paid her handsomely to use her powers to kill again.

Embittered by the hardships she had endured, Helena agreed, and once more found that the thrill of using her abilities overshadowed any lingering guilt. The money she found nearly as intoxicating. A poor girl from the barrio, Helena had never seen so much money. She took to calling herself Caress, after the way she ended lives with her mutant powers.

Caress pursued a successful career as a professional assassin for a number of years. She honed her abilities in battle, and used the larcenous skills she had learned on the street to steal a protective suit of prototype armor from UNTIL. As a compromise with the lingering discipline of her childhood, Caress swore to never use her ability to kill with a touch unless she had been paid to do so, and even then only against the specific target.

Without ever finding out who really was behind her string of murderous jobs, she eventually made enemies. One of these enemies sent Reverie, a powerful mentalist, to deal with Caress permanently. The battle between the two was long and difficult, but in the end, Reverie succeeded in wiping away nearly all of Caress' memories, leaving her an amnesiac shell of a woman. Now, Caress seeks a way to reverse the process, feeling nagging phantoms of her previous life tugging at her every waking second.

Personality/Motivation: Caress is dominated by two factors: greed, and reclaiming her lost memories. By far the stronger of the two influences is greed... Helena has trouble with her finances, spending nearly every cent as soon as she gets it. She rents huge apartments and fills them with luxuries, only to abandon them when her jobs take her elsewhere. Her habitual spending is one of the best methods PRIMUS and UNTIL have for tracking her movements.

In her spare time between jobs, Caress struggles to remember her past. She visits places she thinks may be familiar, and speaks to people who may have once known her. This means she spends a lot of time in Los Angeles when she isn't otherwise engaged.

Quote: "Too late hero! Your strength is now mine!"

(whispered to her target) "Now you'll feel the caress of death... don't worry, it will be quick."

artwork by Jeff Ward

DIGITAL HERO #4

“Where am I? This place seems very... familiar.”

Powers/Tactics: Caress is a frighteningly powerful mutant, able to take on entire hero teams by herself. Her mutant powers allow her to drain life energy and add it to her own, increasing her prowess while weakening anything she touches. She can “tap” directly into a being’s life-force as well, and if she chooses, strip it away to cause near-instant death. However, directly attacking another’s life-force requires her to touch their skin, creating her trademark “caress.” These mutant abilities form a glowing, negative-energy field all around her. This field affects anyone she touches or anyone who touches her, making a combat with Caress very complicated.

Caress can also detect mutants by touch. She can sense a mutant by the interaction of their life-force with her negative-energy field. The interaction between a mutant’s life-force and her powers makes it easy for her to leech power from the mutant’s paranormal abilities rather than life energy. Her reputation is based not only on her assassin career, but also on the fact that many mutants know she can use their powers to make herself stronger.

A side effect of Caress’ mutant abilities is incredibly enhanced agility, reflexes, and speed. She flows like water in battle, dodging blows with ease. On the battlefield, she leaps around from place to place, using the strength she steals from others to make further and higher leaps in addition to more and more powerful blows.

Caress is a vicious opponent; she will typically begin a battle by turning on her power transfer field and using a low blow maneuver on a likely-looking foe. From there, she seeks to gain as much power as she can with chokeholds and grabs. Once she has “powered up” to brick-like strength levels, she will cut loose, putting her levels into extra damage and tagging enemies with her roundhouse. She likes to put foes on the ground with her leg sweep and follow it up with a chokehold to gain more power. She tends to concentrate on powerful or impressive-looking foes she can reach... flying enemies she ignores or hurls things at once her strength is high enough.

Take note of Caress’ skills: She’s an Olympic level gymnast and an accomplished thief. Her contortionist skill means she can wriggle out of most grabs and entangles easily, and with her lockpicking it will take an impressive set of handcuffs to keep her in one place long. She takes full advantage of her acrobatics and breakfall skills, flipping around to attack in surprising ways, and rolling with the punches to get to her feet in an eyeblink. If she has time, she likes to sneak up on a hero with her

stealth skill and pick his pocket... just to keep in practice. A GM should also keep in mind that Caress’ strength is going to rapidly increase over the course of a typical battle. This means that the GM should pay close attention to her martial arts, which will gain damage dice and effect based on how strong Caress is at the time.

Caress will never use her deadly drain field unless she has been hired to do so, and even then only against her specific target. She considers herself a professional assassin and kills only when she is paid to. She enjoys combat with superheroes and organizations like PRIMUS, toying with her opponents long enough to prove to herself she’s no pushover, then she’ll use her stolen strength to make impressive leaps away to safety.

Campaign Use: Caress makes a good “mutant rampage” character, if she encounters something from her past that angers her or if she’s found in the middle of a robbery. She also makes a good hunted if a Player Character has earned the enmity of her mysterious employer. As a Hunter, Caress likes showy displays of her power and particularly enjoys using her power transfer on a normal noncombatant in front of the Hunted’s eyes just before she begins combat.

To make Caress even more powerful, give her more Multipower slots (including such things as a transform that turns people into helpless, drained-out husks, or an entangle along the same lines using EGO instead of STR to break out), increase her STR to 30, and give her some more combat skill levels. To scale her down, lower her DEX to 27, her SPD to 5, then lower her STR to 10, and lower the dice of her transfers from 3d6 to 2d6. A low-powered version of Caress would also have less skill levels and fewer martial arts maneuvers.

Caress can be encountered by PCs who are responding to a distress call by PRIMUS or UNTIL agents. Arriving on the scene, they would have to deal with a laughing, powered-up Caress ready to fight some superheroes!

Also, investigative PCs may get too close to uncovering the identity and plans of Caress’ mysterious employer, deliberately left vague to fit into any campaign. If this happens, the mysterious employer won’t hesitate to hire Caress to eliminate the inquisitive characters.

Compassionate characters may find themselves moved by Caress’ lack of memories, and Caress is not above accepting assistance in trying to reclaim her past. Any heroes involved with Reverie, the thief of those memories, may encounter Caress as she exacts vengeance.... PCs may find themselves obliged to protect Reverie!

A Los Angeles based hero may become involved with Caress on a personal level, or he

Caress

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200kg; 3d6 HTH [1]
33	DEX	69	16-	OCV: 11/DCV: 11
15	CON	10	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 12-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
16	COM	3	12-	
10	PD	7		Total: 22 PD (12 rPD)
10	ED	7		Total: 22 ED (12 rED)
6	SPD	17		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
6	REC	0		
30	END	0		
36	STUN	10		

Total Characteristics Cost: 148

Movement: Running: 11"/22"
Leaping: 8"/16"

Cost	Powers	END
18	<i>Stolen UNTIL Gear:</i> Armor (12 rPD/12 rED); Activation Roll 14- (-1/2), OIF (Bodysuit; -1/2)	0
305	<i>Devitalizing Touch:</i> Multipower, 244 pt. Reserve, Constant (+1), Reduced END: 1/2 END (+1/4); Activation Roll 15- (-1/4), Power Cannot Be Pushed (-1/4), Only Works Against Living Things (-1/2)	
30u	1) <i>Power Transfer I:</i> Transfer 3d6 (target's STR, STUN, END, and CON, to Caress' STR, STUN, END, and CON), Transfer maximum of 58 points, Can transfer all attributes simultaneously (+1), Delayed Return Rate (points return once per hour, +1), Damage Shield (Can be used with HTH attacks, +3/4)	12
30u	2) <i>Power Transfer II:</i> Transfer 3d6 (any four of target's mutant powers, to Caress' STR, STUN, END, and CON), Transfer maximum of 58, Can transfer all attributes simultaneously (+1), Delayed Return Rate (points return once per hour, +1), Damage Shield (Can be used with HTH attacks, +3/4)	12
24u	3) <i>Deadly Drain:</i> Transfer 6d6 (target's BODY to Caress' STR, STUN, END, and CON), Transfer maximum 56, Damage Shield (Can be used with HTH attacks, +3/4); Must Touch Bare Flesh (-1/4)	8
10	<i>Mutant Detection:</i> Detect Mutants 15- (Touch Group)	0
7	<i>Hyper-agility:</i> Leaping +5" (8" total), Accurate; Requires An Acrobatics Roll (-1/2)	2
7	<i>Hyper-reflexes:</i> +2 DCV; Requires An Acrobatics Roll (-1/2)	0

10 *Hyper-speed:* +5" Running (11" total) 2

Martial Arts: Advanced Dirty Infighting

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
5 Choke Hold	-2	+0	Grab One Limb, 2d6 NND
4 Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, +10 STR
4 Joint Lock	-1	-1	Grab Two Limbs, +10 STR
4 Kidney Blow	-2	+0	1d6 HKA
3 Legsweep	+2	-1	STR +1d6, Target Falls
4 Low Blow	-1	+1	2d6 NND
4 Punch	+0	+2	STR +2d6 Strike
5 Roundhouse	-2	+1	STR +4d6 Strike
3 Throw	+0	+1	STR + v/5, Target Falls

Perks

3 Reputation: Dangerous Paranormal Assassin (International) +3/3d6

Talents

19 Combat Sense 14-
10 Defense Maneuver IV
4 Double Jointed

Skills

12 +4 with Dirty Infighting
3 Acrobatics 16-
3 Breakfall 16-
3 Climbing 16-
3 Contortionist 16-
3 Gambling 11-
3 KS: The Criminal World 12-
2 Language: Spanish (Fluent Conversation)
3 Lockpicking 16-
3 Sleight of Hand 16-
3 Stealth 16-
7 Streetwise 14-
1 WF: Blades

Total Powers & Skills cost: 562

Total Cost: 710

200+ Disadvantages

10 Distinctive Features: Detects As A Mutant (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
20 Hunted by PRIMUS 8- (Mo Pow, Imprison, NCI)
20 Hunted by UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, Imprison, NCI)
10 Physical Limitation: Amnesiac (Frequently, Minor)
15 Psychological Limitation: Greedy (Common, Strong)
10 Psychological Limitation: Hunting Reverie (Uncommon, Strong)
10 Psychological Limitation: Loves The Thrill Of Combat (Uncommon, Strong)

DIGITAL HERO #4

- 15 Psychological Limitation: Mercenary Mentality (Uncommon, Total)
- 10 Reputation: paranormal assassin, 11-5 Unluck: 1d6
- 15 Vulnerability: 1½x STUN from poisons/toxins (Common)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2x BODY from transforms (Uncommon)
- 360 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 710

may run into Caress' old gang, Los Lobos. Hector can still reach Caress if he has to, and will call her in if superheroes interfere with the gang.

Finally, Caress can be heavily involved in a mutant superhero's life. Her ability to detect a mutant by touch, and being a mutant herself, makes her very valuable to mutant and anti-mutant forces such as GENOCIDE.

Appearance: Caress is a very attractive Hispanic woman, with short, curly black hair and enchanting brown eyes. Her costume is black with a gold sash; golden boots and gloves complete her look. When her energy fields are functioning, the negative-energy aspect makes her colors reverse: Her costume appears white, her skin little more than a silhouette. The negative-energy fields also make a low, throaty humming sound.



Caress



Reverie

by Ross Watson

Background/History: Allison Windsor-Smythe was the only child of English nobility. At the height of the Cold War, however, her parents defected to Russia, leaving Allison in the care of her Uncle Clancy. Allison's parents vanished with a large amount of state secrets and established an unusually large trust fund for their daughter.

Clancy taught Allison the ins and outs of his business, which happened to be that of a stockbroker. She took well to the trade, and in her off time, she shared a hobby with her uncle... fencing. Clancy was an Olympic level contender whom no one really remembers; he lost an early bout in the 1976 competition. Allison showed no interest in the formal sport, but enjoyed the foil and epee as a way to relieve tension.

As she grew older, Allison began sensing strange thoughts, "seeing" people's memories all around her. Even mundane items like a notebook possessed a psychic "fingerprint" she was able to read with increasing clarity. At first, her mutant abilities frightened her, but over time she grew more used to them, feeling her powers as a natural extension of her own superiority. Her arrogant attitude worried Clancy and drove off many friends and suitors as Allison reached her maturity. She spent some time at Cambridge, studying aspects of science that might explain the source of her powers. Eventually she concluded that she must be a mutant, a member of a new and superior race of mankind.

Allison worried continually about her parents, and Clancy kept the truth from her – unwisely, as it turned out. Experimenting with her new mental abilities, Allison figured out where her parents had gone and exactly what they had done in the past. Horrified at having spies for parents, she turned over this evidence to Parliament. The British government handed down a harsh sentence, and the Windsor-Smythe estate was seized in appropriation for the investigation.

Alienated by her powers, her smug attitude, and her espionage-agent heritage, Allison found she had no friends and no prospects in Britain. Clancy died of heart complications just a few months later, and Allison's future looked bleak.

It was at this low point in her life that she received a mysterious package. The package contained data on her parents, including the fact that they were still alive somewhere in Europe. A note accompanied the documents, demanding her cooperation in return for the continued well-being of her family. If she was ever caught or discovered to be working for the enigmatic sender of the package, her parent's life was

forfeit. Strangely, the package remained blank to her memory-reading powers, and the blackmailer indicated that he knew everything about her mutant abilities.

Ever since that fateful day, Allison has been trapped in a vicious circle of guilt and anger, striking out at the direction of her unknown blackmailer. She has adopted a costumed identity as Reverie in order to carry out her orders and protect herself and her family from any consequences of her actions.

One of Reverie's first operations at her blackmailer's direction was a punishment action against the supervillain known as Caress. Reverie eliminated nearly all of Caress' memories, leaving her a virtual amnesiac. However, Caress remembers enough to know that Reverie is responsible for her condition and seeks to make her pay.

Personality/Motivation: Reverie is trapped in a prison of blackmail and secrets. Only she knows that her parent's lives hang in the balance, and she knows that to reveal her predicament means death for her mother and father.

She can't deny that she feels responsibility for their welfare, if not a great deal of familial love. In addition, guilt gnaws at her for turning them in to Parliament and destroying the reputation of her family holdings.

She desires above all else to break out from her mysterious blackmailer and rescue her parents from his clutches. The blackmailer's threats force her to take extreme measures to conceal her identity. Any hint of someone sniffing around for the truth about Reverie is dealt with harshly and quickly.

Reverie believes herself to be a member of a superior race of mankind, and her smug demeanor shows when she finds herself facing those she considers unworthy opponents. She is also extremely spiteful, and responds to taunts or threats with deadly force. Hypocritically, she has no compunctions about killing, and is widely feared for her ability to destroy an opponent's life by eliminating their memories. Some superheroes and agents of PRIMUS and UNTIL are little more than drooling husks after run-ins with Reverie's memory-altering powers and nightmare blade.

Quote: "Don't you remember me? If not, I'll make sure you never forget."

"Release me or I'll strip you of every happy memory you've ever had."

Powers/Tactics: Reverie is a mutant with the

ability to read and alter memories. This makes her a potent mentalist, able to wipe a subject's mind clean given enough time. A strange quirk of her abilities, however, means that her powers wane with distance. When she is close enough to touch her subject, her powers are nearly twice as effective.

Reverie's array of mental powers is formidable: she can read a subject's memories, and even gain impressions of the past by handling objects. She can modify, erase, or insert new memories into a subject's mind.

The amount that she exceeds the target's EGO should indicate how deeply the target believes the new memory.

For the purposes of the guide table above, "recent memories" are defined as memories possessed by the target within the last few weeks at most. These are considered "short-term" memories, and often include phone numbers, addresses, names of acquaintances, etc. For the higher level effects, "cherished memories" are exactly that: the long-term memories we retain years after experiencing them. First loves, parents, the home you lived in as a child, your favorite teachers or most feared bullies in school, and your beloved pets or favorite toy are all memories that fall in this category.

Minor changes affect only some details, like the spelling of a name, the color of a person's eyes, the direction one drove to work, and other similar alterations.

Major changes can replace or even erase entire sections of memory. At this level, Reverie can insert memories of marrying a hero in Vegas two years ago if she desires. "You can't hit me... I'm your wife!"

To use the table above with Reverie's Transform, use the second set of numbers for comparison. The GM should give an affected hero a bonus to his EGO roll whenever a friendly mentalist attempts to help out with Telepathy, or when the hero encounters evidence of a strong memory that has been altered. (Such as meeting the real wife that he had forgotten!)

To attack, she can send a psychic shockwave at an enemy, forcing them to relive their darkest fears and bringing up terrible memories of loss and pain (her Ego Attack).

It should be noted about Reverie's powers that they are strongly based on the subject's memories... but for the most part, they are not permanent or long-term effects. Long-term/permanent memory alterations require the use of her Transform Multipower slot. She uses her telepathy, for example, to read a subject's memories and find out whatever she needs to know. Her Mental Illusions normally take the form of changing her own appearance or altering a hero's perception of his surroundings by subtle re-arrangement. The hero might "remember" that

he came in through the north door when in fact there isn't any entrance on that side of the building, for example. If Reverie is in a more combative mood, she can form an illusion that the hero has been attacked by a teammate. In this case, the structure of the Mental Illusion would be framed as a memory that causes STUN damage equal to the force that the false memory ascribes to the illusory attack. Reverie's Mind Control powers are similarly linked to memories. In this case, her "adjustments" to the memories in a hero's mind influence his behavior. A temperamental hero might suddenly recall that his teammate made an insulting comment and be prompted to respond in kind... all thanks to a Mind Control result high enough to change the hero's actions! The uses of her Mind Control and Mental Illusions powers are normally confined to use in combat, when she needs "quick and dirty" solutions.

Her most feared weapon is her nightmare blade, a psychic sword formed from the darkest emotions in the human psyche. The blade is composed of mental force, a nearly pure combination of anguish, terror, and agony. The blade leaves behind ropes of crackling black energy... nightmare "poison" that continues to inflict mental pain until Reverie dismisses the effect, or until the victim can succeed in an EGO roll by one-half or more. A successful Telepathy power used on the poisoned hero that is greater than the hero's EGO will also stop the effect.

Reverie's obsessive desire to conceal her identity has led to her powers altering her appearance at all times. She puts out psychic waves that "tune" her appearance to each viewer; she appears as that person's ideal woman, and this grants her not only secrecy, but also a measure of influence over those who see her.

Defensively, her psychic awareness scans the area around her for disruptions, and warns her of imminent danger. Her psychic powers function as a subconscious, instinctual warning system, plotting out a way to evade incoming attacks in a split second.

Reverie likes to pick out an attacking hero and warp his memories. "Why are you trying to hurt me? Don't you remember we got married yesterday?" She likes to pretend to be loved ones, relatives, even other teammates of the targeted hero. She will dart in and attack any non-mentalist with her Memory Blast or the Nightmare Sword if he looks particularly dangerous.

Campaign Use: The first way that Reverie can be used in a campaign is to link her mysterious blackmailer one of the campaign's major villains. Reverie will obey any instructions the blackmailer gives her, and can quickly become a recurring villainess. As an enemy, Reverie can

DIGITAL HERO #4

Reverie

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
15	CON	10	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 12-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
20 (40)	PRE	10	13- (17-)	PRE Attack: 4d6 (8d6)
12 (32)	COM	1	11- (15-)	
5	PD	0		Total: 17 PD (12 rPD)
5	ED	0		Total: 17 ED (12 rED)
4	SPD	9		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
5	REC	0		
30	END	0		
33	STUN	10		

Total Characteristics Cost: 103

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Teleport: 20"/40"

Cost	Powers	END
18	<i>Armored Bodysuit:</i> Armor (12 PD/12 ED); Activation Roll 14- (-1/2), OIF Bodysuit (-1/2)	0
24	<i>Memory Reading I:</i> Retrocognitive Clairsentience (Sight, Hearing, Smell/Taste groups); Retrocognition Only (-1), No Range (-1/2)	6
135	<i>Psychometric Telepathy:</i> Multipower (90 points), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2)	
9u	1) <i>Memory Reading II:</i> Telepathy 18d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); No Range (-1/2)	
6u	2) <i>Ranged Memory Reading:</i> Telepathy 9d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2)	0
9u	3) <i>Memory Alteration I:</i> Mental Illusions 18d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); No Range (-1/2), Based On Memories (-0)	
6u	4) <i>Ranged Memory Alteration I:</i> Mental Illusions 9d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2)	
8u	5) <i>Memory Alteration II:</i> Mind Control 14d6, Telepathic (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); No Range (-1/2), Based On Memories (-0) Mandatory Effect (Victim Never Remembers Mind Control, -1/4)	0
5u	6) <i>Ranged Memory Alteration II:</i> Mind Control 7d6, Telepathic (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); Based On Memories (-0) Mandatory Effect (Victim Never Remembers Mind Control, -1/4)	0

7u	7) <i>Memory Alteration III:</i> Minor Transform 3d6 (minds into minds with any memories, heals back normally), Improved Target Group (Any memories, +1/2), Partial Transform (+1/2), BOECV (+1), Works Against EGO, Not BODY (+0), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); No Range (-1/2), Limited Target (minds, -1/4)	0
9u	8) <i>Memory Blast:</i> Ego Attack 9d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); No Range (-1/2)	0
7u	9) <i>Ranged Memory Blast:</i> Ego Attack 5d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2)	0
68	<i>Mindwarp:</i> Teleportation 20", Position Shift, No Relative Velocity, Safe Blind Teleport (+1/4)	6
70	<i>Nightmare Sword:</i> HKA 1d6+1 (1 1/2d6 with STR), BOECV (Versus Mental Defense, +1), Does BODY (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2)	0
40	<i>Nightmare 'Poison':</i> Ego Attack 2d6, Uncontrolled (+1/2), Continuous (+1); Linked to HKA (-1/2)	4
20	<i>Instinctual Appearance:</i> +20 COM, +20 PRE, Variable Special Effects (she looks like the perfect woman to observers, +1/4); Reduced by Range (-1/4), Only versus Minds (-1/2)	0
20	<i>Illusionary Disguise:</i> Mental Illusions 8d6; Self Only (-1)	4
10	<i>Mental Senses:</i> Mental Awareness, Discriminatory	0
10	<i>Strong Mind:</i> Mental Defense (10 points)	0
20	<i>Psychic Dodging:</i> +5 with DCV, Requires a Danger Sense Roll (-1/4)	0

Martial Arts: Fencing

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Froissement	-1	+1	Disarm, +10 STR
5 Lunge	+1	-2	Weapon +4 DC Strike
4 Parry	+2	+2	Block, Abort
5 Slash	+0	+2	Weapon +2 DC Strike
5 Thrust	+1	+3	Weapon Damage

Perks

2	Fringe Benefit: Member of the Lower Nobility (Baroness)
3	Money: Well Off
3	Reputation: Mindbending Villainess (International) +3/3d6

Talents

30	Danger Sense (self only, sense, out of combat, any danger) 15-
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Skills

- 12 +4 with Fencing
- 12 +4 with Psychometric Telepathy
- 3 Breakfall 12-
- 3 Computer Programming 12-
- 3 Bureaucratics 13-
- 3 KS: Nobility and Royalty 12-
- 3 KS: The Criminal World 12-
- 3 KS: The Financial World 12-
- 3 KS: Fencing 12-
- 3 Gambling 11-
- 5 High Society 14-
- 2 Language: Spanish (Fluent Conversation, English is native)
- 1 Language: English (can imitate dialects)
- 3 Oratory 13-
- 3 Persuasion 13-
- 5 PS: Stockbroker 14-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 3 Scientist
- 2 1) SS: Psionics 12-
- 2 2) SS: Genetics 12-
- 2 3) SS: Anatomy 12-
- 1 WF: Blades

Total Powers & Skills cost: 642**Total Cost: 745****200+ Disadvantages**

- 10 Distinctive Features: Powerful Mentalist (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
- 15 Enraged: if her true identity is discovered (Uncommon), go 14-, recover 14-
- 10 Hunted: Caress 8- (As Pow, Kill)
- 20 Hunted: Mysterious Blackmailer 14- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 10 Reputation: Mindbending Villainess, 11-
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Seeks A Way Out Of Being Blackmailed (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Spiteful (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Obsessed With Keeping Her Identity Secret (Common, Strong)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frequently, Major)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 395 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 545

be very annoying to the PCs; her memory warping powers can cause no end of troubles with DNPCs, Secret Identities, and even Hunteds. By reading a hero's memories she can even discover Psychological Limitations and Vulnerabilities, handing this information over to the villain holding her strings.

The second method that Reverie can show up in a campaign is for her to approach the PC heroes and ask for their help in rescuing her parents. This can be an interesting adventure for the PCs if they decide to help, because Reverie will be in no position to help them out if they are caught! She may be forced to fight them, even at the very gates of the blackmailer's hideout. Another alternative is for some relative of the Windsor-Smythes, or Clancy, begin investigating Allison's parents. A string of reporters winding up mindwiped or dead should clue in heroes to something going on.

Appearance: Reverie is an exceptionally beautiful woman, but that beauty has few definable characteristics... she simply is the most perfect woman in an observer's mind. Blonde, redhead, brunette, she appears in all guises of gorgeous womanhood due to her powers. In her natural, unaugmented appearance, Allison is a slender, almost plain Englishwoman with long blonde hair and bright green eyes. Normally she dresses in fine designer clothes and dresses. Her villain costume is a light purple with gold sash highlights, and a golden sash wrapped around her eyes that sometimes misleads opponents into thinking she is functionally blind.

Reverie's powers are mentally based, so nearly all of them are invisible to sight. Her nightmare sword, however, forms from a glistening black crackling energy in her hands, and is shaped not unlike an English longsword. The blade gives off an unmistakable aura of menace and terrified screams seem to radiate from it when swung.



Reverie



The Nuclear Cowgirl

by Dave Mattingly

Background/History: Patrice Sellers grew up in Montana, the daughter of a cattle ranching father and a high school science teaching mother. Her brilliance was recognized early on, and her mother encouraged her to pursue her education. Her father didn't mind seeing his only child choose other than the family business, but he made sure that she at least understood the basics of riding and shooting, should she ever change her mind and decide to return to the ranch.

Patrice went into science, and eventually settled on nuclear physics, with a specialty in radiation and energy production. Everything went fine until the day of the accident at the nuclear plant. She heroically stayed in the radiation chamber, manually overriding the controls to reduce the radioactivity levels long enough for the rest of the plant to be evacuated.

She blacked out, and when she came to a few moments later, the radiation levels were back to normal. It wasn't until several days later that she realized that it was her own budding powers that absorbed the nuclear energy inside herself.

Feeling that she must use her power for good, but also feeling that her new status as a mutant might damage her credibility as a scientist should her true identity be discovered, she applied to America's leading superhero team, The Sentinels, in New York.

Personality/Motivation: Nuclear Cowgirl has a pleasant personality, and can alternate between a determinedly curious scientist, a fun-loving gun-happy country girl. She has become a superheroine since she fears that her scientific credibility would suffer if it were found out that she could alter nuclear reactions herself.

She tries to maintain an appearance of a cowgirl, to further protect her scientist identity, and tries to exaggerate her speech patterns when in costume.

Quotes: "My word! From the gamma slope of the radioactive decay, that can only mean an armed nuclear weapon has been in this room within the hour! At least one megaton, it sounds like.... Uh, I mean, yer comin' with me, pardner. Yee haw!"

Powers/Tactics: Nuclear Cowgirl has harnessed the power of the atom. She can generate and focus radiation to attack, either hand-to-hand, or at range, providing she has some means of providing range, such as throwing or shooting something that she imbues with radiation.

She can absorb radiation into her body and project it back out again. This allows her to make an area either more or less radioactive, and also increases her power should she be hit by a radioactive attack.

One of her most useful and yet exasperating secondary powers is the ability to short out radios and other small electronic gadgets.

Campaign Use: Every campaign needs a scientist, and Nuclear Cowgirl can easily fill that role. Besides her brains, she's a walking radiation accident! Somebody need to swap in a set of old powers for new? Just hang out with the Cowgirl long enough, and new mutations can be easily justified.

To increase her power level, increase her EC to 40 points, give her a second pistol and a few more levels with it, and a lot more science skills. To reduce her power level, lower her EC to 15 points, and perhaps have her powers rely on a nuclear focus.

Appearance: As Patrice, her most distinctive feature is her current lack of hair, which happened when she gained her powers and that she has been unable to regrow. So, to help disguise her identity, she wears wigs. As Patrice, she wears a very short blond wig, almost in a crewcut. As cowgirl, she wears a cowboy-style hat with curly red hair flowing from it. Apart from her changing hairstyle, Patrice is an athletic 5'7".

In her superheroic identity, she wears a white lab coat, blue jeans, and cowboy boots. Her entire appearance, however, is masked by her yellow-green force field. It blurs her appearance, giving her an eerie glow.

DIGITAL HERO #4

The Nuclear Cowgirl

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6 / DCV: 6
20	CON	20	13-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
18	EGO	16	12-	ECV: 6
15	PRE	5	13-	PRE Attack: 3d6
14	COM	2	12-	
5	PD	2		Total: 20 (15 rPD)
5	ED	1		Total: 20 (15 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
7	REC	0		
40	END	0		
40	STUN	2		

Total Characteristics Cost: 117

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

Cost	Powers	END
25	<i>Radioactive:</i> Elemental Control, 25-point reserve	
22	1) <i>Plutonium Projectiles and Powerful Punches:</i> EB 3d6 AVLD (versus Power Defense; +1½), Does Body (not versus Power Defense; +1); Variable Limitation (Linked to Firearms or Range Limited by Strength or Thrown Objects: -½; No Range: -½)	5
27	2) <i>Nuclear Shielding:</i> Force Field (15 PD, 15 ED), Hardened, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
11	3) <i>Radius Of Radiation:</i> Change Environment 32" Radius (30), Long-Lasting (+10), Varying Effect (increase or decrease radioactivity; +¼); Explosion (-¼), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Increased Endurance (x2; -½)	10
10	4) <i>Disruption:</i> 3d6 Dispel versus All Electronic Instrumentation and Radio Sense Group (+2), Cumulative (maximum = 36 points; +¾), Area Of Effect Cone with Expanded Area (x8 = 55" per side; +1¾); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Increased Endurance (x2; -½), No Range (-½)	10
15	<i>Atomic Absorption:</i> Absorb 3d6 Energy into BODY, END, STUN, and All EC Powers (+2); Only Works Against Radiation (-2)	0
7	<i>Warm Glow:</i> Sight Group Images, 1" Radius; Only To Create Light (-1), No Range (-½) plus Sight Group Flash Defense (5 points); Liked to Warm Glow (-½)	1
5	<i>Geiger Hearing:</i> Detect Radiation (Hearing Group)	0

7	<i>X-Ray Vision:</i> N-Ray Perception for Sight Group (stopped by lead); Costs Endurance (-½)	1
15	<i>Radioactive Recoveries:</i> Power Defense	0
7	<i>Radioactive Physiology:</i> Safe in High Radiation and Temperature Extremes; Eat One Meal per Week; Sleep One Hour per Day; Age at Half Normal Rate	0
10	<i>Pistol:</i> RKA 1d6+1, +1 OCV (+5 points); 6 Charges with 2 Clips (-½), OAF (-1)	0

Perks

6	Contact: The Scientific Community
5	Member of The Sentinels (superhero team)
1	Weapon Permit
3	Well-Off

Talents

3	Lightning Calculator
3	Bump of Direction

Skills

4	+2 with AVLD Blast
3	Range Skill Levels: +2 vs. Range Modifier with AVLD Blast
3	Analyze Energy 13-
3	Computer Programming 13-
3	Cryptography 13-
1	Demolitions 8-
3	Electronics 13-
3	Inventor 13-
4	Languages: German (basic), Japanese (basic), Mandarin Chinese (basic), Russian (basic)
3	Riding 13-
3	Scholar
1	1) KS: Radiation 11-
1	2) KS: The Scientific Community 11-
3	Scientist
1	1) SS: Astronomy 11-
1	2) SS: Inorganic Chemistry 11-
2	3) SS: Mathematics 13-
1	4) SS: Metallurgy 11-
2	5) SS: Nuclear Physics 13-
1	6) SS: Statistics 11-
1	7) SS: Subatomic Physics 11-
3	Systems Operation 13-
1	TF: Motorcycles
1	WF: Pistols

Total Powers & Skills cost: 233

Total Cost: 350

200+ Disadvantages

5	Accidental Glow 8- (when excited)
10	Distinctive Features: Bald (Easily Concealable, Major Reaction)
5	Distinctive Features: Sometimes Glows (Easily Concealable)

- 10 Hunted: Atom-Smasher (As Pow, 8-)
- 15 Hunted: Meltdown (As Pow, 11-)
- 15 Hunted: Technobot (Mo Pow, 8-)
- 20 Normal Characteristic Maxima
- 5 Physical Limitation: Cannot Wear Wristwatch (Infrequent, Slight)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Code Against Killing (Common, Moderate)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Power for Good (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Scientific Curiosity (Very Common, Moderate)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

