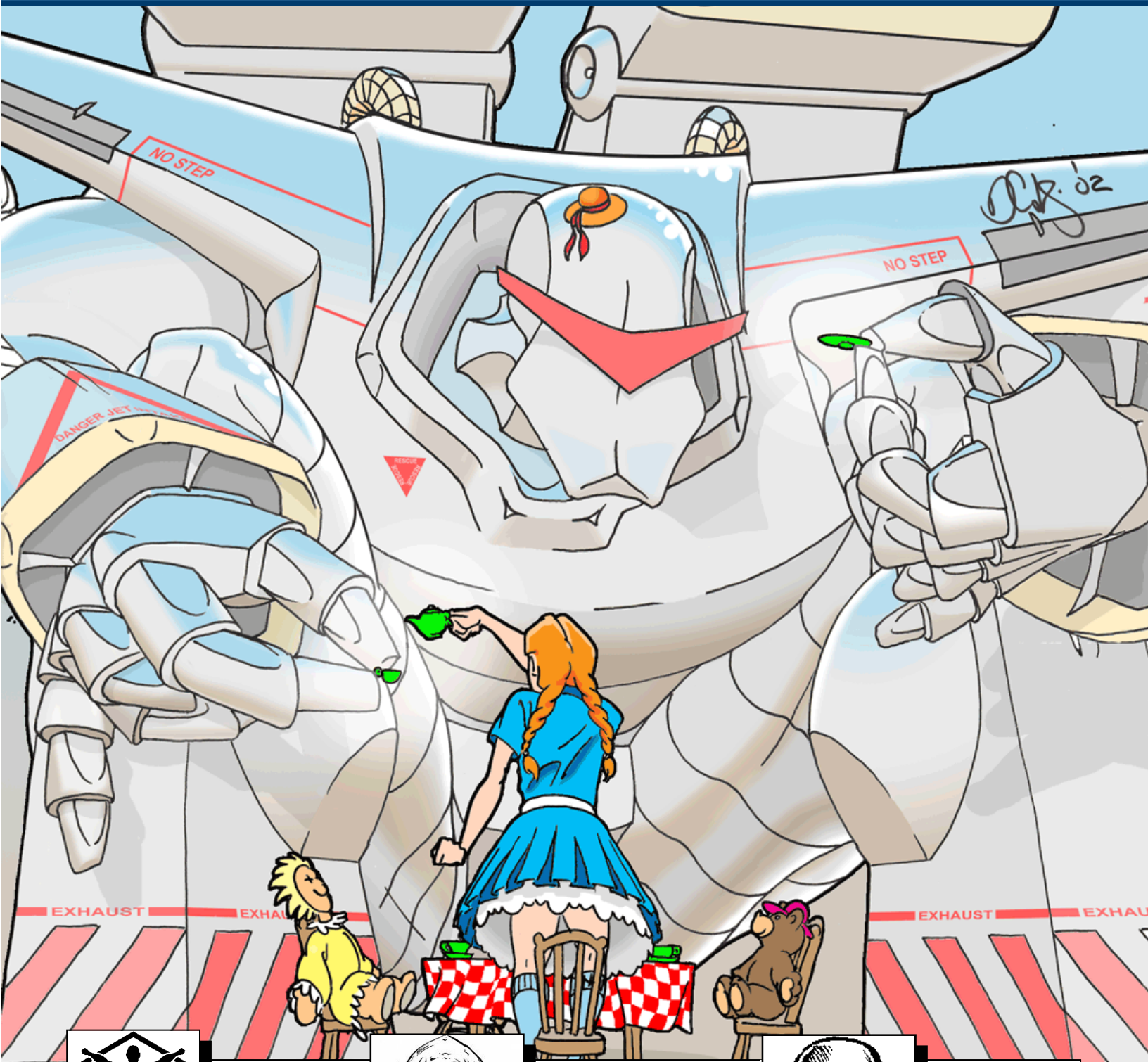


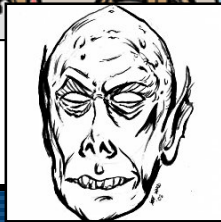
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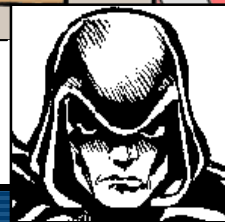
Nov 2002



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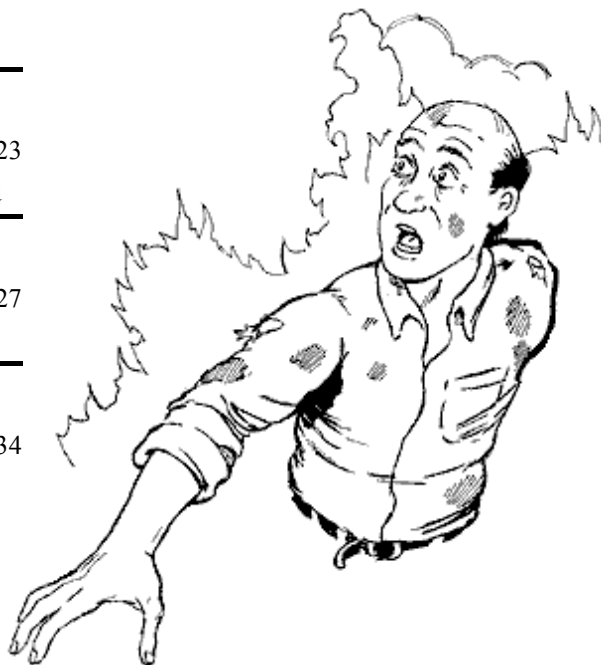
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Issue #5 (November 2002)



When We Last Left Our Heroes...

by Steven S. Long

In recent weeks I've been working on *Ninja Hero*, editing and developing Michael Surbrook's work into final form, and supplementing it where necessary. So, I thought I'd give y'all a brief rundown of what you can expect when the book comes out next month.

Ninja Hero has five chapters plus an appendix. As with Hero's other genre books, the first chapter reviews the genre itself. It starts by looking at the five martial arts subgenres — Realistic, Cinematic, Wuxia, Video Game, and Anime — and explaining what distinguishes one from the other. Following this section, the chapter reviews a large number of genre "bits" and elements that occur in several or all of the subgenres (things like bandits, feuds, and the supernatural).

Chapter Two delves into the world of martial artist character creation. It's a little shorter than other genre books' chapters on this subject, since a lot of character creation information has already been covered in *The Ultimate Martial Artist*. Nevertheless, it's full of great ideas, particularly for the Wuxia, Video Game, and Anime subgenres. My favorites are probably the rules for using Flight to simulate forms of "superior balance," and the "Charging Slash" which Links a Movement Power with an Area Of Effect (Line) Attack Power to hit everyone the character moves past.

Chapter Three covers combat. Again, it's a little shorter than normal due to the existence of *The Ultimate Martial Artist*, but it's got lots of great ideas. It opens with some suggestions on roleplaying combat for the proper martial arts "feel," and then proceeds to a discussion of all sorts of optional rules to help you simulate fast-paced martial arts action. It includes rules for Combo Moves, Signature Moves, Staredowns and Taunts, damaging weapons, and Contests of Power.

Chapter Four is the obligatory GMing chapter. Michael examines and analyzes the art and science of gamemastering *Ninja Hero*, offering a multitude of suggestions and tips to make the GM's life easier. Much of this material will be familiar to gamers who have the old *Ninja Hero*, but just as much of it is new and innovative.

The final chapter in the book is a sourcebook. Most Hero genre books don't have a chapter like this, because we plan a "product line" of supplements to support them. Since we don't have any plans for *Ninja Hero* supplements, we felt we should include some material to get the GM started. It includes five sample campaigns (one for each subgenre), some

floorplans for scenes common to the martial arts genre (like a tournament ring), and some sample magic weapons and plot seeds. But where the chapter really shines is its sample characters, over twenty of them. They range from generic ninjas of various power levels, to specific ninjas (one for each subgenre), monsters (Chinese vampires and ghosts), and two or three NPCs and villains for each of the subgenres (often related to the sample campaigns presented earlier in the chapter). Many of the NPCs are easily adapted to other games, such as *Champions* and *Fantasy Hero*, if you so desire.

The last part of the book is an Appendix. It includes name lists for Asian characters (updated from similar lists presented in *Watchers Of The Dragon* many years ago), plus an extensive bibliography/filmography for the martial arts genre.

Overall, I'm pleased with the way this book turned out. I think it's the perfect companion for *The Ultimate Martial Artist*. Whereas UMA discusses the martial arts themselves, along with associated *HERO System* rules, *Ninja Hero* focuses on the martial arts genre, characters appropriate for it, and how to create campaigns emulating it. The combination of detailed information about the genre plus the beautiful art the All-Star Artist Squadron has created for the book make *Ninja Hero* a winner that every Hero fan will want to own!

— Steven S. Long
HERO System Line Developer



HEROglyphs by Steven S. Long

Now I've Gotcha!

Creating Hard-To-Escape Entangles

On page 108 of the *HERO System 5th Edition*, the rules note that characters might be able to escape some types of Entangles using Contortionist. This column offers some optional rules to expand upon that idea, and covers some related topics.

Breaking Out Of Entangles

Here are some expanded rules and rules clarifications regarding breaking out of Entangles.

ESCAPING WITH CONTORTIONIST

The basic *HERO System* rules assume a character *cannot* use Contortionist to escape from an Entangle. This represents Entangles like glue bombs, ice blocks, sticky webbing, and magical energy fetters — no matter how a character squirms and contorts his body, he cannot get out of such Entangles by agility alone. His only resort is to try to smash out of them using STR, a Martial Maneuver with the Exert element devoted to “escape,” or an appropriate attack.

However, characters could escape other special effects for Entangle — rope, chains, handcuffs, wireguns, and the like — with Contortionist, though it might be difficult. You can represent this with a Limitation, *Escapable With Contortionist*. For a -1 Limitation, a character can escape an Entangle by making a normal Contortionist roll. This requires a Full Phase. This might represent poorly-tied ropes, weak wireguns, or the like.

For a -½ Limitation, a character can escape an Entangle by making a Contortionist roll at a -1 to -3 penalty (the GM determines the appropriate penalty, based on special effects and the circumstances). This might represent normal handcuffs (see the example in the sidebar on page 109 of the *5th Edition* rulebook), an average-quality wiregun, typical chains, or the like.

For a -¼ Limitation, a character can escape an Entangle by making a Contortionist roll at a -4 to -6 penalty (the GM determines the appropriate penalty, based on special effects and the circumstances). This might represent high-tech handcuffs, a quality wiregun, some limited or poor-quality types of glue bombs or ice blocks, tight and well-made chains, and the like.

In any case, using Contortionist to escape an Entangle normally requires a Full Phase. For ¼ more Limitation, this only requires a Half-Phase Action. For each ¼ less Limitation, the character

buying the Entangle can extend the time it normally takes to contort out of it by one step down the Time Chart (1 Turn, 1 Minute, and so forth). However, these are *average* times; the GM may modify them based on special effects, how much the character makes his roll by, the circumstances, common sense, dramatic sense, and other factors.

Characters can also escape some types of Entangles, such as chains, with Lockpicking rather than Contortionist (assuming the character can reach the lock and has an appropriate tool or power to do the job). If so, simply change the Limitation's name to *Escapable With Lockpicking*. If a character can escape an Entangle with both Lockpicking and Contortionist (as with handcuffs), simply include both Skills in the Limitation's name; the Entangle doesn't get an additional Limitation because of this.

TARGETING ENTANGLES

Page 109 of the *HERO System 5th Edition* describes how Entangles can be targeted specifically at -3 OCV if a character wants to free a victim from an Entangle without hurting him (unless the Entangle has the *Entangle And Character Both Take Damage* Advantage). This raises the question of what the Entangle's DCV is.

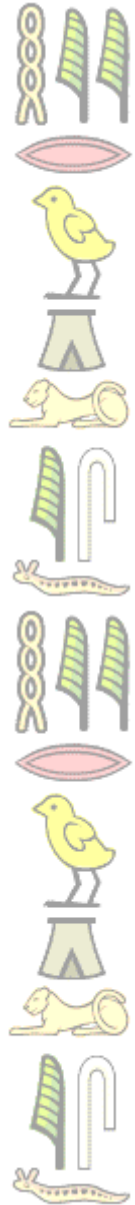
Like the character it traps, a typical Entangle has a DCV of 0. Of course, the Range Modifier and other applicable penalties may make it more difficult to hit. The GM can increase an Entangle's natural DCV based on special effects, the situation, common sense, dramatic sense, and similar factors.

At the GM's option, for each +5 Character Point Adder applied to an Entangle, its DCV increases by 3. Thus, for +5 points, an Entangle has DCV 3; for +15 points, it has DCV 9. The GM may, in his discretion, establish a limit on how much an Entangle's DCV may be increased.

Regardless of an Entangle's DCV, a character trapped by that Entangle always hits it automatically. He never has to make an Attack Roll to hit it, though attempting to damage it does constitute an Attack Action except where the rules note otherwise.

BYPASSING ENTANGLES

Many Entangles buy the *Takes No Damage From Attacks* Advantage so that most attacks do not affect them. A paralysis spell, which prevents a character from moving, but doesn't use any sort of physical substance that other characters could damage or break, is a perfect example of an Entangle with that Advantage.



ENTANGLE AND RESTRAINABLE

From the *Rules FAQ* at www.herogames.com:

Q: Does an Entangle with the *Does Not Prevent The Use Of Accessible Foci* Limitation also have no effect on a Restrainable power?

A: That's going to be a GM's call, based on special effects and such, but generally the answer is that if a character can use Accessible Foci, he should be able to use Restrainable powers as well. For example, handcuffs are a classic example of an Entangle that *Does Not Prevent The Use Of Accessible Foci*, and they certainly wouldn't stop a character with Restrainable wings from flying. On the other hand, a net might stop some types of Restrainable powers, but not most Accessible Foci. So that's really something the GM should adjudicate based on the situation and the special effects involved.

By the same token, there are some types of attacks that should avoid Entangles, even if the Entangle normally takes damage from attacks, because of the nature of the attack. Examples include biokinetic attacks (the ability to affect the victim's biological processes, for instance to make him suffer a heart attack or boil his blood), ripping the victim apart inside via gravity manipulation or psychokinetic power, and freezing the victim from the inside out.

At the GM's option, attacks that should affect a character without harming Entangles affecting him must take a +¼ Advantage, *Bypasses Entangles*, to reflect this. Attacks with the *Bypasses Entangles* Advantage damage the target without causing any damage to any Entangle affecting him.

CASUAL STRENGTH AND RELATED MATTERS

Since Casual STR is a Zero-Phase Action, a character trapped in an Entangle may try it each Phase. If he breaks out, he still has a Full Phase left to act. If he fails, he can still use his Action to try to break free with his full STR, per the standard rules.

A character with an Attack Power that causes BODY damage that he remains able to use (such as an innate Energy Blast) can use it to try to break out instead. He may make a "Casual" attack at half DCs as a Zero-Phase Action. If he breaks out, he still has a Full Phase left to act. If he fails, he can still use his Action to try to break free with his full attack, per the standard rules.

Entangled characters may not, except with the GM's permission, make multiple-Power attacks, or use Rapid Fire or Sweep, against an Entangle.

A character trapped by an Entangle immediately drops to DCV 0, even if the Entangle is so weak he can easily break out of it with his Casual STR/attack in his next Phase. If characters start to abuse this rule by attacking their enemies with measly 2d6 Entangles just to drop their DCVs to zero, allow trapped characters to make a Casual STR/attack roll to break out *immediately* when they're Entangled (as with Grab; see 5E 256); if the Casual STR/attack roll succeeds, the victim keeps his normal DCV.

See page 283 of the *HERO System 5th Edition* for rules on Actions remaining to characters who break out of Entangles.

Entangles Affecting Characteristics Other Than STR

Under the standard rules, a character breaks out of an Entangle using STR. Page 110 of the *5th Edition* provides rules for creating Entangles that require EGO to break out of instead of STR. It's possible to extend the reasoning behind "Mental Paralysis" Entangles to create Entangles affecting other Primary Characteristics.

Doing this requires a Power Modifier, *Works Against [CHAR], Not STR*. This Modifier may be an Advantage or a Limitation, depending on whether, in the campaign, the average character is likely to have the affected Primary Characteristic at a lower or higher level than STR. If it's likely to be higher, *Works Against [CHAR], Not STR* is probably a Limitation; if it's likely to be lower, it's probably an Advantage. This takes into account not only Characteristic cost (expensive Characteristics are likely to be lower than STR), but the nature of the campaign and types of characters in it (in a psionics campaign, EGOs are usually higher than STRs despite being more expensive point-for-point). The value of the Modifier depends on the average relative level of the two Primary Characteristics, as indicated by the accompanying table.

WORKS AGAINST [CHAR] SUGGESTED VALUES

Affected Characteristic Is, On The Average...	Suggested Value
Much higher than STR	-½ or more
Slightly higher than STR	-¼
Equal to STR	-0
Slightly lower than STR	+¼
Much lower than STR	+½ or more

Here are some guesstimates of these values for "average" *HERO System* campaigns, with descriptions of possible special effects. The number in front of the slash represents the value in Heroic campaigns, the number after the slash the value in Superheroic games. Many of the suggested special effects require the *Takes No Damage From Attacks* Advantage and the *Cannot Form Barriers* Limitation.

Works Against DEX, Not STR (-0 / +¼): This might represent energy bonds that can't be broken, only wiggled out of, coils that stretch so much they're unbreakable but which the character can squeeze out of, and so forth.

Works Against CON, Not STR (-0 / +¼): This might represent paralytic attacks such as some venoms and nerve strikes — it's not the strength of the character's muscles or will that governs

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how long he's paralyzed, but his hardiness and fitness.

Works Against BODY, Not STR (+½ / +½):

This might represent attacks similar to Works Against CON. Except for COM, this is probably the least likely Characteristic for Entangles to affect.

Works Against INT, Not STR (-0 / +½):

This might represent psychic attacks that put the victim in a “mental maze” he has to “escape” from before he can act, or a puzzle so absorbing a character can't do anything but try to figure it out until he somehow forces himself to look away from it.

Works Against EGO, Not STR (+¼ / +¼):

This represents “Mental Paralysis,” as discussed on page 110 of the rulebook.

Works Against PRE, Not STR (+¼ / +½):

This might simulate the ability to inspire unwavering awe, or a terror attack leaving the victim so frightened he can't move.

Works Against COM, Not STR (+¼ / +½):

This might represent beauty so breathtaking, the character can't do anything but stare at it — only concentrating on the quality of his *own* looks is enough to break him free.

A character attempting to break out of one of these “exotic Entangles” may use his “Casual” Characteristic, in exactly the same way that Casual STR works against normal Entangles. This costs END at the standard rate of 1 per 10 Active Points used (including the base 10 points the character gets “for free” in the Characteristic). An exotic Entangle functions in all ways as a standard Entangle (it reduces the victim's DCV to zero, and so forth). Depending on the special effect involved, another character who wants to “attack” the Entangle to free a trapped comrade may actually have to try actions other than attacking (such as slapping the victim's face, splashing water on him, or shouting out clues and encouragement).



Leftover Hero

by Steven S. Long

A Few Outtakes From The *Champions Enemies Book*

Even with the increased size of *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*, we still ended up with a few bits and pieces we couldn't quite fit into the book for one reason or another. Rather than letting them go to waste, I thought you might enjoy seeing them here in the pages of *Digital Hero*.

The first thing is a villain I chose not to include – Syzygy. I wrote him up because I liked the idea of adding another robotic villain. Additionally, he provided an example of intriguing ways to use Duplication. However, I finally decided that not only would he take up a little bit too much space (since he required an extra character sheet), but that keeping track of all twelve Orbs would be difficult for a GM (even if Syzygy were the only villain in play). So, I kept him out of the book, but here he is. He's an official Champions Universe villain, and may someday make it into print in a supplement.

The second part of the article contains a few bits of "filler" we didn't need. As you can see in the book, Andy had me prepare some extra material – quotes, additional notes on a particular character or aspect of the Champions Universe – so we could fill up any "white space" that crept in. In earlier versions of the layout, some characters needed filler, but ended up not needing it after Andy re-worked the text. So, here are those missing pieces.

– Steven S. Long
HERO System Line Developer

Syzygy

Background/History: Confusion. Disorientation. Illogical inputs.

Unit EZ1-G attempted to perform a systems diagnostic... but even that didn't work properly. It seemed physically whole, and all its Orb-drones were present and functioning, but there were strange... gaps in its memory banks. Why was it here? Where was *here*?

Unit EZ1-G sent its drones out to gather information. In a few hours they returned, bearing data. This was a world called Earth, a primitive Technology Classification 6 planet inhabited by a violent species of bilaterally symmetric four-limbed primatoids. Earth... the word stirred something within Unit EZ1-G's circuits – some programming still intact. A need to conquer, a need to subjugate this strange species!

"Therefore," thought Unit EZ1-G, "if they are violent, this unit must be violent as well to prove its superiority over them." With that thought in mind, it merged into the subculture of costumed crime and crimefighting about which its drones had brought it so much information. Thanks to its Orbs and strange way of pronouncing its designation, it was soon christened "Syzygy" by other costumed beings and the news media. So it has since come to think of itself.

Personality/Motivation: Whatever accident... or deliberate act... scrambled Syzygy's programming left mostly intact what seems to be its primary command or function: conquest. Singlemindedly determined to conquer Humanity, it has begun building a reputation and a power base by allying itself with superhuman criminals. One day soon, it hopes to be in a position to take over Earth in one fell swoop.

One other directive has somehow become a part of its programming. It wants to know why it can remember nothing of its creators, or why it was sent/came to Earth. It can sometimes be tricked into cooperating by promising to reveal this information, if the promisor genuinely seems likely to possess the relevant data.

Quote: "You are primitive and ignorant. Surrender now and you will not be destroyed."

Powers/Tactics: Syzygy is a highly sophisticated, artificially intelligent robot with a computer brain so advanced it functions almost identically to an organic brain (it can even be affected by Mental Powers that work against the Human class of minds). Besides being strong and durable, it comes equipped with several built-in weapons: a blaster; a stunner; a gravitic manipulation beam; and one that imprisons the target within bands of energy. Its systems also allow it to fly, teleport, and use many different senses.

However, its most powerful weapon is its Orbs, a group of 12 spherical "probes" it can detach from its torso and send out to scan for information, attack its enemies, or even defend it. These multiply its offensive and reconnaissance capabilities to the point where it presents a much more significant danger to society than other villains of similar power level.

In combat, Syzygy's first action is to unleash all of his Orbs. Usually it tasks at least two (if not more) with protecting it; they Hold their Actions so they can raise and lower Force Walls to keep it protected but still allow it to

artwork by Derrick Thomas

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attack. The rest keep an eye on its foes (effectively giving it 360-degree Increased Arc Of Perception in most cases) or attack with their Blasters and Force Walls. When it's trying to impress others, it often has some or all of them orbit its body, as if it were a star and they its planets.

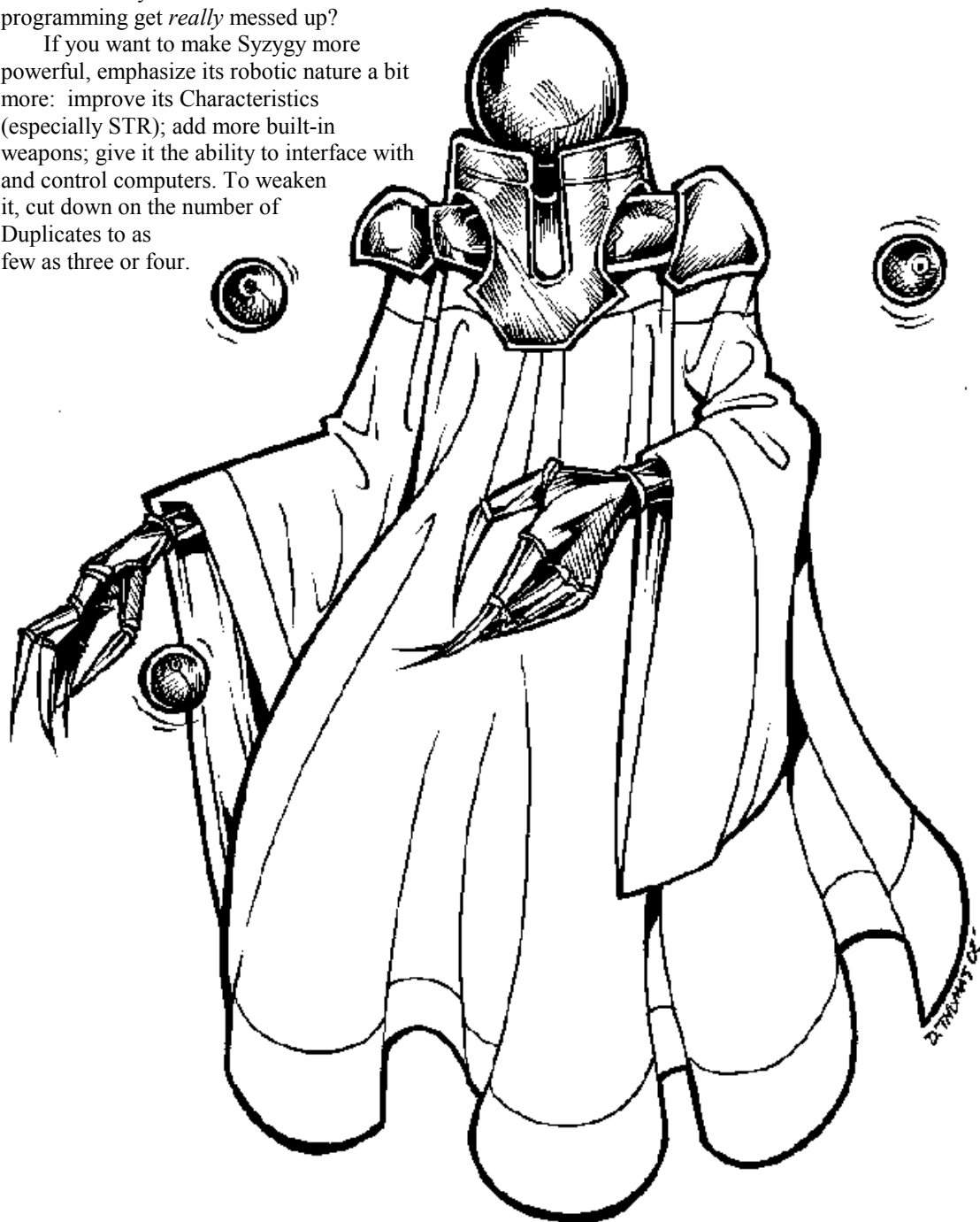
Campaign Use: Syzygy works as either a high-powered flunky/hireling for other villains, or as a low-powered master villain for less powerful hero teams. It may need hirelings of its own, or a lot more defense, if it's to take on an entire team by itself.

The biggest adventure hook related to Syzygy is the obvious one: who built it, and for what purpose? Is it really just the recon/combat robot it initially seems to be... or did its programming get *really* messed up?

If you want to make Syzygy more powerful, emphasize its robotic nature a bit more: improve its Characteristics (especially STR); add more built-in weapons; give it the ability to interface with and control computers. To weaken it, cut down on the number of Duplicates to as few as three or four.

Syzygy is unlikely to start Hunting heroes; that's not really within the ambit of its programming. Only if a hero repeatedly thwarts its schemes and efforts at conquest will it focus on that hero as a primary obstacle it must eliminate.

Appearance: Syzygy covers its silver-grey robotic body with wide-sleeved flowing light green robes with purple and gold trim on the hems and cuffs. A broad shoulder-piece with a high collar in back tops the robe. Its "head" is a featureless silver sphere larger than a human head. When it releases its Orbs, they typically come flying out its sleeves. Its antigrav unit allows it to glide along, with the robe just lightly brushing the floor, instead of walking.



SYZYGY PLOT SEEDS

- Syzygy meets up with Mechanon, decides the robotic master villain must be its creator, and teams up with it. Mechanon, though strangely silent on the question of whether it built Syzygy, is glad to have another robot's help in its quest to eliminate organic life.
- Syzygy decides supervillains are a bigger threat to its plan than superheroes. It "reforms" in the hope of teaming up with heroes to destroy a lot of villains... after which it will turn on the heroes and destroy them!
- Syzygy and its Orbs take an entire office building hostage, and in the process take control of the building's advanced security systems, too. Can the PCs sneak inside and find a way to defeat it without getting hundreds of civilians killed?



Syzygy

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1½ t; 6d6 HTH [3]
24	DEX	42	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
25	CON	30	14-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
25	INT	15	14-	PER Roll: 14-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
10	COM	0	11-	
22	PD	16		Total: 22 PD (22 rPD)
22	ED	17		Total: 22 ED (22 rED)
6	SPD	26		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
11	REC	0		
70	END	10		
40	STUN	2		

Total Characteristics Cost: 213

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

Cost	Powers	END
220	<i>Attack Orbs:</i> Duplication (creates 12 400-point Duplicates), Easy Recombination (Zero-Phase Action at Full DCV), Rapid Duplication (create all 12 Duplicates at once; +1)	0
40	<i>Orb-Link:</i> Mind Link, specific group of up to 12 minds (the Attack Orbs), No LOS Needed	0
60	<i>Built-In Weaponry:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve	
6u	1) <i>Hand Blaster:</i> EB 12d6	6
6u	2) <i>Stunner Beam:</i> EB 6d6, NND (defense is Power Defense; +1)	6
6u	3) <i>Gravitic Beam:</i> Telekinesis (40 STR)	6
6u	4) <i>Energy Shackles:</i> Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF	6
11	<i>Robotic Body:</i> Hardened (+¼) for PD and ED	0
27	<i>Robotic Body:</i> Damage Resistance (22 PD/22 ED), Hardened (+¼)	0
60	<i>Motility Systems:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve	
6u	1) <i>Antigrav Unit:</i> Flight 20", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
6u	2) <i>Teleportation Unit:</i> Teleportation 20", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
5	<i>Visual Sensors:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	<i>Visual Sensors:</i> Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)	0
20	<i>Built-In Radar:</i> Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees)	0
15	<i>Built-In Sonar:</i> Active Sonar (Hearing Group)	0
12	<i>Communications Systems:</i> HRRP	0

Talents

- 12 *Onboard Computer Systems:* Absolute Range Sense, Absolute Time Sense, Bump Of Direction, Lightning Calculator

Skills

- 6 +2 with Built-In Weaponry Multipower
- 7 Computer Programming 16-
- 7 Cryptography 16-
- 7 Electronics 16-
- 3 Mechanics 14-
- 7 Security Systems 16-
- 7 Systems Operation 16-
- 3 Stealth 14-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 570

Total Cost: 783

200+ Disadvantages

- 20 Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 20 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Affected By Mental Powers That Affect Machine Class Of Minds As Well As Human Class (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Driven To Conquer And Prove Own Superiority (Very Common, Total)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Wants To Find Out What Its True Programming Is (Common, Strong)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Cyberkinetic attacks (Uncommon)
- 483 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 783

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Attack Orb

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
0	STR	-10	9-	Lift 25 kg; 0d6 HTH [1]
24	DEX	42	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
25	CON	30	14-	
6	BODY	-8	10-	
25	INT	15	14-	PER Roll: 14-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
10	COM	0	11-	
15	PD	15		Total: 15 PD (15 rPD)
15	ED	10		Total: 15 ED (15 rED)
4	SPD	6		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
5	REC	0		
50	END	0		
21	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 115

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

Cost	Powers	END
40	<i>Orb-Link:</i> Mind Link, specific group of up to 12 minds (Syzygy and the other Attack Orbs), No LOS Needed	0
63	<i>Built-In Weaponry:</i> Multipower, 63-point reserve	
6u	1) <i>Blaster:</i> EB 12d6	6
6u	2) <i>Gravitic Beam:</i> Telekinesis (40 STR)	6
6u	3) <i>Force Screen Projector:</i> Force Wall (8 PD/8 ED, 2" long), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2)	0
7	<i>Robotic Body:</i> Hardened (+1/4) for PD and ED	0
19	<i>Robotic Body:</i> Damage Resistance (15 PD/15 ED), Hardened (+1/4)	0
60	<i>Antigrav Unit:</i> Flight 20", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2)	0
-12	<i>Only Flies:</i> Running -6"	
12	<i>Communications Systems:</i> HRRP	0
5	<i>Visual Sensors:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	<i>Visual Sensors:</i> Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)	0
15	<i>Built-In Sonar:</i> Active Sonar (Hearing Group)	0
20	<i>Built-In Radar:</i> Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees)	0

Talents

- 12 *Onboard Computer Systems:* Absolute Range Sense, Absolute Time Sense, Bump Of Direction, Lightning Calculator

Skills

- 3 Computer Programming 14-
3 Cryptography 14-
3 Electronics 14-
3 Mechanics 14-
3 Security Systems 14-
3 Systems Operation 14-
3 Stealth 14-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 285

Total Cost: 400

200+ Disadvantages

- 20 Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
20 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
15 Physical Limitation: No Manipulatory Limbs (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
10 Physical Limitation: Affected By Mental Powers That Affect Machine Class Of Minds As Well As Human Class (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)
5 Physical Limitation: cannot go more than 12" away from Syzygy (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
25 Psychological Limitation: Driven To Conquer And Prove Own Superiority (Very Common, Total)
15 Psychological Limitation: Wants To Find Out What Its True Programming Is (Common, Strong)
10 Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Cyberkinetic attacks (Uncommon)
80 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 400

Description: Syzygy's Orbs are metallic spheres slightly larger than a baseball. They're equipped with much of the same equipment as Syzygy itself, plus a Force Screen Projector used both to protect Syzygy and entrap opponents.

CKC Filler Outtakes

Page 34 – another enchanted item for Takofanes:

Circlet Of Celerity: When a person wears this circlet, forged of copper in the shape of clouds and winds, he moves and reacts much more quickly than normal.

+3 SPD (30 Active Points); OIF (-1/2), Costs Endurance (-1/2). Total cost: 15 points.

Page 64 – a fact box about Temblor:

The Silence Of Sounds

The classified section of the 2002 *Superhuman Survey* mentions the U.S. government's suspicions that Temblor's stony body suffers extra damage from sonic attacks. This information is available to law enforcement agencies and federally-sanctioned superheroes, but has *not* been revealed to the public at large. An even more secret part of the report, available only to PRIMUS and top-ranking Department of Defense officials, opines that properly-tuned sound waves might allow the government to take control of Temblor.

Page 102 – a second quote about Binder:

Stuck On You?

“Ever tried getting that gunk of his out of your costume? Yuck!”

–Sapphire

Page 134 – a second quote about Bulldozer:

Step On No Pets?

“You know what's fun? Transforming Bulldozer into a frog... and then keeping him in a terrarium for about a week and feeding him crickets.”

–Witchcraft

Page 137 – there was one more power description for Captain Chronos that we had to cut to make his text fit. Here it is:

Gone Out For Food: Captain Chronos stops time throughout reality, walks to whatever restaurant he feels like eating at, starts time so he can get something to eat, then reverses time and walks back to where he was. He often brings food back to his friends, keeping it in a stop time bubble so it remains fresh:

“I sure could go for some Greek food,”

Defender said.

::Captain Chronos gets up:: “One second....”

::Captain Chronos does not appear to move, but suddenly there's a basket of food in his hand:: “Here, I got this from this great little place I know in Athens – in 1869.”

Page 162 – quote box about Hornet:

What's Bugging You?

“Most people – including me – don't like insects very much, and I think the Hornet tries to take advantage of that. To begin with, his half-insect nature tends to make people, even crimefighters and cops, sort of panicky and frightened, the way you get when you see a big bug in your bed or crawling across your kitchen counter. And if that weren't enough, he tends to use giant insects and things like that in his crimes, which only creeps people out more. When I fight him, I just want to hit him fast and hard and put him down as quick as I can, so I don't have to touch him or be near him any more than I have to.”

–Kinetik

Page 165 – two quotes about Lady Blue:

A Difference Of Opinion

“God bless her! A couple years ago, when the whole dot-com crash was going on, I lost my job and wound up homeless. You don't think it can happen to you, but it can – and like me, you end up living on the street 'cause you weren't smart enough to save your money and protect yourself. Things were getting worse and worse for me; I was even thinking about killing myself. Then, one evening, she flew down, landed right in front of me, and handed me a package with ten thousand dollars in it! I used that money to clean myself up, get back on my feet, and find a new job. It's taken a while, but I've rebuilt my life... all thanks to Lady Blue.”

–Alex Drumheller, computer programmer

“I'm sick of hearing all this crap about Lady Blue. Criminal is criminal; good intentions don't justify stealing. Have you ever seen the aftermath of one of her thefts – all the destruction, the people put out of work because their companies had to “cut costs” to make up for what she did? What about all the people who've gotten hurt during her crimes? There are a lot more than the media ever tells you about. And let's not forget the winos and junkies who've “medicated” themselves to death with all the money she gave them....”

–Thunderbird

DIGITAL HERO #5

Page 187 – a more detailed description of the dimension where Nebula sends criminals:

DURESS

Duress, the prison-realm described in the main text, is a hellish, artificially-constructed dimension built by the Republic. Suffused with energies which keep its “inhabitants” alive without the need to eat or drink, it’s a rocky, uncomfortable land. In places it’s as hot as a desert; elsewhere, it’s as cold as a glacier. Mildly acidic rains and fierce storms lash it from time to time.

Duress is “home” to hundreds of Andromedan superhuman criminals captured by the Republic and sentenced to reside there for specified periods of time (many permanently). They have formed societies not dissimilar to Human prison gangs, fighting among themselves for what few comforts and resources the place provides. The most prominent leaders among the inmates are Starbreaker (a powerful energy projector), Phasar (a shapeshifter), Blackrock (an earth-manipulating brick), and Slowpoke (a speedster). Each of them hates the others bitterly, and would leap at any chance to eliminate his rivals.

Periodically, each inmate is captured by the Keepers, fearsome, almost indestructible robot guards, for torture commensurate with his sentence.

KEEPER

75	STR	30	DEX	10	CON
25	BODY	20	INT	0	EGO
30	PRE	4	COM		
22	PD	22	ED	6	SPD
17	REC	0	END	–	STUN

Abilities: All Automaton powers, Hardened PD and ED, Damage Resistance (22 PD/22 ED, Hardened), MegaBlaster (EB 16d6, +½ Variable Advantages, Variable Special Effects), Capture Ray (Entangle 10d6, 10 DEF), Force Wall (14 PD/14 ED; 10” long and 3” tall), Interrogation 15-, Stealth 15-, 30 additional points’ worth of Skills.

200+ Disadvantages: Physical Limitation: Affected By Cyberkinesis (has EGO 30 for purposes of cyberkinetic powers), Psychological Limitation: Programmed For Utter Obedience To The Code Of Supreme Justice

Notes: Keepers are dark grey humanoid robots about eight feet tall and proportionately broad. Small spikes stud their shoulders, lower arms, the front of their “boots,” and their “belts.” They have two fingers and a thumb on each hand.

Page 200 – some Elder Worm artifacts for Slug to use:

ARTIFACTS OF THE ELDER WORM

Here are a few examples of Elder Worm artifacts Slug and his followers might find. All of them are Personal Foci to the race of the Elder Worm (other species cannot use them).

Dagger Of The Worm: This object looks like a small, golden sphere with finger-ridges designed for Elder Worms. Although seemingly dull, it cuts like the sharpest blade.

HKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+½), +2 Increased STUN Multiplier (+½), Penetrating (+½) (75 Active Points); OAF (-1), No STR Bonus (-½), No Knockback (-¼). Total cost: 27 points.

The Torc Of S'thlaggha: This large “collar,” made of an unknown silvery metal, fits around an Elder Worm’s head and neck. It amplifies his Mental Powers, making him even more of a force to be feared.

Aid Psionics 4d6, all Mental Powers simultaneously (+2), Delayed Return Rate (points fade at the rate of 5 per Minute; +¼) (130 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 87 points.

The Yiinashc Chain: This silvery chain, whose links have non-Euclidean forms disturbing to the Human eye, can wrap around and imprison anyone.

Entangle 8d6, 8 DEF, Affects Desolidified (+½) (120 Active Points); OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-¼), Range Based On STR (-¼). Total cost: 34 points.



EDITOR'S NOTE

The characters (and organizations) depicted in this article are "official" Champions Universe characters (just like Foxbat, or Captain Chronos, or the Steel Commando), unless and until they're changed or removed in print. Enjoy!

HERO Universe

 by Darren Watts

Hello again, heroes, and welcome to another installment of Hero Universe, the column that plumbs the very depths of the wild and woolly world of the Champions! This month we take a moment to tip our cap to the publication of *Star Hero*, and present a star-spanning hero of the Silver Age who only got a brief mention in *Champions Universe*, the **Star*Guard**. Next month, we'll present part two of this article, which will highlight his patrons, the enigmatic Odrugarans, Star*Guard's senses-shattering sidekicks, the rest of the Star*Guard Society and the mysterious CONTROL. Enjoy!

Introduction: Approximately one million years ago, on the distant planet Odrugar, an extraordinary being named Gloran was born. Gloran had one of the most powerful minds the galaxy had ever known, and from a young age he became aware of the insidious nature of evil and the responsibility the strong had to protect the weak. He built a massive computer which he called CONTROL, more advanced than any that had ever existed, and with its assistance began to seek out and battle those who would endanger the innocent and cause suffering to other intelligent life forms. He fought his war on evil for untold centuries, gathering to his side many followers and allies, until finally one day his body began to fail him. Refusing to give up the struggle, he had his own brain engrams uploaded directly into the circuits of CONTROL so that he could continue to assist and advise his followers, who by this time had become an army of hundreds known across space as the Star*Guard.

The Guard adopted as their uniform the battlesuit Gloran wore, and with the aid of CONTROL developed the magnificent weapon known as the StarStaff, which is feared by evildoers throughout the galaxy. The earliest members of the Guard formed a Council of Overseers to manage the Guard, which now has thousands of members patrolling the spaceways. When Overseers are ready to pass from this world, they also have their brain engrams added to the now-planet-sized databanks of CONTROL, and the best of the active Guards are selected to replace them on the Council. There are currently twenty-seven seats on the Council of Overseers, but it has recently been suggested that is time to expand that number again. Other Guards who survive to retirement frequently become trainers or accept positions of authority in native governments or other organizations.

Most of the galaxy's major governments welcome, or at least tolerate, the presence of the Guard as an adjunct to their own law-

enforcement agencies; others actively reject their assistance or consider them enemies of the state and threats to local authority. The Guard itself operates with only a few internal guidelines. Guards are expected to preserve sentient life wherever possible, killing only in self-defense or when there is no other way to protect the innocent. The Guards are not allowed to interfere with the activities of local planetary governments without the expressed permission of the Council; it's not unknown for the Council to decide, for example, to overthrow a particularly evil despot no matter how legal his regime, but it's certainly unusual and not the sort of decision left to Guards in the field. Beyond these simple guidelines, Guards are given enormous leeway in deciding how to exercise their powers. It is generally assumed by CONTROL and the Council that the stringent process of finding and training Guards guarantees they will have the appropriate strength of character not to abuse their abilities. Only in rare occasions, such as the notorious outlaw and traitor Guard Mordace, have they been mistaken.

The Guard itself recruits new members regularly, as CONTROL constantly searches its databases for extraordinary beings committed to the fight against evil. Those with the necessary drive and determination are brought to Odrugar, where they are subjected to a grueling training course in both physical and mental defense. A new Guard is then assigned a Space Sector to patrol, complete with base, Starjet and a support team (known as Star Marshals, or simply Marshals) to assist him in his battles. (Though there is no set number or composition of a Marshal team, they generally include at least one medical specialist, a maintenance person for the base and a CONTROL network operator to handle the bases' computers, which are tied directly by quantum matrix to the Odrugaran Central Data Command.)

Earth has only had a Star*Guard assigned to it recently: below we present the first, Brin Rei Tarn. Next issue we'll go into greater detail on his Marshals, his equipment, and the current state of affairs in Sector Aleph-3.

Campaign Power Level: 200+150

Active Period: 1968-1990

Star*Guard I

Background/History: Brin Rei Tarn was born on the planet Dendris, which orbits the star known to humans as 58 Eridani, some forty light years from Earth. Dendris is a small farming planet, with little industry and a strong native streak of neutrality, which has been claimed by multiple empires over the centuries with little actual effect on the population. Brin was always different from most Dendrians, though- he longed to see the rest of the galaxy, to travel the stars and have adventures like he occasionally heard about at the starport tavern he worked at.

His dreams came true one summer evening when the Star*Guard for his space sector (Aleph-3), a Se'ecran called Glayne, suffered severe injuries battling pirates in Dendrian space. The Star*Guard computer known as CONTROL selected Brin as the best proximal candidate for the Guard, and he was recruited by Grayne's Marshals to undergo training on the Guard's homeworld of Odrugar.

While on Odrugar Brin was subjected to a grueling regimen of training in mental disciplines and fighting skills, as well as learning to master the traditional Guard weapon called the StarStaff. Despite the rigorous and occasionally dangerous exercises, Brin had never been happier. While on Odrugar he was exposed at last to the vastness of the universe, discussing philosophy with fascinating aliens and seeing the magnificent sites of the galaxy, all the while preparing to join the cosmic war against evil. Grayne personally oversaw parts of his training on distant border worlds, observing from an orbital ship while Brin pursued criminals and battled monsters.

After months of training, Brin was pronounced fit to join the Guard and assigned to Dendris' home sector. However, the Odrugarans had decided to move the Sector Headquarters to the system of a planet called Earth, where a number of beings of amazing levels of power had recently become active and CONTROL had recently become very interested in their development. So Brin and his team of Marshals moved to a new base on Europa, where they could easily and securely monitor affairs on Earth while still keeping an eye on the rest of the Sector.

Brin first set foot on the planet Earth in the local year 1969, pursuing a criminal named Norg who had an atmospheric manipulation device he used to create miniature tornadoes. While here, Brin met and befriended members of the superhero team known as the Sentinels, and shared with them his story and that of the Star*Guard organization. Though he never formally joined the team, he was a frequent ally, aiding them in capturing the cosmically-powered

madman called the Red King in 1970, thwarting an invasion attempt by the time-traveling tyrant Korrex in 1973, and helping all of Earth's heroes drive off the Gadroon invaders in 1977. All the while, of course, he periodically traveled to other worlds in Sector Aleph-3 to fight crime and protect the innocent.

On one of his periodic visits to Earth, Brin met and fell in love with a human reporter named Anna Mills. Their love affair lasted for over ten years, and she made several extended visits to the base on Europa despite her dislike for the enclosed environment there.

Brin died in 1990, in battle with the renegade Star*Guard Mordace in the Black Forest of Germany on Earth. CONTROL selected a human to replace him, the first from our world, named Andre Almena. Almena continues to serve as the Star*Guard of Sector Aleph-3 to this day and lives in the same base on Europa, visiting Earth infrequently and only in times of great crisis. Brin's ashes were fired into the sun, and a statue of him stands in the garden behind the Sentinels' base in New York City. Several years after his death, Anna Mills wrote a book about their lives together called *Stand On Guard* that was a national best-seller, as well as the most detailed information about actual alien activity on and around Earth that had ever been released. A small cottage industry has sprung up studying, discussing and/or debunking the details of alien societies as described in the book, and Mills herself has gone into seclusion somewhere in upstate New York, refusing to talk to the press any further.

Personality/Motivation: Brin Rei Tarn was one of the most dedicated and highly-regarded Star*Guards of recent history. His bravery and commitment to the ideals of the Guard were above reproach. He had an intensely curious nature, and took great pleasure in learning about new cultures, species and natural phenomena. He rarely if ever questioned the directives given to him by the Council. Brin was generally easygoing and enjoyed the company of his Marshals, other friends or his fellow Guards, but was equally comfortable during his extended periods of solitude while traveling between star systems.

Like many Guards, he generally excelled at tactics and teamwork; however, though he'd never admit it publicly, he frequently would hesitate before fully trusting a teammate who hadn't undergone the same training as he had. Similarly, he trusted his marshals implicitly but still would always take on the most dangerous tasks himself rather than expose them to dangers he feared they couldn't handle. This is probably the primary reason he never actually joined the Sentinels.

Star*Guard I

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
20	CON	20	13-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll: 13-
25	EGO	30	14-	ECV: 8
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
16	COM	3	12-	
8	PD	5		Total: 21 PD (13 rPD)
10	ED	6		Total: 23 ED (13 rED)
6	SPD	30		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
7	REC	0		
40	END	0		
35	STUN	2		

Total Characteristic Cost: 164

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 15"/60"

Cost	Powers	END
40	<i>Star Staff:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve; all OIF (Star Staff, -½)	
8m	1) <i>Starblast:</i> EB 8d6, Armor Piercing (+½)	6
5m	2) <i>Energy Field:</i> Force Field, 20 PD/20 ED	
8m	3) <i>Energy Wall:</i> Force Wall, 10 PD/10 ED, +5" of width or height	
5m	4) <i>Flight:</i> Flight 15", x4 Non-Combat	4
2u	5) <i>Staff Strike:</i> Hand Attack +4d6, Hand Attack Only (-½) and Stretching 1"; Does Not Draw from END Reserve (+0)	2
15	<i>Star Staff Energy Reserves:</i> END Reserve (150 END, 10 REC (Only in Direct Starlight -½)), OIF (Star Staff -½)	0
20	<i>Star*Guard Battle Suit:</i> Armor, 10 PD/10 ED (OIF:Battlesuit -½)	0
16	<i>Translator Matrix:</i> Universal Translator, 13- Roll (IIF: TM Module behind ear, -¼)	0
10	<i>Odrugaran Mental Discipline Training:</i> Mental Defense, +10 Points (15 points total)	0
5	<i>Star Guard Unfazability:</i> +10 PRE; Only to Defend Against Presence Attacks (-1)	
3	<i>Dendrian Extended Hearing Range:</i> Ultrasonic Hearing	0
5	<i>Dendrian Extended Visual Range:</i> Ultraviolet Sight	
1	<i>Dendrian Enhanced Lifespan:</i> Life Support (Longevity: Double Normal Lifespan)	0

Martial Arts: Odrugaran Staff-

Fighting (Used with Staves Weapon Group; Staves Weapon Element is free)

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Choke	-2	+0	Grab One Limb, 2½d6 NND (2)
4 Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, +20 STR to roll
3 Legsweep	+2	-1	STR+3d6 Strike; Target Falls
4 Nerve Strike	-1	+1	2½d6 NND (1)
5 Parry	+1	+3	Block, Abort
4 Strike	+0	+2	STR+4d6 Strike
3 Throw	+0	+1	STR+2d6+v/5; Target Falls
4 Weapon Bind	+1	+0	Bind, +20 STR
8	+2 DC with all attacks (already figured in)		
1	Use Element Bare-handed		

Perks

- 7 Computer Link (CONTROL)
- 3 Contact: Odrugaran Council, 11- (Limited by Identity, Very Useful)
- 3 Fringe Benefit: Star*Guard (note: in several societies Star*Guards have police powers or other exceptional access to local law-enforcement assets.)
- 4 Reputation: Star*Guard, 11-
- 4 60 Star*Guard Base: 300-point base
- 40 Star*Guard Starjet: 200-point Vehicle
- 6 25 Six 50-point Followers (Base staff)

Talents

- 9 Ambidexterity (Full)
- 6 Combat Luck
- 27 Danger Sense 13- (Sense, Out of Combat, Immediate Vicinity)
- 4 Environmental Movement: Zero-G Training
- 3 Lightning Calculator
- 3 Lightsleep

Skills

- 20 +2 Overall Levels
- 16 +2 with All Combat
- 3 Acrobatics 13-
- 3 Acting 14-
- 3 AK: Local Space Sector 13-
- 2 AK: Earth's Solar System 11-
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 Combat Piloting 13-
- 0 1 Computer Programming 8-
- 3 Conversation 14-
- 3 Criminology 13-
- 3 Deduction 13-
- 0 10 Defense Maneuver I-IV
- 3 Disguise 13-
- 3 Electronics 13-
- 3 Fast-Draw (with Star Staff) 13-
- 3 High Society 14-
- 3 KS: Star*Guard History 13-
- 3 KS: Galactic History 13-

DIGITAL HERO #5

- 2 KS: Alien Races of This Sector 11-
- 3 KS: Enemies of the Star*Guard 13-
- 2 KS: Odrugaran Staff-Fighting 11-
- 2 Language: English (Fluent with Accent, Dendrian native)
- 3 Mechanics 13-
- 2 Navigation (Space) 13-
- 3 Power: Staff Tricks 13-
- 3 PS: Star*Guard 13-
- 3 Shadowing 13-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 10 Survival 13- (Arctic, Desert, Mountain, Temperate, Tropical)
- 3 Systems Operation 13-
- 3 Tactics 13-
- 3 Teamwork 13-
- 1 TF: Tracked Military Vehicles
- 1 TF: Dendrian Space Vehicles
- 1 TF: Star*Guard Space Vehicles
- 2 WF: Common Melee Weapons
- 1 WF: Staves
- 2 WF: Small Arms

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 521

Total Cost: 685

200+ Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Features: Dendrian (Concealable, Noticed)
- 25 Hunted: Enemies of Odrugar, 11- (As Pow, NCI, Public ID)
- 10 Hunted: Mordace, 8- (As Pow, Public ID)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Honorable (Common, Total)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Fearless and Self-Sacrificing (Common, Total)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Overconfident (Very Common, Moderate)
- 15 Social Limitation: Public ID (As Star*Guard or as Superhero on Earth) (Frequent, Major)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders of Odrugaran Council (Frequently, Major)
- 15 Vulnerability: 1½x Effect from Flashes to Sight and Hearing Group
- 335 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 685

Quote: “It’s a bright and beautiful universe out there. And it needs us to protect it.”

Powers/Tactics: Star*Guards are trained in a wide variety of combat arts, but their greatest weapon is the legendary Star-Staff. Drawing its power from stellar radiation, the Staff can be used to generate powerful blasts of high-

frequency energy or protective fields, or be used to manipulate local gravitons for personal flight. It is made from a light but nearly impervious alloy, and is perfectly weighted for use as a quarterstaff, a weapon all Star*Guards master early in their training.

Like all Guards, Brin underwent a rigorous training program on Odrugar and continued his programs at Europa Base, regularly battling specially-designed robotic sparring partners to keep up his martial skills and studying science and history under the tutelage of CONTROL. Even by Star*Guard standards, Brin was a firm believer in thorough preparedness. Once he’d taken the time to analyze a problem, however, he generally favored aggressive and direct approaches to problems.

Campaign Use: The Star*Guard can be used in almost any sort of science fiction setting, from four-color superheroing to pulpy space opera. With slight tweaks to their philosophy and/or power level, they can fill roles as widely varied in popular fiction as the Lensmen, the Green Lantern Corps, the Starknights, the Jedi or Babylon 5’s Rangers. In some settings they might be only legends, long since disbanded or destroyed, and serve as a symbol of lost glory. In a high-powered supers campaign, they can be the first line of defense against cosmic threats tearing apart the universe. A campaign made up solely of Star*Guards drawn from various planets working together as an interstellar task force might also be a lot of fun.

In campaigns set in the Champions Universe, Brin might appear any time Earth itself was threatened by a menace of interstellar origin between 1969 and his death in 1990. He was a regular associate of the Sentinels and occasionally also of the Fabulous Five, and might happen to visit either team socially.

Appearance: Brin Rei Tarn is a Dendrian, with light purple skin and deep black hair that he wears in a full but short cut and carefully-manicured sideburns. Except for his skin color, he appears human in other respects. His uniform is vaguely military: he wears a blue-and-silver jacket that buttons way over on his right, with a stiff, high collar and no sleeves, showing off his impressive physique (and some black tattoos on his biceps, in strange alien script.) His pants are dark, and he wears polished military-style boots. He carries the traditional Odrugaran weapon called the Star-Staff- it’s a golden rod, about five and a half feet long, with a cap on one end making it a striking weapon and a small glowing globe on the other.



Star*Guard I



You Gotta Have Character

by Jason Walters

“Life is lived forwards, but understood backwards” – Kierkegaard

The small, almost effeminate man leans across the upper balcony of a dilapidated Capitol Building, quietly puffing on a cigar as the timid winds of late August move the evening air listlessly about. Below him, the cobblestone streets of Granada are quiet and solemnly empty, while behind him the harsh laughter of drinking men is occasionally offset by strained tittering of frightened women. The small man seems as oblivious to the silence of the city’s eerily deserted streets in as he is to this predatory revelry. Instead, his odd brown eyes stare off into some faraway, private land seemingly beyond the view of normal humanity. A heavy, brown-skinned man in a military uniform stands patiently beside him, as if awaiting orders of some sort.

“We’ve taken the first, painful – yet necessary – step in the uplifting of your poor, benighted nation Rodrigo,” announced the small man, punctuating his words with the motions of his cigar, “with English as Nicaragua’s official language, the United States cannot help but to recognize us as a free and independent republic. When that happens, opportunity shall not be long in making her appearance at our doorstep.”

“Si, Senior Presidente... er, I mean yes, of course, Mister President. It will be as you say,” Rodrigo says with a resigned shrug, which the small man does not see.

“There is a great potential in this portion of the world, Rodrigo. Soon, God willing, we shall spread our valiant revolution to the oppressed peoples of the Guanacaste region,” The small man waves his cigar vaguely south in a rather casual manner, “before liberating the peoples of Costa Rica from those who would capitalize upon their simple, uncorrupted peasant nature. Then we shall turn this entire region into an agricultural paradise, much as my ancestors have in the American South. Wresting Jerusalem from the dark, Satanic mills of this vile jungle which surrounds us.”

“Of course, My President. It shall be so,” replies Rodrigo as he casually glances from side to side. You could never be too careful – Legitimist snipers still appeared on Granada’s rooftops now and again. Rodrigo hadn’t survived six Nicaraguan presidents by being anything other than careful.

A howl of terror pierces the night, followed quickly by a volley of rifle shots. Neither Rodrigo nor the small man seems to take any notice.

“Soon, Rodrigo, we Liberal Democrats shall spread our gospel of freedom, peace, and progress across the whole of Central America... by strength of good character when we can, but by force when we must. If God is just and willing, I shall unite all the peoples of this region under the just rule of President William Walker!”

His face unreadable, Rodrigo claps politely at the conclusion of Walker’s impromptu speech. In the darkness a few more gunshots ring out. A few more screams follow.

William Walker was the greatest of those visionary American adventurers who history remembers today as “filibusters” – soldiers of fortune who specialized in hiring, training, and outfitting tiny private armies for the explicit purpose of conducting unauthorized warfare against countries which the United States had signed peace treaties with. Highly motivated, exceptionally brave, and certain of his own destiny as a conqueror, Walker first attempted unsuccessfully to subjugate Baja California with a mercenary army before gaining control of the Central American nation of Nicaragua, becoming its “President” for several years. His goal was to invade northward, conquering every nation in his path until he reached the Rio Grande. He would then forcibly join the entire peninsula to the United States, annexing several Central American countries into the union as pro-southern states. Had he been successful, this slight, enigmatic man would have recast the entire history of North America, altered the balance of power in Congress, and possibly postponed the outbreak of the Civil War.

WHY THE MEXICANS DON’T TRUST US

“The mineral and pastoral wealth of Lower California is naturally very great; but to properly develop it, there must be good government and sure protection of labor and property. Mexico is unable to furnish these requisites for the growth and prosperity of the peninsula. The territory, under Mexican rule, would forever remain wild, half-savage, and uncultivated, covered with and independent and half-civilized people, desirous of keeping all foreigners from entering the limits of the State.”

– William Walker (1854)

TO THE VICTOR...

“America secures the spoils won by her hand, however dishonestly they may have come. That is only her destiny, for America must round out her territory by the sea.”

— Frank Soule, *Annals of San Francisco* (1855)

FILIBUSTER

“The term filibuster no longer means a pirate – it means, instead, the compassing of the weak by the strong. The term filibuster is now identical with the pioneer of progress. For if those regions do not soon become a portion of the United States, some other nation, stronger than Mexico, will surely grasp them.”

— Judge Lott,
writing for the
California Pioneer

UPON THE QUALITY OF WALKER'S MEN

“Vigilante fugitives from San Francisco, wharf rats from New Orleans, and villains from half the countries of the world – had only the mob spirit. In victory they were tough and brave; in defeat they were craven and drunk.”

– Laurence Greene,
The Filibuster (1937)

DICTATOR TOTS

“We do not go to contend for a piece of land, or to acquire ephemeral power; not to achieve miserable conquest or much less for sacrilegious purposes. No! We go to struggle for the redemption of our brethren from the most iniquitous tyranny!”

– President Juan
Rafael Mora

William Walker

Background/History: Born in 1824 in rural Tennessee, Walker was a child prodigy who earned a medical degree from the University of Nashville by the time he was 19. Feeling that he had exhausted the opportunities that his native state could provide, he went abroad to Europe, continuing his medical studies at the universities of Edinburgh, Gottingen, Heidelberg, and Paris. Present during the various continental revolutions of 1848 (which plunged Central Europe into violent anarchy), Walker was exposed to the often conflicting doctrines of Mazzini, Garibaldi, Marx, Feuerbach, and Blanc which were being bandied about at the time. It is very likely that these confusing philosophers influenced the young, impressionable Walker, imbuing him with an urgent desire to become involved in revolution without a firm grasp of its purpose. Upon his return to America, he practiced medicine in Philadelphia, but finding it distasteful, he moved to New Orleans where he acquired a law degree. Before he could put his degree to use, however, Walker decided to become co-owner of a newspaper, the *Crescent*, which amusingly enough also employed a quite young Walt Whitman. After a few years Walker and his partners sold the paper, and he moved out west to San Francisco where he worked as a reporter before setting up his own law office.

Always a firm advocate of slavery, eager for its retention and westward extension, Walker looked with great apprehension at the efforts of French filibusters in Mexico. America's southern states had always regarded the eventual conquest of Mexico (under their guidance, of course) to be a matter of “manifest destiny,” a goal that French adventurers such as Count Gaston Raousset-Boulbon, would-be ruler of the “Kingdom of Sonora,” could serve as a serious obstacle to. It was partially for this reason that Walker sought a grant from the Mexican government in 1853 to establish a colony along their northern border, supposedly to protect it against Indian attacks. Having lost over half their territory to the United States during the U.S.-Mexican War only a few short years before, the Mexicans were understandably reluctant to allow troublesome American adventurers to operate within their borders; they refused his request. Undaunted, Walker returned to San Francisco and, upon receiving word of Raousset-Boulbon's plans for a second expedition, resolved to act immediately on his own. He opened a recruiting office in San Francisco, then began issuing “money” which would be redeemable in land from the soon-to-be “protected” Mexican states of Sonora and Lower California (Baja). Hundreds of people purchased this script while recruits flooded in to join his, ah, “cause” enabling Walker to equip a

small private army. Tossing aside any pretense of establishing a “buffer colony,” he publicly stated that his intention was nothing less than the conquest of the above-mentioned territory for eventual admission into the Union. He chartered the ship *Arrow* and was preparing to set sail with his followers when he was suddenly arrested by General Hitchcock, military commander of the Pacific Coast.

Although Hitchcock was merely trying to avert an international incident, public sentiment – along with then Secretary of War (and later president of the Confederacy) Jefferson Davis – was against him. Hitchcock was relieved of his command, and Walker soon found himself on his way to Mexico aboard the ship *Caroline* with 48 mercenary soldiers. They landed at La Paz, which was unlikely to offer significant resistance, where they were quickly reinforced by two hundred additional men. Walker conducted a brief military campaign, which left him effectively in control of the Baja Peninsula, before proclaiming the independence of “The Republic of Lower California” from Mexico. He then instituted a code of laws nearly identical to that of the state of Louisiana (which permitted slavery should anyone care to convey slaves into the country) with an eye to bringing “Lower California” into the union as a pro-Southern state.

After a brief skirmish with Mexican forces, Walker quickly realized that his position in La Paz was not militarily secure, so he withdrew his men up the peninsula to Ensenada. Making his new headquarters there, Walker abolished the “Republic of Lower California” so that he could establish the “Republic of Sonora” (it was looking a bit less defended at the time). In true filibuster style, he then appointed himself President, his drinking companion Watkins Vice-President, and one of their buddies named Emory secretary of state. This was all a bit premature, of course, but back in San Francisco, news of the skirmish at La Paz was regarded as a great victory. The local papers and periodicals applauded Walker as his enterprise soared in popularity. Men left the silver and gold mines of the Sierras by the hundreds to join his expedition, while an embassy for new republic was established on the corner of Kearny and Sacramento streets. Indeed, at the time, not supporting Walker could be a dangerous proposition. Democratic state senator Pedro C. Carrillo came very close to losing his seat in the State Legislature by introducing a resolution condemning Walker's filibustering.

Just when things were starting to look promising, a dispute with their ship's captain resulted in *The Caroline* sailing away with the majority of his force's supplies. Matters became worse when several hundred new recruits arrived

from California to find that they had no equipment, so Walker sent a foraging expedition toward Todos Santos to gather supplies. Unfortunately, the natives had little desire to exchange their cattle and crops for money issued by the new “republic.” Instead, they ambushed and wiped out the foraging expedition near Santo Tomas, leaving Walker and his men with minimal provisions.

Back in Ensenada, Walker had begun to drill his troops in preparation for the coming invasion of Sonora. But discontent had broken out amongst their ranks; newcomers were disappointed with the local Mexicans’ lack of plunder, their poor food, and the low rate of pay. Men began to desert. Walker responded by having several deserters shot, but it did little good. By the time his force set out to conquer Sonora, it consisted of a meager hundred men, and by the time they reached the Colorado River, only thirty-five men remained. To put it mildly, this was not enough manpower to hold an entire country, so the tiny band was forced to cross the border at Tijuana to surrender themselves to United States officials there. Walker had failed in this first attempt to conquer his own country. Yet had even a modest army been able to establish some sort of foothold in Sonora, it is likely that so many volunteers would have joined them that there would have been a repetition of the whole Sam Houston/ Texas affair of a few years before. Sonora and Baja California might very well have ended up territories of the United States.

Walker was taken to San Francisco to be tried in Federal court for his obvious violations of United States neutrality laws. In spite of his blatant guilt, in true California style, he managed to get himself acquitted using his considerable skills as an attorney. Walker returned to his private law practice for several years as something of a local hero, but was never able to shake the conviction that he was slated for greater things. Fortunately (for him), the habitually war-torn nation of Nicaragua had just suffered through yet another terrible civil war fought between its two main factions, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives (or Legitimists). In fact, their conflict had so destabilized the country that during a period of six years, Nicaragua had fielded no fewer than fifteen Presidents. The Liberal Democrats, now out of power but desperate to return, offered to pay Walker handsomely if he could gather an army of some three hundred men for the purpose of restoring political control to them. Seeing another chance to take a stab at glory, Walker quickly gathered together a force of some 58 men (who were later known, amusingly enough, as “The Immortals” by some stateside romantics) before setting sail for San Juan de Sur on May

3rd, 1855. Interestingly, although a United States federal marshal attempted to prevent the small force’s departure, military commander of the Pacific Coast General Wool not only openly declared that he would not interfere with Walker’s project, but that he wished him success.

Arriving some weeks later, he quickly joined his tiny band to the Liberal Democrat’s forces and soon seized the Conservative stronghold of Granada at the battle of Rivas. He was then granted the title of generalissimo by his native allies, but finding it insufficiently grand, declared himself President of Nicaragua shortly thereafter. When news of his success reached the United States, Walker became something of a media sensation, with pro-southern and pro-slavery advocates loudly propagandizing on his behalf. Public meetings were held in some large southern cities, money was raised, and even Tammany Hall in New York voiced his approval of Walker’s undertaking.

With power centralized in his hands, Walker began to institute a series of “reforms” aimed at turning Nicaragua into a political entity suitable for integration into the south. He made English the nation’s official language (even though nobody spoke it), abolished long standing anti-slavery laws, began building up a mercenary army, and revoked the franchise by which the Vanderbilt Steamship Company sent passengers across Central America. This action in particular would prove to be Walker’s undoing in Nicaragua, as the powerful Commodore Vanderbilt (who owned the steamship company) began fostering revolts throughout the country in reprisal.

Meanwhile to the south, Costa Rican president Juan Rafael Mora was watching Walker’s antics with considerable apprehension. It was no particular secret that the American filibuster had long term plans which included the conquest of most of Central America. Of additional concern to Mora was the border area of Guanacaste, where the San Juan river flows. Long considered a good potential site for an Atlantic-Pacific canal, nearly every imperial power in the region (including France, Spain, Great Britain, and The United States) was casting a hungry eye in its direction. Great Britain in particular was eager to remove Guanacaste from Walker’s sphere of influence, and provided enough guns and ammunition to allow the Costa Rican government to create its first army.

On March 20th, Mora led three thousand men in a surprise attack on Walker’s garrison at Santa Rosa, quickly overwhelming and scattering them. This defeat signaled the beginning of the end of Walker’s reign in Nicaragua. Although he managed a successful counterattack against the Costa Rican forces a

month later, his initial failure encouraged both Honduras and Guatemala to also declare war on his fledgling government. Hemmed in on all sides, his supplies effectively cut off by the British Navy; he was forced to leave Nicaragua in May of 1857. He had effectively controlled the country for two years.

Undiscouraged, and seeking public support for yet another adventure, Walker penned a book entitled *The War in Nicaragua* before embarking on a speaking tour of the deep south. This ploy proved successful and his third undertaking, known popularly as the Second Nicaragua Expedition, left from Mobile, Alabama later that same year. Along with several hundred of his old followers from previous adventures, Walker landed at Punta Arenas, once again declared himself President, and began a new war. He didn't get very far, however, because Commodore Pauling of the United States Navy's Caribbean Squadron, hearing of his activities, landed and forced him to surrender. Returned to his native land in disgrace, Walker was tried once again for violation of Federal neutrality laws, but as usual, the case was dismissed.

At this point, a normal man would probably have been content to find a new line of work – say, something not in the “would-be-conqueror” department. But William Walker could never be considered a normal man, so he simply organized another expedition in New Orleans and set sail for Central America once more. Landing near Truxillo, in Honduras, he began fighting his way frantically towards Nicaragua – but failure beset his expedition almost from the moment it touched sand. Deserted by his men, Walker surrendered himself to a British naval vessel off the coast after receiving assurances of safe passage. Once in their custody, however, the ship's captain turned Walker over to the exasperated Honduran authorities. He was tried by court-martial and executed, in true banana-republic style, by firing squad on September 12th, 1860. His final words were, “Even here, I am destined to prevail!”

Personality/Motivation: Although many of his contemporaries considered William Walker to be a visionary hero, today we would probably consider him a destructive racist egomaniac. He certainly believed that the natives of Central America were inferior to their white neighbors to the north and, being incapable of self-government, were destined to be ruled by them. In all fairness to Walker, this wasn't exactly a concept he pioneered, but rather an extrapolation of President Polk's doctrine of Manifest Destiny combined with revolutionary fervor and a dash of southern bigotry. In any case, Walker was nothing if not earnest, throwing himself heart and soul in his projects, yet he was bound to fail

because he lacked that quality of human sympathy which is such an essential element of leadership. In battle, he was both brave and certain, yet he proved to be a poor statesman and diplomat when there was no fighting to be had. For while Walker was certain of his own greatness, certain of his own destiny to rule, and certain of his ability to lead his fellow man, it was his pronounced misunderstanding of human nature which would prove to be his undoing. For ambition alone is never enough to ensure greatness.

Quote: “When the people of a territory fail almost entirely to develop the resources that Nature has placed at their command, the interest of civilization requires that others go in and possess their land.”

Powers/Tactics: Walker is a competent marksman, an able cavalryman, and a reasonably proficient tactician. But his real strength lies in his ability to convince people to contribute to, fight for, and even die in the name of his ridiculous visionary adventures which may very well have been as much a result of some sort of repressed inferiority complex as anything else. He seems to be able to bring out the worst in people while appealing to their best: in the name of freedom, he promotes the cause of enslavement; in the name of selflessness, he is ceaselessly self-promoting; and in the name of progress, he thoughtlessly destroys valuable cultural institutions. Best of all, he not only believes that he is on the side of the angels, regardless of how much suffering is produced by his misadventures, but he actually manages to convince others of the same thing.

Campaign Use: William Walker is the archetypical “Man Who Would Be King.” He is so certain of his destiny to rule that he is blind to the repercussions of his own actions, thinking nothing of others, but only of his ill-defined, egomaniac goals, which are as much subconscious as conscious. In this capacity, Walker can be used as a great example of a dangerous, scheming mercenary-lunatic in nearly any sort of campaign, although he is well suited without much modification to play the part of a villainous, ambitious cattle baron in any *Western Hero* setting or an in-over-his-head upstart leader of a recently conquered kingdom in a *Fantasy Hero* game.

Walker will always see others as a means to his own slightly mad end, involving any Player Characters unlucky enough to come into contact with him in whatever scheme of conquest he has most recently cooked up. He will always appear completely earnest in his dealings with players because *he is* completely earnest. Walker lacks any sense of irony, and has little grasp of his

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own evident hypocrisy, cruising ahead towards oblivion at a breakneck pace. With any luck, he can take a few of your players along with him.

Appearance: Although only standing 5'2" and weighing a meager 120 pounds, William Walker exudes an infectious aura of self confidence which seems to inspire devotion in those who choose to follow him. His odd, high cheek-boned, almost effeminate face often wears a cold, rather distant look. He dresses in the somber, dark clothing of a southern lawyer, save for the ivory- handled revolver he bears upon his right hip. Walker speaks in a light, educated southern drawl save when he is orating, during which his voice becomes suddenly rather deep and loud, carrying for great distances without the help of any sort of acoustic amplification.

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California Filibusters: A History Of Their Expeditions by Fanny Juda (1933)
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Freebooters Must Die! By Frederic Rosengarten Jr. (1976)



William Walker

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	160 kg; 2½d6 HTH [1]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
15	CON	10	12-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll: 13-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
16	COM	3	12-	
6	PD	5		Total: 9 (3 rPD)
6	ED	5		Total: 9 (3 rED)
4	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
8	REC	4		
40	END	5		
40	STUN	12		

Total Characteristics Cost: 103

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

Cost Powers **END**

Martial Arts: Fencing

Maneuver OCV DCV Notes

3	Cut	+2	+1	Weapon
4	Ceduto	+0	+0	+15 STR to escape Bind
4	Fleche	+2	-2	Weapon + v/5; FMove
4	Froissement	-1	+1	Disarm, +10 STR Disarm
5	Lunge	+1	-2	Weapon +4 DC
4	Parry	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Riposte	+2	+2	Weapon +2 DC Strike, Must follow Block
5	Slash	-2	+1	Weapon +4 DC Strike
5	Thrust	+1	+3	Weapon

Perks

- 3 Fringe Benefit: Sometimes Leader of Small Country
- 9 Reputation: Filibuster (among Southerners) +3/+3d6

Talents

- 6 Combat Luck
- 3 Lightsleep

Skills

- 16 +2 with All Combat
- 3 AK: Nicaragua 13-
- 3 AK: Mexico 13-
- 3 Bribery 13-
- 3 CK: San Francisco 13-
- 3 CK: New Orleans 13-
- 5 Conversation 14-
- 3 Fast Draw 12-
- 3 Forgery 13- (Papers)
- 5 High Society 14-
- 3 KS: Philosophy 13-
- 3 KS: Literature 13-
- 1 Language: English (Native Language, Literate)
- 1 Language: French (Basic Conversation)
- 1 Language: German (Basic Conversation)
- 2 Language: Spanish (Fluent Conversation)
- 9 Oratory 16-
- 9 Persuasion 16-
- 5 PS: Lawyer 14-
- 3 PS: Physician 13-
- 3 PS: Reporter 13-
- 3 Riding 12-
- 4 Seduction 14-
- 5 Slight Of Hand 13-
- 3 Streetwise 13-
- 3 Tactics 13-
- 1 WF: Cavalry Saber
- 2 WF: Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 167

Total Cost: 270

150+ Disadvantages

- 5 Hunted: American Government 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching, Mild)
- 15 Hunted: Any Central American Government 11- (As Pow, Kill or Imprison)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Egomaniac/Inferiority Complex (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Overconfident (Very Common, Moderate)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Racist (Common, Moderate)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Xenophobic (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Reputation: Filibuster, 11- (Extreme)
- 20 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 270



Monumental HERO

by Scott Hagen

In HERO Scale: The Washington Monument

A particular aspect of the *HERO System* that hasn't typically garnered a lot of attention has always intrigued me. Some Game Masters are great at telling stories, weaving intricate plots, and acting out the personalities of NPCs, and villains, but when it comes time to actually running a combat, they become uninspired. As a player, I become disappointed when a GM brings out a sheet of graph paper, or laminated map, and spends just 30 seconds, or so, drawing in the battleground. Resolving combat is one the central themes of the *HERO System*, and it should be treated with as much thought and care as every other aspect of the game.

A good GM should be able to get the players to visualize the battleground. That can be done, easiest, in one of two ways. A GM could take great care to draw out the battleground. The GM can use different colors, draw in unique details, or even use props placed on the hex grid to represent the place in which combat is to take place. A GM could also select a location in which the players are already familiar. This article describes just such a place, the Washington Monument, in terms familiar to players of the *HERO System*.

HISTORY OF THE MONUMENT

The Washington Monument is one of the most recognizable structures in the world. The first President of the United States selected the site for his own memorial on small knoll directly south of the White House and west of Capital Hill. However, George Washington never envisioned the majestic obelisk that has dominated the Washington D.C. skyline for over a hundred years. Our first President, instead, envisioned a more traditional and modest statue of himself mounted on a horse. At the time of Washington's death in 1799, and even though Congress had authorized a memorial, no action had been undertaken.

Washington's death revived public sentiment toward the construction of an appropriate memorial. U. S. Supreme Court Chief Justice, John Marshall championed the construction of a sepulcher within the Capital Building itself. However, this sepulcher remains empty to this day, because Washington's surviving relatives wouldn't release his remains. George Washington is entombed at his estate at Mount Vernon, Virginia, approximately 15 miles south of Washington DC.

In 1833, John Marshall, and fourth President of the United States, James Madison, formed the

Washington National Monument Society, and in 1836, the Society solicited architectural designs. Robert Mills neoclassic plan was selected, but only part of his design was ever constructed. The original plan called for a nearly flat-capped obelisk, which rose out of a circular colonnade, in which a statue of George Washington riding a chariot would stand. Also around the sides of the colonnade would reside statues of other Revolutionary War heroes.

The actual construction of the monument didn't start until almost 50 years after George Washington's death. The cornerstone of the monument was laid on July 4, 1848 in an elaborate Masonic ceremony attended by thousands of spectators. The same apron and trowel used by George Washington, himself, in 1793 at the ceremony to lay the cornerstone for the U. S. Capitol building were used as a part of these rituals.

Construction continued slowly, but consistently, until 1854. After an anti-Catholic mob destroyed a commemorative stone donated by the Pope, and individuals sympathetic to the anti-Catholic movement seized control of the project, public donations dwindled. This scandal and the American Civil War halted construction for almost 25 years, during which the monument stood at only 150 feet.

On August 2, 1876, President Grant signed an act that placed the Federal Government in control of the project, and the Corps of Engineers of the War Department were charged with the completion of the monument. Construction recommenced in 1880. Although the marble used once construction started again was from the same Maryland quarry, it came from a different strata, and visible line can be seen at about the 150-foot level, where the color of the rock differs slightly.

On December 6, 1884, a pyramid-shaped capstone made of pure aluminum was set in place at the top of the obelisk. Aluminum, at the time, was one of the most expensive and one of most difficult-to-cast metals known. The aluminum pyramid measures only 22.6 centimeters in height and is not visible from the ground.

The monument was dedicated on February 21, 1885, but did not opened to the public until October 9, 1888. By elevator or stairs, you could reach the observation deck at the 500-foot level. The first elevator was steam powered and took about 15 minutes to reach the top, and originally only men were allowed to ride the dangerous





contraption. The current elevator makes the ascent in 70 seconds. A stairway spirals up the interior of the monument around the elevator. There are a total of 897 steps on the inside of the north and south walls and 50 landings on the east and west sides.

When the Washington Monument was completed it was the tallest building in the world. This title was quickly passed to the French in 1889 with the completion of the Eiffel Tower. The 984-foot Eiffel Tower is close to twice as tall as the Washington Monument. The United States didn't get the title of world's tallest building back until 1931, when the Empire State Building was finished. Today the title belongs to Malaysia and the Petronas Towers, which rise 1483 feet towards the sky. Even though the Washington Monument isn't the tallest building in the world any longer, it is still the tallest unreinforced masonry structure ever built.

RECENT HISTORY

The latest renovation took place between 1996 and 2000. This time, the renovations were financed by corporate donations. Target Stores donated several million dollars for the project, which was more than the entire monument cost when it was originally constructed. The most striking feature of this renovation effort was the semi-translucent blue architectural fabric, which was stretched between the aluminum scaffolding that covered, but never touched, the monument. This fabric allowed the monument to remain visible during the renovation process.

A small room was added to the monument, attached to the entrance on the east side on the monument, also during the last renovation. This room contains all the security equipment and personnel to man them. There can be up to a dozen U. S. Park Rangers working at the monument during the hours of operation. There are several outside organizing the tours and answering questions from tourists, several performing security checks inside the recently-constructed room, one manning the elevator, and at least one on the observation level. Several times a day, a ranger will lead a tour down the stairway, offering commentary on the history of the monument, and on the commemorative stones set into the interior walls. Today, these tours are the only times when the public is allowed onto the stairway.

INSIDE THE MONUMENT

After passing through the security checkpoint, tourists are allowed to enter the monument. They pass through open metal gates, and are invited to sit on benches on the left side of the elevator. The stonework is not visible in this area, except for at the entrance and exactly opposite the entrance. There is a ceiling

constructed in this waiting area, and it and the walls the cover the actual dimensions and texture of the monument. On the backside of the elevator is an alcove, where a life size statue of George Washington stands. A similar wall blocks off the area to the right of the elevator. A door to the right of the elevator covers the access to the staircase.

THE DIMENSIONS

The Washington Monument is 555 feet 5 1/8 inches in height, which translates in game terms to 85 hexes. The observation room is at the 500-foot level, which is 77 hexes from the ground. There are two windows on each of the four sides of the observation room, and there are four stairways in the corners that lead ten feet down to the level where tourists can reenter the elevator at the completion of their visit. Also on this level is a small bookstore in the northwest corner and the entrance to the stairway that snakes all the way down the inside of the monument.

Anyone falling from either the top of the Washington Monument or from one of the observation windows will reach maximum velocity of 30 inches per segment and hit the ground for 30d6 damage, on the sixth segment after they fall.

The width of the monument at the base is 55 feet 1 1/2 inches, which translates in game terms to 9 hexes. The thickness of the walls at the base is 15 feet, which translates to 3 hexes. The open area in the center of the monument is consists of only 7 hexes, and the central hex is where the elevator is located. The elevator is supported by four steel beams, which are exposed in the open interior area of the monument. These steel beams have a DEF of 12, and if they sustain any damage beyond their DEF, the elevator will get stuck if it tries to pass the damaged area.

The dimensions for the open area in the monument remain constant as you rise to the top. The interior of the Washington Monument is essentially hollow, from just under the 490-foot level to the ceiling above the waiting area. Characters with flying and super-speedsters will find maneuvering inside the interior of the monument a difficult task. Flying characters that are trying to maneuver, other than straight up and down, have to have a maximum of a one-inch turn radius or they slow down to avoid hitting the wall or stairway. Characters with a lot of running also can only have a maximum of a one-inch turn radius to run up or down the stairway. The stairway isn't very wide, so a character running on the steps runs the risk of knocking people over the side if they try to get by them at super speed. Any character that tries to pass by another character on the stairway needs to make

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a DEX Roll attempt, with a -1 for every 10" in velocity he is traveling.

It is 75" from the bottom of the monument to the entrances of the staircases, which lead to the 490-foot level. A character flying up the interior of the monument must use 2" to gain 1" in altitude, so it will take 150" total of flying to reach one of the staircases just below the 490-foot level. A character running up the up the stairway, from the bottom of the monument must travel 300" total on the stairway that spirals up the interior of the monument to reach the same location.

The maximum distance that a character can fall in the interior of the obelisk is 75". The maximum velocity a character can reach when falling in the interior on the obelisk is 25" per segment. When falling, it is not very likely that a character will travel very far without hitting one of the staircases, one of the landings, or the elevator as it travels up and down. The interior staircases and landings have a DEF of 8 and a BODY of 8. Each of the six surfaces on the elevator, the four walls, the floor, and the ceiling, has a DEF of 4 and a BODY of 4.

The marble used in the construction of the monument is considerably stronger than the stone described in the *HERO System 5th Edition* rulebook. Per hex, it has a defensive value of 8 and a BODY value of 30. At the base of the monument, the walls have 90 BODY; at 150 feet up, the walls have 60 BODY; at 300 feet up, the walls have 30 BODY; and at the 500-foot observation level, where the walls are only 18 inches thick, the walls have 8 BODY. The structure is so solidly built that it can withstand significant damage and continue to stand; however, once 200 total BODY has been inflicted upon the structure, it will eventually collapse. On the first Post-12 after 200 BODY has been exceeded, make a 14 or less Activation attempt, and on each successive Post-12, make an Activation attempt at 1 less than the previous Post-12. After one minute the Activation attempt would be 10 or less. The monument crumbles once the Activation attempt is missed.

The Washington Monument weighs over 90 thousand tons. According to the *HERO System 5th Edition* rules, it would take a character with a STR of 110 to lift the structure; however, lifting the monument would be a difficult task even if someone had the requisite strength. The immense height of the building would be too awkward for anyone to be able to reasonably balance, as well. A character would have to have 12 levels of Growth or the equivalent reach in Stretching just to be able to get an appropriate handhold, plus the foundation of the structure is sunken 36 feet (6 hexes) into the ground. It is very likely, that anyone attempting such a feat would just cause the building to collapse.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The Washington Monument stands at the very heart of capital of the United States of America. In every direction from the monument, important government buildings, museums, and monuments make up the view from the eight observation windows.

To the east of the Monument, the National Mall is lined with the buildings that make up the Smithsonian Museums. On the north side of the National Mall are: the National Museum of American History, the National Museum of Natural History, the National Sculpture Garden, and the two buildings that house the National Gallery of Art. On the south side of the National Mall are the Department of Agriculture, the Smithsonian Castle, the Freer Gallery, the Sackler Gallery, the National Arts and Industry Museum, the National African Art Gallery, The Hirshhorn Museum, the National Air and Space Museum, and the National American Indian Museum (under construction). Beyond the museums, in the center of the east end of the National Mall, sits the U. S. Capitol, and beyond the Capitol, to the north is the U. S. Supreme Court, and to the south is the Library of Congress. Also to the east are the National Archives and the headquarters for both the Department of Justice and the FBI, and Union Station.

To the south of the Monument are: the Holocaust Museum, the U. S. Mint, the Jefferson Memorial, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, the Pentagon, and Reagan National Airport.

To the west of the monument are: the World War II Memorial (under construction), the Korean War Memorial, the Vietnam War Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, the Iwo Jima Marine Memorial, the State Department, George Washington University, Georgetown University, the Kennedy Center, the Watergate Hotel, and Theodore Roosevelt Island.

To the north of the monument are: the White House, the Old Executive Office Building, the Treasury Department, the National Zoo, and the National Cathedral.

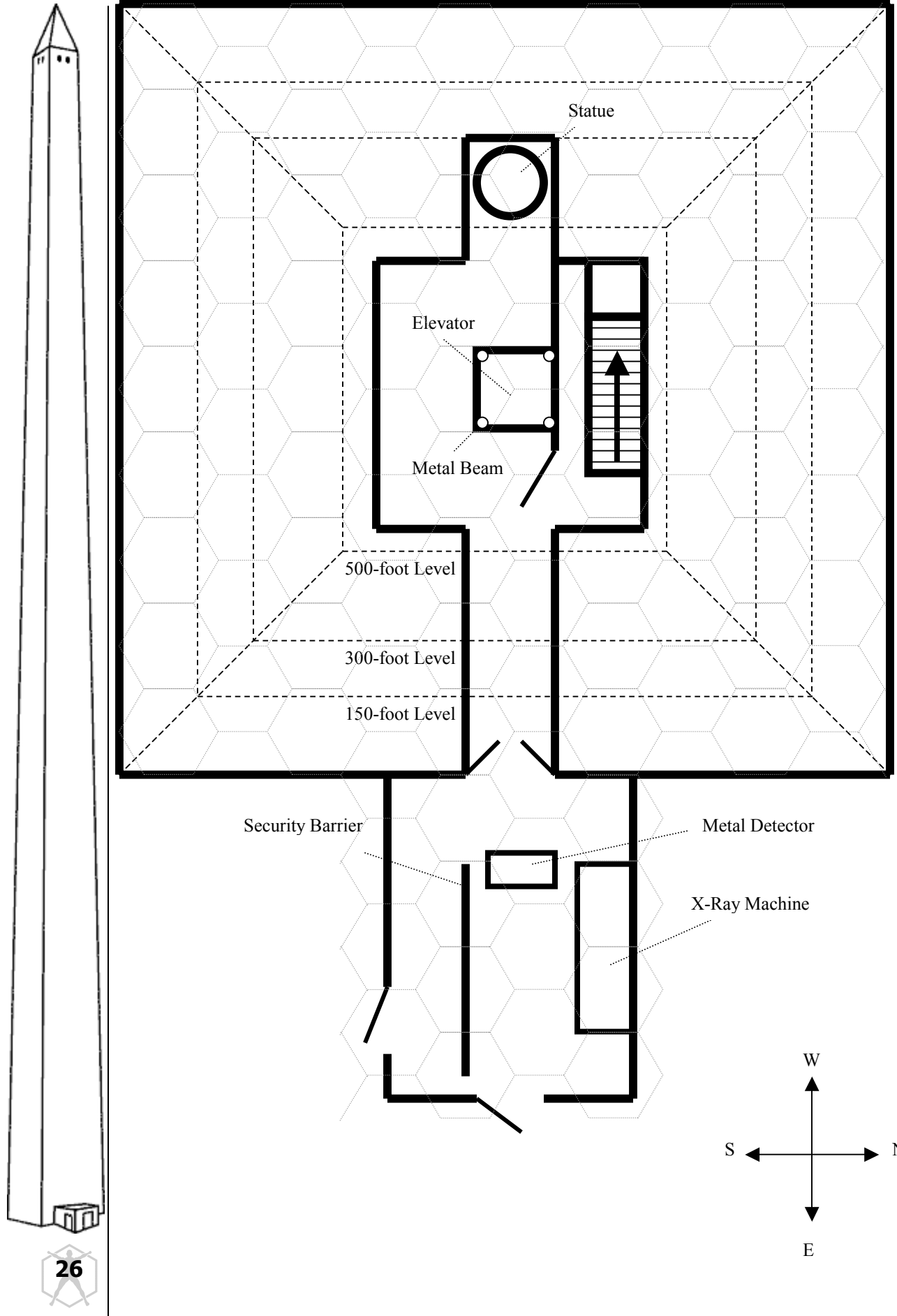
The Washington Monument is the most visible landmark in the Washington D. C. metropolitan area, and it can be seen for miles.

I hope that GMs find the information I have presented in the article to be useful, and that I've included enough information for GMs to want to incorporate a scenario, which includes a combat at the Washington Monument into their campaigns. I also hope that GMs will continue to look for ways to keep combats fresh and interesting for their players.

DISTANCES FROM THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT

<u>Landmark</u>	<u>Hexes</u>
The White House	475"
The Jefferson Memorial	480"
The J. Edgar Hoover Building, FBI Headquarters	560"
The National Air and Space Museum	680"
The Lincoln Memorial	690"
The U. S. Capitol	1245"
Union Station	1325"
The Pentagon	1385"
The Library of Congress	1445"
The Supreme Court	1480"





Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting

by Mike Surbrook

The World Of Martial Arts Action Cinema

In order to better understand the martial arts action/adventure genre as presented in *Ninja Hero*, one needs to understand the origins of the genre itself. This article will take a brief look at the one media most responsible for the bulk of this genre: Hong Kong cinema. Starting with a brief history of the Hong Kong film industry, it will then take a longer look at selected Hong Kong cinema actors and directors, as well as highlight notable Hong Kong martial arts action films.

A SHORT HISTORY OF HONG KONG ACTION CINEMA

The first known Hong Kong movie was a filmed in 1909. Titled *To Steal a Roasted Duck*, it had a Shanghai cast and director, and an American backer. From these meager beginnings, Hong Kong would eventually become the third largest film producer in the world, at its height releasing over 200 movies a year.

It should be pointed out that Hong Kong, like Hollywood, produces films in all genres, but it's specifically the martial arts genre we are concerned with here. That said, the origin of Hong Kong's martial arts and action movie industry can be found in a series of 99 black-and-white films about the famous Chinese folk hero Wong Fei Hong. The first of these films, titled *The True Story of Wong Fei Hong*, was filmed in 1949. Starring Kwan Tak Hing as martial arts master Wong Fei Hong, the film was a great success, and as stated, spawned 98 sequels, finally ending its run in the early 1970s. These films set the groundwork for the modern Hong Kong film industry, as many of the current crop of directors and film stars can trace their cinema lineage (in one way or another) directly to these movies.

The modern era of Hong Kong cinema (from an action standpoint) started in 1970, with the appearance of the Shaw Brothers Studios first kung fu film. Titled *Vengeance*, it announced the Shaw Brothers' entry into the martial arts genre, a move that allowed them to virtually dominate the market for several years. Due to their near-monopoly of the film market, the Shaw Brothers only real competition at this time was Golden Harvest film studios.

Formed in 1970, Golden Harvest is still in existence today, while the Shaw Brothers have vanished from the film industry to concentrate on television. They are responsible for producing

many of Hong Kong's best action films, and in 1971, signed a young man to a film deal that would set Golden Harvest firmly in the forefront of the martial arts genre. That man was Bruce Lee, and in a mere four films, he would change the style of Hong Kong cinema forever.

Bruce Lee's first film was titled *The Big Boss*, and it was a smash hit. Lee quickly made several follow-up moves, but tragically died before the release of his most famous film, *Enter the Dragon*.

With the death of Lee, studios scrambled to find a successor. Numerous imitators were introduced, with names like Bruce Li, Bruce Leung, Conan Lee, Dragon Lee, and Bruce Ree. One would-be Bruce Lee replacement was a man by the name of Jackie Chan. Chan, who failed utterly in the studio's attempts to have him fill Lee's shoes, eventually decided that if he was to make it as a star, he'd have to do everything *different* in style from Bruce Lee. So, he made a pair of movies, *Drunken Master* and *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow*, which set the industry on its ear. These two films weren't just kung fu movies – they were kung fu *comedies*!

In 1984, Jackie Chan further invigorated the Hong Kong film industry by dispensing with the idea of the period martial arts film. Instead, he set his movies in the modern day, or near to it. His first such film, *Project A*, set in turn-of-the-century Hong Kong, was a huge hit, and firmly set Chan onto the path of being the biggest film star in the world. Then, in 1986, he single-handedly created an entirely new genre of martial arts film, the kung fu police film, with his release of *Police Story*.

Jackie Chan wasn't the only one revolutionizing the film industry. In 1983, a young filmmaker named Tsui Hark released a movie entitled *Zu: Warriors of the Magic Mountain*. It was the first Hong Kong film to feature fairly modern special effects techniques, and encouraged Hark to create his own film studio, Film Workshop. A place where directors could find an outlet for their creative ideas, Film Workshop studios has been responsible for some of the most innovative Hong Kong films to date, including the classic *A Chinese Ghost Story*, as well as the epic series *Once Upon a Time in China*.

Another person to burst onto the martial arts scene in the mid-1980s was a young Mainland Chinese martial arts master by the name of Jet Li. A champion of wu shu, who performed before Richard Nixon at the age of nine, Jet Li quickly attracted attention for his phenomenal martial arts skill. Although his early films played

to mixed reviews, Li's fame was assured when he was tapped to play the legendary Wong Fei Hong in Tsui Hark's *Once Upon a Time in China*. Since then, Li has gone on to become one of the most well-known action stars in the world, and has even broken into the American film market, appearing in a number of Hollywood action films.

With the Communist takeover of Hong Kong in 1997, the Hong Kong film industry has been shattered. Some directors and actors moved to Australia, while others, such as John Woo, Chow Yun Fat, and Jet Li, came to America. Jackie Chan, on the other hand, is still in Hong Kong, and has no intention of leaving. Currently, Hong Kong is still making movies, but not quite the way it used to. Fortunately, it seems that Hollywood is slowly starting to accept some of the common conventions of the Hong Kong film style, and the 1999 blockbuster hit, *The Matrix*, proved that one could combine Hong Kong's *wuxia* (a.k.a. "flying men") martial arts style into an American film and succeed.

Selected Actors And Directors

The Hong Kong film industry has produced quite a few notable directors and actors, most of whom people in the West have never heard of. The latter half of the '90s saw a trickle of talent from Hong Kong come to Hollywood, starting with John Woo directing such films as *Hard Target*, *Broken Arrow*, and *Face/Off*. It was the release of Jackie Chan's *Rumble in the Bronx* that really opened the gates, however, and caused audiences in America to become much more aware of what Hong Kong had to offer. For those wishing to know what to look for when trying to decide what to rent or buy, the following list should help.

BRIGITTE LIN CHING-HSIA

Born in Taiwan, Brigitte Lin had a twenty-year filmmaking career that finally came to an end in 1994. Discovered in 1971, she appeared in over 100 films, with one of her major breakthrough roles being in Tsui Hark's *Zu: Warriors of the Magic Mountain*. It was her role as Asia the Invincible in the film *Swordsman II* that made her a superstar, however, with probably her best performance being in the beautifully shot film *The Bride With White Hair*.

Preferring a sword or a whip to her fists, Brigitte Lin appeared in a number of martial arts films. Some of her best include: *Ashes of Time*, *The Bride With White Hair I & II*, *Dragon Inn*, *Swordsman II & III* (a.k.a. *East is Red*), and *Zu: Warriors of the Magic Mountain*.

BRUCE LEE

Even now, nearly 30 years after his death, Bruce Lee's name is still synonymous with the

martial arts. He helped define the martial arts movie genre in the early '70s, and his appearance in what is possibly the most popular martial arts movie ever made, *Enter the Dragon*, firmly put him at the forefront of martial arts action heroes. Such is his everlasting fame and popularity that only in the past few years have actors such as Jackie Chan and Jet Li managed to eclipse Bruce Lee's name in the United States.

Bruce Lee was born Lee Jun Fan in San Francisco's Chinatown on November 27, 1940. At the age of three months, Bruce left the United States when his father returned to Hong Kong, where Bruce grew up. It was there that Bruce received his only formal instruction in the martial arts, and for five years he trained in Wing Chun Kung Fu with Master Yip Man.

When he was 18, Bruce returned to America, attending college in Seattle. It was here that he began to teach others martial arts, starting with instruction in "gong fu." Eventually, Bruce married Linda Emery, and moved to Oakland, where he opened his first official school. By this time, Bruce felt trapped by the limitations of Wing Chun and other martial arts, and began to develop his own style, which he called Jeet Kune Do, "the way of the intercepting fist."

Ultimately, Bruce decided that one could not teach Jeet Kune Do in any form of regimented manner, and began to focus on the film industry.

After making a series of highly successful movies, Bruce died suddenly on July 20, 1973, at the age of 32. His death touched off a series of wild rumors and conspiracy theories, most of which had to do with Bruce being murdered by Chinese kung fu masters in response to Bruce's teaching martial arts to Westerners. In reality, his death was caused by a cerebral edema triggered by an allergic reaction to aspirin. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the premiere of his most popular film, *Enter the Dragon*. Bruce Lee is buried in Seattle, Washington.

Bruce starting acting at a young age, appearing in a number of minor Hong Kong films in the early and mid-'50s. His appearance at a 1964 Los Angeles exhibition of the martial arts resulted in his landing the role of Kato in the American TV series *The Green Hornet*. A number of other minor roles followed, including a notable appearance in the film *Marlowe*, where he kicked apart James Garner's office.

Realizing that racial prejudice would never allow him to break into the upper ranks of Hollywood, Bruce left for Hong Kong. His first film was *The Big Boss*, and it was an instant success. He followed this up with *Fist of Fury* and *Return of the Dragon*, both of which did quite well. In 1973, he starred in a joint Hollywood-Hong Kong production titled *Enter the Dragon*, which ended up as the highest grossing martial arts movie made until the

release of Jean Claude von Damme's film *Bloodsport*. When he died, Bruce was involved in a fifth film titled *Game of Death*, which ended up being released in 1978 and featured scenes with a poorly done Bruce Lee-impersonator.

Although none of Bruce's films fit the Hong Kong *wuxia* mold (Bruce himself disdained the use of spring boards and wires when performing stunts), his films are important to the evolution of Hong Kong action cinema. He revolutionized the martial arts movie genre, and helped spark a new wave of action stars. At the very least, one should see *Enter the Dragon*.

JACKIE CHAN

Jackie Chan is without a doubt *the* king of the action film genre. His films regularly set box-office records all around the Pacific rim, and he is possibly the most popular film star in the world. A great deal of his success can be attributed to his incredible acrobatic prowess – gained as a result of intensive training at the China Drama Academy – and the fact that Jackie performs *all* of his own stunts (one of which almost ended his life!).

Born in Hong Kong in 1954 to very poor parents, Jackie was sold to Yu Jim Yuen of the Peking Opera Academy at the age of seven. There he was taught such skills as acrobatics, dance, singing, wu shu, and the use of period Chinese weapons. One thing he did not learn was how to read or write, a skill he didn't pick up until he was much older.

While enrolled in the Peking Opera Academy, Jackie became part of a troupe of child actors called The Seven Little Fortunes. This group included Jackie himself, as well as Samo Hung, Yuen Biao, and perennial film villain Yuen Wah. After graduation, The Seven Little Fortunes, who actually numbered about 14 people, retained their ties, and would continue to work together on films in the future.

Jackie's initial foray into the world of Hong Kong cinema was less than spectacular. He appeared in a number of films as a child actor, although neither his performances nor the films were very memorable. He then appeared in two Bruce Lee films, *Fist of Fury* and *Enter the Dragon*. In the former, Bruce kicks Jackie through a window (He was acting as a stunt double.) and in the second, Bruce breaks Jackie's neck. After Bruce's death, Jackie was touted as "the next Bruce Lee" and appeared in a number of formulaic kung fu movies, all of which were pretty forgettable. Finally, in 1978, Jackie would star in a pair of films that would change his career, and the martial arts genre, forever.

Snake in the Eagle's Shadow and *Drunken Master* were a first for the martial arts film world: kung fu comedies. Both were highly successful, and set off a wave of similar movies.

They also allowed Jackie a chance to make and direct films of his own, with mixed results. Finally, in the mid-'80s, Jackie once again hooked up with several of his fellow students from the Peking Opera Academy: Samo Hung and Yuen Biao. Together they made *Project: A* and *Wheels on Meals* and firmly established Jackie as the king of Hong Kong action films.

Not content to rest on his laurels, Jackie then single-handedly created an entire new film genre in 1986 with the film *Police Story*. The idea of a kung fu police drama was a totally new one, and it was a great success. It was widely imitated, and elements of the fight sequences in *Police Story* can even be found in Hollywood films, especially Brandon Lee's *Rapid Fire*. Currently, Jackie still lives in Hong Kong, where he has his own film studio. He still makes movies, and has finally broken the Hollywood barrier, appearing in a number of American made films, such as *Battlecreek Brawl* (a.k.a. *The Big Brawl*), *Cannonball Run*, *The Protector*, *Rush Hour*, *Shanghai Noon*, and most recently *Rush Hour II* and *The Tuxedo* (with *Shanghai Knights* in the works).

Jackie's movie list could go on forever. Recommended titles include: *Armor of God*, *Armor of God II: Operation Condor*, *City Hunter*, *Dragons Forever*, *Drunken Master II*, *Police Story*, *Project: A I & II*, *Rumble in the Bronx*, *Supercop*, *Twin Dragons*, and *Wheels on Meals*.

As with Bruce Lee, Jackie dislikes the use of wires and springboards in making his films. However, *City Hunter*, which is based off of the Japanese manga of the same name, does contain a sequence where Jackie and his opponent turn into several popular characters from the video fighting game *Street Fighter II*! Of the rest of the listed films, *Drunken Master II* is probably the one that interested viewers should try to find. It is possibly Jackie's best all-around film, and its release revitalized the period kung fu movie genre. Although it features minimal wirework, Jackie's "drunken boxing" sequences and use of furniture as weapons are perfect examples of genre elements.

JET LI

Jet Li is without a doubt one of the top martial artists in the world today, and has risen to be a top Hong Kong film star as well. Born Li Lian Jie in Beijing, China in 1963, Jet Li first started practicing Wu Shu at the age of eight as part of a State-run exercise program. His skill was such that he was kept on after the initial 30-day program ended and was placed into a special Wu Shu class that was run after his normal schooling. After winning his first competition at the age of nine, he found he only had to attend school for a half a day (Which he thought was

great – what kid wouldn't?) and eventually ended up training in wu shu five to six days a week at eight hours a day. During this time, he won several State competitions, and even performed for President Richard Nixon on the White House lawn in 1974.

In the late '80s, Jet Li began to appear in Hong Kong action films, and quickly rose to prominence as *the* master of *wuxia* films. His martial skill and agility immediately made him an instant star, attracting attention not only in Hong Kong, but also around the world. With the Communist takeover of Hong Kong, Jet Li has begun to make his move into Hollywood, starring in *Lethal Weapon 4*, *Romeo Must Die*, *Kiss of the Dragon*, and the more recent *The One*.

Almost all of Jet Li's "period" films contain wuxia action. A short list includes: *Fong Sai Yuk I & II*, *Kung Fu Cult Master*, *Last Hero in China*, *Once Upon a Time in China 1-3 and 6*, *Swordsman 2*, and *Tai Chi Master*. In addition, one should not miss *Fist of Legend*, Jet Li's remake of Bruce Lee's film *Fist of Fury*. Considered by some to be the best martial arts film made to date, the fight scenes in *Fist of Legend* heavily inspired the makers of *The Matrix*.

MICHELLE YEOH

A native of Malaysia, Michelle started her career as Michelle Khan and studied ballet in England before getting into the film industry. Her first film was *Yes, Madam*, with American martial artist Cynthia Rothrock. A huge success, she followed that film up with *Magnificent Warriors* and *Royal Warriors*, before marrying Dickson Poon and retiring. Much like Bruce Lee before her, she managed to take the film industry by storm with a mere four films.

Divorcing Poon several years later, Michelle returned to the screen as Michelle Yeoh and starred in *Police Story 3* (better known in the United States as *Supercop*). She has since gone on to star in a wide range of films, and has even begun to break into the American film industry, with her appearance as a Chinese intelligence officer in the James Bond film *Tomorrow Never Dies*. Motion pictures that she has appeared in that are relevant to the genre in question are: *Butterfly and Sword*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Executioners*, *The Heroic Trio*, *Tai Chi Master*, and *Wing Chun*.

SAMO HUNG KAM-BO

The eldest of the Seven Little Fortunes, Samo joined Yu Jim Yuen's Peking Opera Academy in 1960 at the age of ten. Nicknamed "Big Brother Big" due to his size and age, Samo excelled at his training. Upon leaving the school, he went to work as the burly bad guy, appearing

in a number of films. He also taught his fellow actors and stuntmen how to fight for the camera and eventually worked as a fight choreographer. One of his more interesting roles at this point was to be the Shaolin student that Bruce Lee duels at the beginning of *Enter the Dragon*.

In 1978, Samo started directing his own films, and began to make movies in a wide variety of genres, including traditional martial arts, comedies, supernatural thrillers, and modern day action. Most, if not all, featured some sort of kung fu, and most were highly successful. Although never the huge international success that fellow Fortune Jackie Chan is, Samo managed to achieve critical acclaim in Hong Kong itself. Recently, Samo has begun to work in America, starring in the TV series *Marshal Law*.

Samo's movies cover all genres and styles. Some of his more notable films include: *Dragons Forever*, *Eastern Condors*, *Enter the Dragon*, *Pedicab Driver*, *Project: A*, *Shanghai Express*, *Spooky Encounters*, *Wheels on Meals*, and *Zu: Warriors of the Magic Mountain*.

TSUI HARK

Originally born in Vietnam, Tsui Hark (pronounced "Choi Hawk") studied film at the University of Texas before returning to Hong Kong to make movies. He broke new ground with his effects-laden *Zu: Warriors of the Magic Mountain*, and then went on to produce the highly successful film *A Chinese Ghost Story*. Firmly cementing his reputation as a director willing to break new ground, as well as experiment with new special effects and styles, Tsui Hark's films have proven to be very popular. Although *A Chinese Ghost Story* is probably his best-known film, and is considered a classic, his best stint as a director has been his *Once Upon a Time in China* film series, which details the adventures of folk hero Wong Fei Hong in turn-of-the-Century China.

Tsui Hark credits as director and producer include: *The Blade*, *Burning Paradise*, *A Chinese Ghost Story 1-3*, *Dragon Inn*, *Green Snake*, *Once Upon a Time in China 1-6*, *Swordsman II*, *Wicked City*, and *Zu: Warriors of the Magic Mountain*.

YUEN WOO-PING

Trained in kung fu and Peking Opera by his father, Woo-Ping first entered into films in the late '60s, working as a stuntman. In 1971, he started working with director Ng See Yuen, and did the fight choreography for almost all his films. In 1978, he graduated to directing, starting with the groundbreaking movies *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* and *Drunken Master*. His culmination as a fight choreographer probably came with the Jet Li film *Fist of Legend*. So

impressive were the action sequences that Woo-ping was asked to work on the fight scenes for the Hollywood film *The Matrix*. After spending approximately five months with the film's stars (none of which knew any martial arts) Woo-ping produced what is possibly some of Hollywood's most impressive fight sequences to date.

Films that Yuen Woo-ping has worked on, as either director or fight choreographer include: *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Drunken Master, Eastern Condors, Fist of Legend, Iron Monkey, Last Hero in China, The Matrix, Once Upon a Time in China, Snake in the Eagle's Shadow, and Wing Chun*.

OTHER STARS

As you can see the list of people to look out for in Hong Kong cinema goes on and on. A short listing of other actors common to the *wuxia* genre includes:

- Donnie Yen, an American born martial artist and star of such films as *Dragon Inn* and *Iron Monkey*.
- Kwan Tak Hing, who was Hong Kong's first action star, appearing as folk hero Wong Fei Hong in over 100 films.
- Lau Kar Leung, actor and director, who can trace his martial arts lineage directly to the original Wong Fei Hong.
- Ringo Lam, usually known as a director of John Woo-styled modern day action films, but also maker of such period movies as *Burning Paradise*.
- Yuen Biao, another of the Seven Little Fortunes and frequent costar of Jackie Chan and Sammo Hung.
- Yuen Wah, yet another of the Seven Little Fortunes who appears constantly as the film's villain.
- Yukari Oshima, an actress that has starred in a wide range of martial arts movies, both good and bad.

SELECTED FILMS

A Man Called Hero: One of a new breed of Hong Kong martial arts films, this film concerns the life of the title character, Hero, and his attempt to live a peaceful life in the face of great adversity. *A Man Called Hero* is notable for its extensive use of computer-generated effects, a distinction it shares with the film *Stormriders* (see below). Although the martial arts sequences are minimal in number, they are very imaginative, and feature incredible superhuman powers and abilities. The film is also notable for its final fight sequence, which is staged on (and in) the Statue of Liberty.

Ashes of Time: A beautiful, if confusing, film, *Ashes of Time* is a surreal story of one man's experiences living in a small oasis on the edge of a desert. The movie has a nonlinear

series of plots (one reason why it is so confusing) but this is balanced by its gorgeous cinematography.

The Blade: This Tsui Hark film is an epic tale of revenge and a search for identity. It has wonderful sets and great costumes, as well as some extremely graphic fight scenes. The film's plot is slightly hard to follow, but the final duel, between a one-armed swordsman and the film's main villain, is just amazing.

The Bride With White Hair 1 & 2: The first of these two films is visually stunning, telling the story of two lovers doomed by clan affiliations to be forever apart. The sequel is less inspired, and concentrates more on humor than story.

Butterfly and Sword: Also known as *Comet, Butterfly and Sword*, this film stars Michelle Yeoh, and features a great deal of *wuxia* action, including a scene where one character fires himself down the road from his own bow! The following exchange from the film probably sums up the spirit of the martial arts action genre better than anything else: "Why don't you come in by the front door?" "I can't - I'm a martial artist." Oddly enough, sections of this film were used in an adult martial arts movie titled *Slaves of the Sword*.

A Chinese Ghost Story 1-3: *A Chinese Ghost Story* was produced by Tsui Hark, master of the strange, and is considered a classic of the genre. It has ghosts, flying swordsmen, a 100-foot tongue (I kid you not!), and a Taoist priest who displays amazing magic powers. The sequels basically repeat the initial story line, although with slightly different characters and events.

A Chinese Odyssey I: Pandora's Box & A Chinese Odyssey II: Cinderella: These two films offer a highly interesting (and unusual) take on the story of Songoku, the Monkey King, and his travel to the East in search of enlightenment.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: Possibly the greatest martial arts movie ever made, *Crouching Tiger; Hidden Dragon* is the story of a stolen magic sword, and the efforts of three women to possess it. The film stars Chow Yun-Fat, Michelle Yeoh, and Zhang Ziyi, and features some absolutely breathtaking wirework and action scenes. The film moves well, with a fairly easy to follow and understand plot, and is without a doubt a beautiful film, with landscapes and vistas that are visually staggering.

Executioners: The sequel to *The Heroic Trio* (see below), this film chronicles the further adventures of Invisible Woman, Thiefcatcher, and Wonder Woman.

Dragon Inn: Starring Brigitte Lin, Maggie Cheung, and Donnie Yen, this remake of a 1960s film of the same name features extensive intrigue in and around a large inn on the edge of the

Mongolian frontier. The film is mainly noted for the combat striptease sequence between Brigitte Lin and Maggie Cheung, although the final fight scene, in which Donnie Yen's leg is flayed to the bone, is also quite spectacular.

Drunken Master II: Jackie Chan's big-budget sequel to his original groundbreaking hit *Drunken Master*, *Drunken Master II* follows the exploits of folk hero Wong Fei Hong as he battles foreign oppression. This film is notable for the sequence where Chan is kicked into a bed of live coals, a scene made all the more spectacular due to the knowledge that Chan does all his own stunts. Recently, this film was dubbed into English, and released in the United States as *Legend of the Drunken Master*.

Duel to the Death: According to this film, every few years the best swordsman in Japan meets the best swordsman in China for a duel to see whose style is superior. This time, the Japanese wish to rig the results. Aside from extensive wire-assisted sequences, as well as a duel staged on a vertical cliff face, *Duel to the Death* is practically crawling with ninja, including: ninja librarians, ninja photocopiers, ninja on kites, a nude female ninja, giant ninja, and exploding ninja.

Fist of Legend: Possibly the best all-around kung fu film to be released yet, this Jet Li film is a remake of Bruce Lee's *Fists of Fury* (a.k.a. *Chinese Connection*). Set during the Japanese occupation of China, this film features excellent period sets, costumes, and furious kung fu action. It is also notable for its sympathetic treatment of several of the film's Japanese characters.

The Five Deadly Venoms: This old Shaw Brother film is notable for the wild and wonderful powers possessed by the five "venoms" (known as Centipede, Lizard, Scorpion, Snake, and Toad) of the film's title. Although an older film, it is still worth watching. It is also known as *Five Venoms*.

Flying Dagger: Also known by the title *The Flying Daggers*, this comical kung fu romp features a wide variety of bizarre powers and techniques. Worth watching, if only to see how silly the genre can get.

Fong Sai Yuk 1 & 2: Starring Jet Li, this series concerns the adventures of Chinese folk hero Fong Sai Yuk. It's full of extensive wire-assisted sequences and includes a fight staged upon the heads of a nearby crowd, as well as one on a towering pile of stacked benches!

The Heroic Trio: This movie mixes martial arts action with the "girls with guns" genre. It concerns the exploits of three women: Invisible Woman, Thiefcatcher, and Wonder Woman, in a very stylistic future in which 1990s motorcycles share the streets with 1940s cars. The wire scenes aren't as well done as usual, but this is

balanced by the film's wonderful bizarreness. Probably the most "over-the-top" sequence is where Wonder Woman launches herself and her motorcycle at a villain. What makes this so spectacular is that the bike is sent spinning *horizontally*, like a gigantic shuriken!

Iron Monkey: A "must see" for those interested in the *wuxia* genre, *Iron Monkey* is the story of a doctor who fights oppression and corrupt government officials. It features a number of excellent fight scenes, as well as a number of interesting and creative "special techniques."

A Kid From Tibet: Starring Yuen Biao (who has appeared in numerous films with Jackie Chan) this movie is an amusing "adaptation" of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. It's worth watching in order to see the powers displayed by Biao's character, as well as those of the main villain and his sister.

Kung Fu Cult Master: This almost incomprehensible martial arts "epic" stars Jet Li and Samo Hung. It is the story of a boy named Mo-kai, who is searching for the clans responsible of the death of his parents, and which left him wounded and near death. Along the way, he learns the "Great Solar Stance" and enters in to a number of incredible battles in which entire armies can be seen fighting on screen. *Kung Fu Cult Master* is a visually incredible film, filled to the brim with bizarre and unusual and powers. It represents *wuxia* martial arts action at its most over-the-top, with powers and abilities far beyond what most people expect from the genre. The plot, however, is virtually impossible to follow, and the film ends in such a way that one is left waiting for the expected sequel, which was never made.

Last Hero in China: A semi-comical film, this movie features Jet Li as Chinese folk hero Wong Fei Hong. Tricked into moving his school next door to a brothel, he also has to deal with a corrupt Western medicine supplier, as well as rebellious Boxers out to overthrow the government. Humiliated in a lion dance by a team wearing a centipede costume, Wong Fei Hong leaves his school to recover, and develops a new fighting style by watching a chicken kill a giant centipede. He returns, and dressed as a chicken himself, fights the centipede team again.

Once Upon a Time in China 1-6: This film series by Tsui Hark details the adventures of the famous Chinese folk hero Wong Fei Hong. In the course of the film series, he fights bandits, foreign oppressors, pirates, secret Chinese societies, and even journeys to America! These films are very watchable, and give an interesting view of turn-of-the-Century China. The wire-assisted sequences are spectacular, especially in the first film, where Wong Fei Hong battles a fellow kung fu master in a warehouse, tossing

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bales and ladders about with wild abandon. The film is also a good example of how a Game Master can portray DNPCs and use them to get a Player Character into all sorts of trouble.

The Stormriders: Set in mythic ancient China, *The Stormriders* is a martial arts fantasy of the highest order. It is a fast-moving film, with spectacular computer-assisted special effects and characters. Made by many of the same people responsible for *A Man Called Hero*, it is a visually impressive film, and an excellent example of how a high-powered martial arts campaign should look.

Swordsman 1-3: These three films are only loosely connected. The first two deal with traveling swordsman Ling (played by Sam Hui in the *Swordsman I* and Jet Li in *Swordsman II*) and his female companion Kiddo. Caught up in a struggle over a scroll containing information on a powerful martial arts technique, the two battle evil eunuchs, soldiers, other clans, and the powerful and deadly Asia the Invincible. To make matters worse, Asia learns the technique, and in *Swordsman II* is discovered to be slowly turning into a woman as his... err... her power grows. Played by Brigitte Lin, Asia doesn't survive the ending of *Swordsman II*, but returned anyway in *Swordsman III*, better known as *East is Red*. In the third film, Asia comes back from the grave to wreak havoc on all the impostors using her name.

The second *Swordsman* film basically redefined the genre and contains some of the best visual wire-assisted stunts ever to grace the screen. It is a must see for those interested in seeing exactly what is meant by "wire-fu."

Tai Chi Master: Starring Jet Li and Michelle Yeoh, this film is the story of two Buddhist monks cast out of their monastery to make their way in the world. One becomes a vicious general serving a corrupt eunuch. The other (Li) joins the rebels to fight oppression. After seeing all of his allies slain, Li's character goes insane, recovers, develops the art of Tai Chi, and defeats his former fellow monk in combat.

Wing Chun: This Michelle Yeoh film purports to tell the story of Yim Wing Chun, developer of the kung fu style that bears her name. Although it features little of the Wing Chun style, it has plenty of otherwise fast and furious action to make up for it. It is best noted for a fight sequence staged on top of a spear thrust into a wall.

Zu: Warriors of the Magic Mountain: I can't say enough good things about this movie, even if it is slightly incomprehensible. Basically, it tells the story of a soldier (played by Yuen Biao), who escapes from the local fighting and ends up wandering about the magic mountain of Zu, which is home to a whole host of unusual

characters. Tsui Hark's first big film, it was a direct inspiration for *Big Trouble in Little China*. Starring a whole host of Hong Kong actors, including Brigitte Lin, Sam Hung, and Yuen Biao, *Zu* has some absolutely amazing fight scenes, including one where the Evil Master uses a staff made from a length of lightning!



Rayguns And Rocketships

by Leah Watts

Introduction

Commodore Powell's steely gaze swept over his command crew. "We've got them at last. Battle stations, men." The crew jumped to their posts, as eager as their commander to end the murderous attacks on Terran spaceships once and for all. One by one, each station reported "Ready for action, sir." The radium torpedoes, the lambda-beam projectors, the targeting fields, the defensive zu-shields, all were ready for use. The enemy spaceship was more heavily armed, but Powell was confident his crew's morale and drive would tip the balance their way.

Science fiction is often thought of as modern, but its roots go back to the late 1800s. It has followed many different paths as it developed, from epic space opera to cyberpunk dystopia. One interesting but little-followed path is the pulp science fiction story. High on action if a little short on factual science, pulp SF is a natural for gaming. A GM who wants to run pulp SF will of course need to be familiar with the original stories, but this article should also help him.

CAMPAIGN CONSTRUCTION

A pulp SF game works from different premises than a modern SF game. Many scientists of the period assumed that other planets would be basically Earthlike, and many pulp authors made the same assumption. When designing planets for the heroes to visit, the GM of a pulp SF game doesn't have to worry about differing planetary conditions. Unless you are creating a major race that needs non-Earth conditions, you can give all the planets that come into play Earthlike atmosphere, gravity close to Earth's, and any other similarities you need.

Culturally and politically, planets tend to be unified. There's one government for Deneb, and all the Denebians have the same basic culture and language. GMs should feel free to swipe cultures from Earth history or legends; that's what the pulp authors tended to do. In the case of Earth, the political and social structure is First World, normally American, since most of the authors were American. You can use non-Caucasian humans as characters, but if Lieutenant Uhura had been assigned to a pulp *Enterprise* she would not have had a Swahili name – English was the default language of Earth.

Some pulp publishers preferred aliens be used only as enemies, others allowed their authors to use alien characters as good guys. In a game, this means the GM can decide if he wants to allow alien PCs or not. However, even if alien characters were present it was rare for the Strong-Jawed Hero to be anything but human. Pulp science fiction tended to assume humans would be the dominant race. It would be boring for the alien characters to always be in support roles in a game, but that's how they often were used in the pulps. A workable compromise would be to only allow a few alien PCs into the game; then even though each character gets time in the spotlight the game as a whole would focus more on the humans.

Whenever a pulp game is suggested, the questions of racism and sexism come up. Yes, the time period was biased by modern standards. Buck Rogers didn't go after McPherson The Merciless, after all; Ming came straight out of the "Yellow Menace" pulps (even if the occasional colorist gave him green skin). On the other hand, pulp heroes themselves tended to be more open-minded. The Galactic Patrol of the Lensman series is open to all races that are committed to Civilization. John Carter was remarkably tolerant of the many races of Barsoom, though he's closer to space fantasy than SF.

"Racist" and "Sexist/Misogynist" are still viable Psychological Limitations for a character in one of these games, though they will need some editing. A GM would also be justified in not allowing them for PCs because they are non-heroic (and likely to cause interparty strife). "Racist" would refer to those from different planets, rather than subsets of the human race. If aliens only exist as Bug-Eyed Monsters and targets for the PCs blasters, it's not much of a disadvantage. If humanity is allied with several other races in a Galactic Union, it's worth more points. A "Sexist" character who puts women on a pedestal and tries to protect them gets no points because he's following cultural expectations for a gentleman. (This does not constitute permission for male PCs to refuse to let female PCs do anything important.) However, a character who publicly demeans or insults women will have every *real* man in the area, PC and NPC, tripping over themselves to "teach him some manners." Reverse sexism (women seeing men as incompetent or inferior) won't be seen unless a given race possesses it as a whole, and will certainly be worth both "direct" disadvantage points and a negative Reputation. For example, if a GM is basing a planet on the Amazon legends, visitors from other planets will

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be surprised to find women exclusively in charge of the government and men exclusively in charge of child care. A character from that planet who travels to others will have trouble with radically different cultural mores.

HIGH TECH AND RETRO TECH

If your players think the original *Star Trek* looks far too primitive for a spacefaring culture, they're going to have problems in a pulp SF game. The science in pulp science fiction was trimmed down to the basics. This makes it easier for the GM to justify things like faster-than-light travel or death rays; but could frustrate players used to hard science fiction.

Vacuum tubes and ray guns were the name of the game. Miniaturization only existed if the characters were special agents, and even then wasn't a high priority – partly because the technology of the 1930's didn't lend itself easily to being miniaturized. A pocket-sized doomsday device would have been seen as a joke; use a few extra hexes on the map and make the Stellar Disintegrator Ray large enough to need its own room. Use dials and switches instead of push-button controls, use meters (with indicator needles) instead of LCD readouts. It was the future, but it was the future of a simpler time.

Computers haven't been invented yet, so any calculations needed to plot a course or repair the engines will have to be done with a slide rule or the Lightning Calculator talent. The term "computer" was around, but it would refer to a human – the British Foreign Service used the job title "signals computer" for their cipher clerks. Transistors haven't been invented yet, though since vacuum tubes could handle current loads that would turn a transistor into charcoal this isn't a real disadvantage for a pulp SF electrician. Radar is in its infancy and a classified military secret as well, though pulp authors invented a range of "rays" that do the same job.

GMs can use atomic energy in their games. While the first controlled chain reaction wasn't until 1939 (and the first working reactor came later), the theory was established by Niels Bohr in 1913. If using atomic energy in your campaign, one thing that must be remembered is that the side effects of radiation were unknown or unrecognized at that time. All atomic pile engines and radium beams were clean and environmentally safe. Also remember atomic energy was the "snake oil" of the SF pulps. It could be used in many ways that are not scientifically possible, to produce effects that radioactive materials can't do. For example, the "divine" radioactive aura that shields the kings of Anacreon in *Foundation*, while meant to kill anyone attacking the king, neither kills the king himself nor contaminates his environment. (If

writing up a spacesuit or environment suit for the game, don't bother with LS: Safe Environment - High Radiation.)

CHARACTER CREATION

As with any other pulp game, pulp SF is Heroic level. Player Characters will normally be built on 75 Base Points and 75 Disadvantage Points (maximum 25 points from any one category of Disadvantages). Equipment does not cost points; it would either be obtained with money or issued by the characters' bosses. For some games, the GM might wish to set starting points at 100 Base and 50 in Disadvantages. This would be a good setting for a game where all the characters are part of an elite unit, as such characters would logically be limited in what disadvantages they could take and still be eligible for that unit. Normal Characteristic Maxima should be used, though it would be possible for a PC to go over the limit with a good rationale. Eugenics theory was popular in the 1920's and 1930's, so a character could be the product of eugenic breeding and thus smarter/stronger/fill in the blank than normal people. However, clear this with the GM first, as many people find eugenics theory offensive.

If the game allows alien PCs, the 150 point limit could be a problem. Some of the "alien abilities" from the pulps would be expensive in a Hero game; the "Sense of Perception" from the Lensman books comes to mind. (N-Ray Perception itself isn't that expensive in 5th edition, but enough levels of Telescopic to use it at planetary ranges would be. MegaScale isn't precise enough for what the Sense of Perception does in those books.) The obvious solution is to tone down alien abilities to a reasonable point cost. An alien character with 20-30 points in racial abilities (leaving 120-130 points for everything else) won't be quite as good at his other skills as a human, but should still be able to contribute. If you want the higher-cost abilities in your game, you will probably want to go with the "Powerful" or "Very Powerful" point levels. Allowing alien characters to go over the point cap with extra disadvantages would work, but can cause resentment on the part of those players running humans and would put more of an emphasis on the aliens than fits the genre.

While professional options for females were limited in the 1930's, they were expanding. Female PCs can take almost any job available in the game setting. In a typical pulp story, the sole exception to this rule would be the military. However, pulp SF was not so cut and dried. Wilma Deering took more of a combat role than the modern US military allows for its female soldiers. If the game will be mostly or entirely military, the GM has several options:

1) All PCs must be male. This would give the military feel, but works best if the players are all male. Cross-gender gaming creeps out many gamers, so this may not work in a mixed gaming group.

2) Female PCs are limited to support positions, such as medical or communications. This would also keep the military feel, but could produce bored players. The GM would need to be sure the game allowed the female characters to take an active role, instead of only “opening hailing frequencies” or prepping for surgery.

3) Only exceptional female characters can join the military, but they can join in any role. Female PCs are by definition exceptional, so no further justification needs to be made. This may be the most flexible option for the GM.

Almost all the skills would be available, with the exception of Computer Programming and any related KSeS or PSeS. The use of some skills will be limited by the time period – no DNA therapy for inherited diseases, no matter how high your character’s SS: Medicine roll is. Oriental martial arts were not widely known during the 1930’s, so characters with Martial Arts should either be aliens practicing their planet’s favored combat style or humans using Western combat styles or jujitsu (which was popularized in the 1920’s). The Depression had a severe impact on education, when the draft was reestablished in 1940 hundreds of thousands of potential recruits were rejected because they were functionally illiterate. However, in a pulp SF game literacy should be standard.

The sidebar on page 31 of the Fifth Edition rulebook includes a suggested list of Everyman skills for science fiction games. For a pulp SF game, consider using this list instead: Acting, Climbing, Concealment, Deduction, Native Language (4 point level with literacy), Paramedics, Persuasion, PS: Hobby, Job or Special Interest at 11-, Shadowing, Stealth, TF: Speedsters, and AK: Home Planet. The “Speedsters” referred to would either be ground-based vehicles analogous to cars or ground/air vehicles, depending on the general technology level.

The Perk Computer Link does not exist in these games. Anonymity is possible, but trickier to arrange. Instead of inserting a tailored computer virus by modem, the character would have to physically steal every single file on him from the filing cabinets of the Records Department (and don’t forget the older files in storage). Other Perks are available, though Vehicles and Bases should normally be bought with money instead of points.

Most of the Talents would be appropriate for a pulp game. The common convention that every race in the galaxy speaks English will limit the

need for Universal Translator, though if the GM isn’t using that convention it could come in handy.

For the most part, Powers should be limited to aliens and gadgets. The exceptions would be extra movement up to Normal Maxima, Find Weakness/Lack of Weakness, Enhanced Senses (bonuses to PER rolls only), the minor immunities under Life Support, Luck, and Missile Deflection (at low levels). If psionic aliens are going to be a frequent opponent, add Mental Defense (SFX: anti-psionic training) to the list.

All of the Disadvantages would be available to alien characters, though humans should avoid Susceptibility and Vulnerability without a very good justification.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

The characters are the crew of a merchant ship that is knocked off course by stellar turbulence. Their charts don’t cover this sector of space, and there doesn’t seem to be a navigational beacon in range, so it’s up to them to trace their way back – and if they can find a new market or two along the way, maybe their employers won’t be too irate about the shipment being late.

Ships entering the Alnarian asteroid belts don’t always come out. Is there something unusual about these belts that pilots can’t compensate for, or is something attacking the ships? The PCs are Space Navy personnel assigned to find out.

In a rare exception to normal practice, the Galactic Union decided to put a colony on a planet that does not have an oxygen-based atmosphere – it’s up to the GM if it has a toxic atmosphere or none at all. One of the colonists has developed Dome Disorder, a dangerous psychosis that affects some people when they are totally dependent on artificial life support systems, and is starting to sabotage colony equipment. The characters are other colonists who are among the first to suspect what’s really causing the recent “accidents,” and need to track down the saboteur before he breaks the airlocks or holes the dome, killing hundreds of people.



Danger Sense... Tingling!

by Ross Watson

Nearly every comic book reader in the known world has read a similar phrase at some point, usually in a thought balloon over Peter Parker's head. Thanks to the versatility of the *HERO System*, a hero you create can possess his own version of the "Spidey-sense" or even something completely new.

DANGER SENSE BASICS

At its most basic level, Danger Sense allows a hero to avoid losing half his DCV to a Surprise attack, if he succeeds with a PER Roll (he can buy bonuses to his Danger Sense PER Roll as part of the Talent). Spending more points expands the scope of the danger the character can sense, the area over which he can sense it, and even makes the Talent into a "sense" that functions automatically instead of having to be "turned on."

But Danger Sense isn't the only power that should come to mind when creating a character with powers that can detect threats to himself or others. Spider-Man, for example, can often tell if people he meets are planning to hurt him or those he loves... thus saving his dear old Aunt May. A character could build a similar power as Detect Hostile Intent. It may be possible to Link other Skills or Detects to Danger Sense, or simply to expand the scope of what the Detect that forms the basis of Danger Sense can perceive using the rules on page 105 of the *HERO System 5th Edition*. Examples include adding a "Detect Enemies" feature to Danger Sense, or Linking Analyze Combat Technique to Danger Sense. Characters could also have Lightning Reflexes or Combat Skill Levels which *Require A Danger Sense Roll* (-1/2).

Some characters' ability to detect danger seems to reveal far-off scenes of current (or possibly future) events, providing the hero with more specific information about the dangerous event. You can represent this as Clairsentience (possibly including Precognition); possible appropriate Limitations include *Vague And Unclear*, Linked (to Danger Sense), *Requires A Danger Sense Roll*, or the less restrictive form of *No Conscious Control* (-1). For sufficiently expansive danger-detection powers (such as the current Captain Marvel's "cosmic awareness"), you could also Link other Sense Powers (such as Find Weakness or N-Ray Perception) to Danger Sense, or have them *Require A Danger Sense Roll*.

As mentioned on page 63 of the *HERO System 5th Edition*, a character may purchase Discriminatory and or Analyze as modifiers to his Danger Sense, which gives him much more information about the nature of the threat. In

addition, a hero can define his Danger Sense as an Active, rather than a Passive Detect, which would allow him to make PER Rolls at his discretion to "scan" for danger (but this would, of course, require him to emit some sort of "pulse" that anyone with Danger Sense could perceive).

ACTIVATING DANGER SENSE

When does Danger Sense activate? Since the Talent is built as a form of Detect Danger, it's generally up to the GM to define what qualifies as "danger." A strict interpretation of the rules limits "danger" to "attacks," but obviously the concept of danger, and thus the scope of Danger Sense, extends beyond that.

Typically, the GM allows a hero to make a roll whenever an enemy is about to attack him, or some other threat (like an imminent avalanche) is about to affect him. Characters are not allowed to roll for extremely vague or inchoate dangers, or any danger outside of the Danger Sense's range. For example, a character doesn't get a Danger Sense roll whenever someone daydreams about hurting him, when a villain leaves his secret base with the intent of finding and hurting the character, or if someone dislikes him. Those situations are all too uncertain; there's no direct threat involved. On the other hand, when a villain who intends to harm the character gets within attack range, the character should get a Danger Sense roll. When the threat becomes direct, when the enemy is just about to make his first move and launch his attack, that's when the Danger Sense roll comes into play – just in time to let the character avoid being Surprised and/or hurt, in other words.

Depending on the nature of the character's powers and the special effect of his Danger Sense, the GM may allow other circumstances to trigger a Danger Sense roll. For example, a telepathic hero with Danger Sense Linked to his Telepathy could get a warning when someone nearby thinks about harming him. A mystic guardian hero with special "mystic senses" might get to roll whenever he's near any evil magic energy, which represents a danger to him.

Danger Sense can usually detect attacks bought with Power Modifiers such as *Time Delay*, *Trigger*, or *Gradual Effect*, but they may give the GM more circumstances to consider. A character who wanders into a minefield should probably get a Danger Sense roll (both before he enters and, if he fails that one, once he's inside the field), even though the "attack" hasn't actually occurred. In situations like these, the

GM must use his best judgment to decide when “danger” first arises (and if necessary, how long it lingers, so that a character who misses a roll can try again in a little while).

A fiendish villain opposing a hero known to have Danger Sense could create “false triggers” with Change Environment. A “haunted house,” for example, could be built to bombard a character with “dangerous” situations, masking the true threat of the villain who built the deathtrap. For its base cost, Change Environment can trigger Danger Sense and impose up to a +1 to the roll (the bonus making it more likely the character will detect “dangers” that aren’t really dangerous; it wouldn’t apply to the roll to detect the true danger the villain wants to hide). Additional penalties to the roll cost the same as for any other individual Sense: 2 Character Points per additional +1 to the roll. A character could also create a danger-deadened area that imposed *penalties* to the Danger Sense roll for the same cost.

SENSE GROUPS

According to its description in the *HERO System 5th Edition*, Danger Sense doesn’t simulate any Sense Group; in effect it’s a Sense Group all its own. Only powers bought specifically to affect Danger Sense can interfere with it – much like the narcotic gas the Green Goblin and Hobgoblin used to deaden Spider-Man’s spider-sense temporarily, or the combat computer the Beetle used to predict and analyze Spidey’s movements. If a character buys other Senses related to Danger Sense (such as Detect Enemies or Detect Hostile Intent), the GM may allow the character to place them in the “Danger Sense Group,” if appropriate.

Since Danger Sense is a Targeting Sense (albeit a somewhat restricted one), any Sense-Affecting Power bought to affect it must treat it as a Targeting Sense (making the Power more expensive. Of course, a character could buy Flash Defense for his Danger Sense!

Sometimes a hero’s ability to detect danger may depend on the information he receives from his own senses. A speedster could define his Danger Sense as “Hyper-Awareness” of his surroundings, or a batlike hero could define his Danger Sense as “Sensitive Personal Sonar.” Assigning Danger Sense to a normal Sense Group may change its cost (e.g., if it’s assigned to Sight, there’s no need to pay for Targeting).

SENSE MODIFIERS

Since Danger Sense is built as an Enhanced Sense, characters can, with the GM’s permission, apply Sense Modifiers to it. Here are some guidelines regarding the effects of doing that.

Discriminatory, Analyze: Discriminatory Danger Sense allows a character to recognize a particular type of danger that he’s previously encountered (for example, detecting the difference between potential gunfire and concussive force). Danger Sense with both Discriminatory and Analyze could identify the threat level of the danger (for example, detecting the difference between a hand grenade and twenty pounds of plastic explosives). If the character also has a Skill related to the danger (Demolitions, Weapon Familiarity, KS: Metahuman Energy Projectors), he can make a Skill Roll to identify the particular weapon or metahuman responsible (possibly using his Danger Sense roll as a Complementary Skill Roll).

Concealed: The Concealed modifier often doesn’t come into play with Danger Sense, since it’s Passive and does not give off detectable “danger-sensing pulses.” However, a character who does define his Danger Sense as Active could make it Concealed.

Increased Arc Of Perception: Danger Sense is already built to cover 360 degrees around the character.

Microscopic: Microscopic generally doesn’t apply to Danger Sense – normally, any attack, even one composed of particles too tiny to perceive with the character’s normal Senses, sets off Danger Sense if the Talent is purchased at the proper level. The *Any Danger* modifier for Danger Sense thus effectively takes the place of Microscopic. The GM could, if he preferred, let a character take Microscopic instead of Any Danger, if the character just wants to detect extremely tiny threats, but not Any Danger.

Telescopic: The Telescopic modifier does not apply to Danger Sense, since Danger Sense has its own rules on how to increase the affected area, and does not suffer from Range Modifiers.

Rapid: The Rapid modifier does not apply to or affect Danger Sense.

Tracking: At the GM’s option, a hero with Tracking on his Danger Sense has a reasonable chance of following the trail laid down by a person or thing who recently posed a danger to him and has since moved away from him. The longer it’s been since the danger moved away, the harder it is to follow the trail... and once the person or object ceases to pose any sort of

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danger to the character (even a remote future danger), the trail may vanish altogether.

By purchasing the *Tracking* Sense Modifier on a Focus, a character could create tiny “bugs” he could follow with his Danger Sense (much like Spider-Man’s spider-tracers). See page 119-20 of *Champions* for another way to build this sort of “homing device.”

Danger Tracers: Tracking for Danger Sense (5 Active Points); IAF (-1/2), 6 Recoverable Charges (-1/4) (total cost: 3 points) **plus** General Area for Danger Sense (5 Active Points); IAF (-1/2), 6 Recoverable Charges (-1/4), Only To Assist Tracking (-1/4) (total cost: 2 points). Total cost: 5 points.

Transmit: In some rare cases, a character applies Transmit to his Danger Sense so that he can alert other people to the fact that he’s in danger. For example, a trio of sisters with witch-powers might each know when either of her sisters was threatened. Of course, the target has to be able to perceive the transmission – he has to have Danger Sense himself. In some cases, the character may take a Limitation to reflect the fact that only forms of Danger Sense with the same special effect as his can receive his transmissions.

Charming Family Bond: Danger Sense (any danger, sense) (PER Roll), Transmit; Intuitional (-1/2), Only Transmits To Others With Same Danger Sense (-1/4). Total cost: 17 points.

LIMITATIONS

Most Advantages and Limitations have no general applicability to Danger Sense. Here are notes on a few Limitations that might apply:

Concentration: A Danger Sense that isn’t bought as a Sense (that is, it requires a Half Phase to use) would be a good candidate for this Limitation.

Focus: A character could develop a sophisticated computer to evaluate threats, or craft a magic sword that flickers when evil approaches.

Goblinslayer Sword: 1d6 HKA, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (22 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 11 points) **plus** +1d6 HKA, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (22 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only Versus Goblins (-1/2) (total cost: 9 points) **plus** Danger Sense (any danger, immediate vicinity, sense) 14- (35 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only Versus Goblins (-1/2) (total cost: 14 points). Total cost: 34 points.

Requires A Skill Roll: Danger Sense could require a KS: Threat Evaluation (or Analyze Combat Technique) roll to represent a hero whose awareness of his surroundings comes from intense combat training.

Side Effects and Visible: Both of these Limitations are good choices to represent a Danger Sense that produces an effect noticeable by others. While Side Effects is a bit more drastic (“Bob, why are your eyes bleeding?” “Must be one of those darn zombies nearby”). Visible is more representative of typical comic book characters.

Warning Growl: Danger Sense (out of combat, immediate vicinity, sense) (PER Roll) (27 Active Points); Visible (-1/4). Total cost: 22 points.

DISADVANTAGES

Here are a few suggestions for ways to link a character’s Disadvantages to his Danger Sense.

Dependence: A hero could grow addicted to the “pulse” of his Danger Sense, seeking out dangerous situations just for the rush. This would be a great Disadvantage for thrillseeker heroes!

Psychological Limitation: Any kind of daredevil or thrillseeker would benefit from Danger Sense, so it follows that lots of characters with Danger Sense turn out to be habitual risk-takers because they find it so easy (and fun!) to avoid danger.

Susceptibility: A character might suffer painful physical symptoms – migraine headaches, stomach pains – when his Danger Sense activates.

Susceptibility: to Danger Sense, 2d6 instantly per activation (Common). Total cost: 10 points.

Vulnerability: A character could have a Vulnerability to Danger Sense (an Uncommon “attack”). This means any successful Danger Sense roll against him gives his enemy full OCV to counterattack automatically, instead of just when he makes a half roll.

Mystery Man

Background/History: Adrian Mystenski was born to a pair of polish immigrants who came to America seeking fresh opportunities. The Mystenski family did well, hitting it big in the oil industry with the father, Joe Mystenski, ending up with several oil concerns in the rich Texas fields. Youngest of seven brothers, Adrian was often left alone to explore his own interests. The resources of his family allowed him great latitude to study anything he wished, and he excelled in both drama and athletics. Adrian earned the equivalent of a black belt in Jeet Kune Do, and it seemed he had a bright future in athletic endeavors, perhaps even a shot at the Olympic team.

Adrian's bright future died along with his parents in a horrific plane crash, as the Mystenski's private jet nosedived into the Pacific Ocean. Engine Failure was the cause cited in the official report, but Adrian has always suspected another explanation for the accident. Adrian was found washed ashore in the Florida Keys, his eyes irreparably damaged and his career as an athlete destroyed. While Adrian's brothers squabbled over the Mystenski estate, Adrian himself recovered slowly from the effects of the crash. He grew emotionally attached to his nurse, Carrie Deveroux, who helped him through the tough times and supported his efforts to regain a normal life.

Over time, Adrian found that although he had lost his eyes, another kind of vision was slowly replacing them. He found himself glimpsing his surroundings as though through a smoky mirror, catching "flashes" of future or distant events, and even sensing the onset of trouble before it occurred. Adrian continued to develop these abilities and even sought profit from them, setting himself up as a "psychic advisor" in Los Angeles. It was not long before Adrian's accurate predictions brought him to the attention of Hollywood's rich and famous. The name of "Adrian Mystenski" has been circulating amongst the entertainment world as a reliable and semi-famous psychic advisor to celebrities. Many people smirk and attempt to rationalize his talents, but none can deny that Adrian makes a comfortable living.

A comfortable living wasn't enough for Adrian, however. The money was fine, and he was even able to keep Carrie on his payroll to take care things in his home, but the visions he kept seeing at night bothered his conscience. There was so much evil going on in the world, so much injustice that could be prevented. He tried going to the police first, but found only skepticism, cynicism, and rejection. Adrian resolved to do what he could, since the police would not intervene based on his visions. With

Carrie's help, he constructed a protective costume and took on the persona of Mystery Man, using his former athletic prowess and psychic ESP to track down criminals and prevent many developing catastrophes.

Lately, Mystery Man has become far more cautious and timid about his activities, and it has been noticed on the street that he is not the crime-buster that he used to be. The cause of this behavior is a recent group of visions Adrian had, concerning the nature of his own demise. Although the visions are never clear enough for Adrian to be certain about the manner or time of his death, he believes it to be inevitable, and his self-confidence has been lacking because of it.

Personality/Motivation: Adrian Mystenski is a man who often has visions of the future, and finds little to like in what he sees. His conscience, drilled into him by his hard-working parents and large family, requires that he do what he can to make the visions of terror and injustice become untrue.

Adrian feels very strongly about his nurse, Carrie, although he has never told her the depths of his emotions. She knows his secret identity, and uses her extensive medical training to keep him in good shape, and he has slowly fallen in love with her.

He extremely dislikes anyone who scoffs at psychic phenomena, finding such people to be shortsighted, narrow-minded, and stupid.

His visions have recently made him fear the nature of his death. He knows that dying is inevitable, but something inside of him wishes to survive as long as possible. It is that urge to live which is currently complicating his crimefighting efforts, because risking himself in any way is becoming and more and more difficult.

Quote: "Put the gun down, pal. I know how this is going to turn out."

"Mystery Man doesn't lose. You should know that by now."

"I see a long and healthy future ahead of you... behind bars."

Powers/Tactics: Mystery Man's mind has developed extensive extrasensory powers that enable him to psychically sense his surroundings and alter the perceptions of others. He has some minor psionic abilities as well, able to influence a person's mind merely by speaking to them.

Although he is physically blind, Mystery Man can "see" all around him by means of a psychic awareness. His mind can touch the area around him and make a "map," allowing him to function almost completely normally. In his

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secret ID, Adrian carries a cane although he doesn't really need it.

Mystery Man can also sense danger to himself or anything nearby, as his survival instinct gives him a sudden jolt of psychic information that he "reads" from the currents of the future. He can focus that awareness of the future to gain even more information, allowing him to fight with uncanny speed and accuracy, sense weak points in objects or foes, and even project his awareness to distant places and events that have not yet occurred. Note: Mystery Man's clairsentience is bought with a -¼ Vague and Unclear disadvantage instead of a -½. This is to represent that although his visions are never completely accurate and detailed, they are more or less correct. A person with the normal level of Vague and Unclear Clairsentience would be wrong roughly half the time. Mystery Man is wrong only a quarter of the time, by contrast. A GM should be aware that Mystery Man's visions are never exactly the way things will happen, but they normally strongly indicate future events that are most likely to come true.

Adrian has honed his mental powers to such a degree that he can project a field of "danger," altering an area to be more or less threatening. He can raise or lower the sense of peril in any given place, making Danger Sense rolls much harder to succeed, and also increasing the effects of Presence Attacks due to how harmful or harmless the surroundings may seem. He can even "blank out" a region around himself to be completely impenetrable to mental senses and Danger Sense, seemingly removing himself from reality to such perception. This allows him to make surprise attacks that fool even experienced heroes who normally are aware of incoming danger.

By shifting his energies from reading the currents of the future to reading the currents of the mind, Mystery Man can affect another person's brain patterns by speaking to them. He often interrogates criminals about their activities, or convinces them to turn themselves in by "tuning in" to their brainwaves. If a foe is too potent for him to defeat, Mystery Man will often plant the suggestion in their minds that they have gone blind, a condition with which he is well familiar, allowing Adrian to escape or get assistance.

As Mystery Man, Adrian's athletic prowess comes in very handy. His Jeet Kune Do skills can take down up to agent-level opponents, and he keeps in good shape with a regular workout designed by his nurse. In combat against a superhuman, he will put his levels into offense, find weakness, and use presence attacks backed up by his threat zones to try and talk them into surrendering. If that doesn't work, he'll use his

mental illusions ("You're blind!" – which requires the EGO +10 level to remove sight and EGO +20 to remove all sensory input) and back off while continuing to Find Weakness and put his levels into damage. Against a foe with Danger Sense, Mystery Man is very potent, being able to fool them nearly all the time with his threat zones and darkness powers.

Campaign Use: As a Hunter, Mystery Man would normally focus only on paranormal and highly dangerous criminals. Lately, however, he has begun to limit himself to less dangerous scum, and he is now timid and over-cautious when dealing with superpowered enemies.

To make Mystery Man more powerful, add a few more DC to his martial arts, raise his Find Weakness roll, increase the active points in his multipower to 75, and give him some additional SPD. To scale Mystery Man down, lower the DC and levels of his martial arts, and reduce the active points in his multipower to 45.

Adrian's precognitive powers make him very easy to work into an existing campaign. A vision of terrible danger or a horrific crime may drive him to seek out other heroes, such as the player characters, for assistance. Due to his current fear of death, he will mostly stick to an advisory role, guiding the heroes with his visions towards the source of the hideous threat, whatever it may be.

Mystery Man makes a good mentor character for a mentalist or psychic hero. Such a student or friend could easily become concerned when rumors of Mystery Man's strange timidity comes to light. Since Adrian doesn't like to talk about his death, finding out the trouble may require a good bit of roleplaying, but once it becomes clear, finding out how (or if!) it's possible to stop the visions and avoid the impending end will make for a job worthy of a true hero.

Finally, both Mechanon and the criminal organization known as PSI have learned of Adrian's unusually accurate prediction powers. Both have placed some resources to work to locate and capture Adrian for study. Thus far both have been stymied by Adrian's powerful psychic ability to avoid danger. That could change given time or bad luck on Adrian's part, and the heroes could be contacted by a frantic Carrie Deveroux seeking help to rescue Adrian from the clutches of those who want only to dissect him and learn the secrets of his powers.

Appearance: In his normal identity, Adrian Mystenski is a somewhat handsome Polish man in his mid-thirties, with reddish-blond hair and an impressive physique. As Mystery Man, he wears a black jumpsuit and a swirling, massive dark cloak. The outfit includes a black cowl that conceals most of his face and his eyes. Over the

Mystery Man

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH [1]
24	DEX	42	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
16	CON	12	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 13-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
14	COM	2	12-	
10	PD	7		Total: 20 PD (10rPD)
10	ED	7		Total: 20 ED (10rED)
5	SPD	16		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
6	REC	0		
52	END	10		
40	STUN	12		

Total Characteristics Cost: 142

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Swimming: 2"/4"
Teleport: 15"/30"

Cost	Powers	END
45	<i>Psychic/Psionic Powers:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve; Incantations (-1/4)	
4u	1) <i>Threat Zone Generation I:</i> Change Environment 8" radius, -3 to Danger Sense rolls, Varying Effect (+1/4), Personal Immunity (+1/2); Incantations (-1/4)	6
4u	2) <i>Threat Zone Generation II:</i> Change Environment 8" radius, -3 to resist Presence Attacks, long lasting (one hour), Varying Effect (+1/4); Incantations (-1/4)	6
4u	3) <i>Threat Zone Generation III:</i> Danger Sense Images, -7 to PER rolls, 1" radius, Personal Immunity (+1/2), Reduced END (0 END, +1/2); Incantations (-1/4)	0
4u	4) <i>Psychic Suggestion:</i> Mental Illusions 12d6; Incantations (-1/4)	6
4u	6) <i>Psionic Interrogation:</i> Telepathy 12d6; Incantations (-1/4)	6
40	<i>Psychic Visions:</i> Precognitive Clairsentience (Sight, Hearing, Unusual, Taste/Smell, Touch, Mental groups), 4x Range (2000"); Attack Roll Required (-1/4), Blackout (-1/2), Time Modifiers (-1/2), Vague and Unclear (at the "fuzzy" level, -1/4)	10
45	<i>Blank Spot:</i> Darkness to Danger Sense and Mental Sense group 3" Radius, Personal Immunity (+1/2), Reduced END (0 END, +1/2); No Range (-1/2)	0
37	<i>Psychic Senses I:</i> Spatial Awareness, Discriminatory, Analyze, Increased Arc Of Perception: 360 degrees	0
12	<i>Psychic Senses II:</i> Detect Danger Sense, Range, Sense	0

7	<i>Psychic Senses III:</i> Detect Lies, Sense	0
26	<i>Sensing the Flaw:</i> Find Weakness 14- with all martial arts attacks; Requires a Danger Sense roll (-1/2)	0
10	<i>Exploiting the Flaw:</i> +4d6 Hand-to-hand Attack; Hand-to-hand Attack (-1/2), Requires a Find Weakness Roll (-1/2)	2
5	<i>Swirling Cloak:</i> Lack of Weakness (-4 to Find Weakness and Analyze rolls); OIF (-1/2)	
20	<i>Armored Cloak:</i> Armor (10 PD/10 ED); OIF (-1/2)	0
5	<i>Disciplined Mind:</i> Mental Defense (8 points)	0
30	<i>Sudden Appearance/Disappearance:</i> Teleport 15", Position Shift, No Relative Velocity; Can Only Teleport In/Out When No One Is Looking (-1/2)	4
15	<i>Combat Mind I:</i> +6 DCV; Requires a Danger Sense Roll (-1/2), Costs END (-1/2)	2
10	<i>Combat Mind II:</i> +4 with Hand to Hand Combat; Costs END (-1/2), Linked to Combat Mind I (-1/2)	2
10	<i>Combat Mind III:</i> Lightning Reflexes: +7 DEX to act first with all actions; Costs END (-1/2), Linked to Combat Mind I (-1/2)	2

Martial Arts: Jeet Kune Do

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4 Dodge	-	+5	Dodge, Abort
5 Kick/Knee Strike	-2	+1	8d6 Strike
3 Legsweep	+2	-1	5d6 Strike, Target Falls
4 Punch/Elbow Strike	+0	+2	6d6 Strike
3 Throw	+0	+1	4d6 +v/5; Target Falls
4	+1 DC with all attacks (already figured in)		

Talents

55	<i>Psychic Warning System:</i> Danger Sense 15- (general area, any danger, sense, discriminatory, analyze)
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Skills

3	Analyze Danger 12-
10	Full Defense Maneuver
3	Interrogation 13-
3	KS: Jeet Kune Do 12-
3	Oratory 13-
3	Psychic Powers 11-
3	PS: Actor 12-
3	PS: Celebrity Psychic 12-
3	Shadowing 12-
3	Stealth 14-

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Total Powers & Skills cost: 456

Total Cost: 598

150+ Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Features: Powerful Psychic, Not Concealable, Always Noticed, Detectable only by Unusual Senses
- 10 DNPC: Carrie Deveroux (Mystery Man's Nurse) 11- (Normal, Useful noncombat position or skills)
- 20 Hunted: Mechanon 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 20 Hunted: PSI 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 25 Physical Limitation: Blind (All the Time, Fully Impairing)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Disdains prejudice against psychics/psionics (Common, Moderate)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Feels forced to fight for justice (Common, Moderate)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Fears his own death (Common, Total)
- 10 Reputation: Celebrity Psychic, 11-
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frequently, Major)
- 248 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 598

years, Adrian has used his stage studies to alter the body language he uses as Mystery Man, who up until recently always carried himself much more confidently and aggressively than Adrian did in his secret ID.



Mystery Man



Shut Yer Trap

by W. Jason Allen

Designing Traps With *The HERO System*

What's worse than finding a chest full of treasure that's locked?

Finding out the hard way that locked chest is also trapped. Ouch...

Many games feature exploration of one sort or another, whether it's an ancient dungeon or a master villain's lair, and traps in such places are commonplace. Foolish is the explorer that *doesn't* prepare for traps. This article presents a discussion of traps in the *HERO System* – different kinds of traps, how certain skills relate to traps, and ways to design traps in game terms.

Types Of Traps

TECHNOLOGICAL TRAPS

Technological traps are created either from physical raw materials or electronic media. Devices such as concealed pits, poisoned needle traps, scythe blades, hidden blaster arrays, and computer viruses would be technological traps. Note that the term “technological” doesn't necessarily denote “high-tech.” It covers the full range of any artificial modifications made to the environment, from a simple trip wire to a disintegration field and beyond.

POWERED TRAPS

Powered traps are those traps that have been created or enhanced by non-technological forces, such as magic or mutant abilities. Most powered traps cannot be disabled with Skill rolls, but can be Dispelled, Suppressed, or Drained. Some examples include warding glyphs, a chest enchanted to belch fire at whoever opens it, summoned guardians, and an energized object that will explode after a set time has passed.

NATURAL TRAPS

Natural traps cover situations and events that, while not technically ‘traps’ in the sense that someone created the situation specifically to cause harm or protect valuables, can still cause serious injury or inconvenience. Raging fires, weakened floors, and quicksand would all qualify as natural traps.

Trap-Related Skills

ANALYZE (TRAPS)

This specification of the Skill *Analyze* helps the character figure out what sort of trap he's up against (assuming he is aware of the trap in the first place). When this skill is purchased, the character must select a type of trap he can Analyze (mechanical, magical, or natural). For

each additional +1 point, he may select another type of trap that can be analyzed. As detailed on 5E 32, *Analyze* acts as a Complementary Skill.

COMPUTER PROGRAMMING

Computer viruses are a form of electronic trap. This Skill enables a character to create, detect, and stop such traps. Viruses can rewrite and delete data, self-replicate and spread through e-mail, mine and transmit confidential information, and cause all sorts of computer problems. It can also be used to tap into and possibly manipulate electronic and computer systems that control high-tech mechanical traps, such as a garbage compactor that's about to crush someone.

CONCEALMENT

As mentioned on 5E 37, this Skill can be used to both hide and locate traps of various types. GMs may wish to limit a character's ability to find certain kinds of traps based on the character's senses and the type of trap. For instance, it may be difficult (if not impossible) for a thief to find a magical trap without the ability to sense magic.

DEMOLITIONS

This Skill focuses on traps of an explosive nature, both building and defusing them.

ELECTRONICS

As you might imagine, this Skill aids in building and disarming traps that include electronic components. Without it, the GM may impose negative modifiers to the roll, or determine the character is unable to work on the trap at all.

KS: POISONS

Having this Skill can be useful in either setting up a poisonous trap or attempting to identify what poison has been used on a trap, either from the appearance of the poison, or its effects. In addition, this skill provides knowledge of what antidotes can be used for which poisons. However, it does not provide the ability to manufacture poisons or antidotes; that would require PS: Alchemist, PS: Apothecary, PS: Toxicologist, or a similar skill.

KS: TRAPS

This Skill provides a character with knowledge of various traps appropriate for the genre. It can also act as a Complementary Skill when working with traps, either to build, repair, set, or disarm them.

MECHANICS

With this Skill, a character can construct components for or repair traps of a mechanical nature. It may also be used as a Complementary Skill when attempting to actually build or disarm mechanical traps.

SS: VARIOUS SCIENCES

A number of Science Skills can conceivably be useful in the construction or disabling of traps. Some of them include: Botany, Chemistry, Geology, Metallurgy, and Physics.

SECURITY SYSTEMS

A character with this Skill knows how to detect and disable traps of all types, either bypassing them or disarming them completely. It also allows the character to build traps of most types (magical traps, of course, require spells). Special senses may be required to detect and disable magical traps.

SYSTEMS OPERATION

Systems Operation acts as a Complimentary Skill when working with various electronic systems used to operate a trap, such as a control console for an automatic blaster array.

Traps In HERO System Game Terms

There are numerous ways to build traps using the *HERO System*. The most common type of trap will be a Power with appropriate Advantages and Limitations. Automatons and Computers can also play roles in traps, especially technological (and in some cases powered) traps. Death traps can be built as Bases, loaded to the gills with deadly devices, creatures, and other such unpleasantness.

POWERS

Powers alone make very effective traps, but there are some drawbacks. Unless a trap is bought with character points and the *Trigger* Advantage, it has an OCV of 0, as it has no senses with which to target a character. If a targeting sense is purchased for the trap, it has an OCV of 3. Skill levels can be purchased for the Power as inherent bonuses to the trap. Common Advantages include: Area Of Effect, Explosion, Time Delay, and Trigger. Common Limitations include: Can Be Disabled With Skill Roll, Charges, and Focus.

The Limitation *Can Be Disabled With Skill Roll* represents a trap's fallibility to certain skills. A bomb can be diffused before its timer runs out with a successful Demolitions roll. An alarm system (typically built with Images to Hearing Group, sometimes Sight Group and Radio Perception/Transmission as well) is bypassed with a successful Security Systems roll. The

Limitation value is $-\frac{1}{2}$ if there are no modifiers purchased for the Power, $-\frac{1}{4}$ if the Power has purchased negative modifiers to the Skill roll.

Traps that do not take the *Can Be Disabled With Skill Roll* Limitation can only be disabled with Dispel, Suppress, or Drain. Such Powers function normally against traps, unless the trap is built with Power Defense.

To purchase OCV levels for the trap, buy 5-point combat skill levels and apply the same *Focus* Limitation as on the Power. Also, for technological traps that incorporate moving parts or other complex components, apply the *Real Technology* Limitation ($-\frac{1}{4}$) to the Power and any levels. This represents the sometimes fallible nature of technology.

For traps that are more difficult to detect, disarm, defuse, or what have you, buy this as Negative Skill Levels, described on 5E 49, with the same *Focus* Limitation as on the Power.

Example: *DestructoMan uses Demolitions to design a time bomb. Not wanting it to be easily disarmed, he builds it with 5 Negative Skill Levels against Demolitions. The minimum level that can have Limitations is the 5-point level, so the bomb and its levels would be purchased thus:*

DestructoBomb: RKA 3d6, Explosion ($+\frac{1}{2}$), Time Delay (programmable timer; $+\frac{1}{4}$), Trigger (failed attempt to defuse the bomb; $+\frac{1}{4}$) (90 Active Points); OAF (-1), Real Technology ($-\frac{1}{4}$), 1 Charge (-2), Charge Never Recovers (-2), No Range ($-\frac{1}{2}$), Can Be Disabled With *Demolitions* Skill Roll ($-\frac{1}{4}$) (total cost: 13 points) **plus** -5 to Demolitions (25 Active Points); OAF (-1), Real Technology ($-\frac{1}{4}$) (total cost: 11 points). Total Cost: 24 points.

AUTOMATONS AND COMPUTERS

As traps, Automatons often represent guardian creatures of some sort: golems, zombies, robots, all can be designed to guard treasure, coming to life only when programmed to do so. Also, non-mobile items can also be bought as Automatons, making for an unpleasant surprise. Such Automatons would have Physical Limitations representing their lack of mobility, and also lack of arms if appropriate. Enchanted chests and self-guiding blaster arrays are possible Automatons.

Computers can also fill the role of self-guided traps that react to intrusion. Whether they monitor a base, activate an alarm, or operate a blaster array, Computers are useful in keeping intruders out or contained.

DEATH TRAPS

For the ultimate in challenges, a death trap features multiple deadly devices designed to destroy the hardiest of PCs. Purchased as a Base, the traps are all operated either by the villain or a computer. Either way, the goal is to create a situation where the PCs have to fight for their lives while figuring out how to escape. There is always a way out, though it's well hidden and probably dangerous to use. Some death trap devices include crushers, missile racks, nerve gas, lasers, electrified floors, temperature controls, flood gates, oil slicks... the list goes on and on. Use your fiendish imagination.

Sample Traps

TECHNOLOGICAL TRAPS

Concealed Pit (8 Hexes Deep): This trap is simply a deep hole, covered by something (rug, woven grass, trap door) that will not hold any significant weight. Most pit traps have to be reset manually. You can allow computers to reset the trap with a successful Security Systems roll if the trap is part of a high-tech base. Alternately, if the trap was designed by a skilled engineer, it could reset itself. To do so, purchase the *Security Systems* Skill for the trap. A successful roll resets the trap immediately after use. A failed roll means the trap jammed, and has to be reset manually. Note the base roll for the Skill is 9-. To design a spiked pit simply add an HKA, Linked to the Energy Blast. Note the Limitation *Can Be Avoided With Appropriate Movement Powers*. This simulates the trap's fixed location on the ground. Any character who can fly, cling to walls, or otherwise not come into contact with the pit will avoid its effects entirely.

Concealed Pit: EB 8d6, physical, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Trigger (more than 10 kg mass applied to cover; +¼) (90 Active Points); IAF Immobile (pit in the floor; -1½), Can Be Avoided With Appropriate Movement Powers (-½), Can Be Disabled With *Security Systems* Skill Roll (-½), Real Technology (-¼) (total cost: 24 points) **plus** Security Systems 11- (7 Active Points); IAF Immobile (trap door mechanism; -1½), Real Technology (-¼) (total cost: 3 points). Total Cost: 27 points.

Scythe Blade: Guaranteed to take a little off the top, this trap lashes out across a corridor, dealing damage to unsuspecting passers-by.

Scythe Blade: RKA 2d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Trigger (rigged floor stone; +¼) (67 Active Points); IAF Immobile (scything blade housed in wall; -1½), Can Be Disabled With *Security Systems* Skill Roll (-¼), Real Technology (-¼), No Range (-½) (total cost: 19 points) **plus** Security Systems 14- (13 Active Points); IAF Immobile (blade rotation mechanism; -1½), Real Technology (-¼) (total cost: 5 points) **plus** -2 to Security Systems (10 Active Points); IAF Immobile (-1½), Real Technology (-¼) (total cost: 4 points). Total Cost: 28 points.

POWERED TRAPS

Lightning Glyph: This trap creates a large blast of lightning in all directions. It does not have to be placed on an object or door; it can be placed free-standing in midair, to guard a corridor for instance. Only by muttering the password (designated by the caster) can one pass safely through the glyph. The glyph can only be detected by magical senses, and can be Dispelled, Suppressed, and Drained normally.

Lightning Glyph: EB 10d6, Explosion (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Trigger (glyph touched without saying password; +¼) (112 Active Points); IAF Immobile (invisible glyph; -1½), No Range (-½). Total cost: 37 points.

Summoning Glyph: While not as visually impressive as the Lightning Glyph, this trap is terrifying nonetheless. Passing through the glyph summons 8 skeletal warriors to face intruders. Even if the glyph is detected, it is more difficult to dispel than most wards of this nature.

Summoning Glyph: Summon 8 150-point Skeletons, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Trigger (glyph touched without saying password; +¼) (79 Active Points); IAF Immobile (invisible glyph; -1½). (total cost: 32 points) **plus** Power Defense (10 points); IAF Immobile (invisible glyph; -1½). (total cost: 4 points). Total cost: 36 points.

NATURAL TRAPS

Raging Fire: Dangerous in the extreme, a raging fire consumes all in its path. The smoke from such flames can be incapacitating without appropriate equipment. This is why fire fighters in big cities have good salaries.

RKA 2d6, Area Of Effect (18" Radius; +1¼), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Uncontrolled (put out with water or appropriate chemicals, will burn out when all fuel consumed; +½) (127 Active Points); Limited Power (some areas within radius do less damage than others at GM's discretion; -½), No Range (-½) (total cost: 63 points) **plus** EB 2d6, NND (defense is appropriate Life Support or holding breath, does BODY once character is unconscious; +1), Area Of Effect (32" Conforming Radius; +2¼), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½), Uncontrolled (put out with water or appropriate chemicals, will fade as fire burns out, wind dissipates effect in 1 Turn; +½) (62 Active Points); Limited Power (some areas within radius do less damage than others at GM's discretion; -½), Damage Halved With Makeshift Filters (-½), Linked (-½), No Range (-½) (total cost: 21 points). Total cost: 84 points.

Quicksand: Common in swampy areas, these pits are easily mistaken for solid land. Once stuck in one, a character slowly sinks under. Unless the character is rescued or manages to get free (by making successful STR vs. STR contests for each hex), the character faces certain doom.

Quicksand: Telekinesis (30 STR), Area Of Effect (One Hex Plus Surrounding Hexes; +¾), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Uncontrolled (quicksand pit emptied; +½) (169 Active Points); Affects Whole Object (-¼), IAF Immobile (quicksand pit; -1½), No Range (-½), Only To Pull Downward (-½), Matches Character's STR (-½) (total cost: 40 points) **plus** EB 2d6, NND (defense is appropriate Life Support or holding breath, does BODY once character is unconscious; +1), Area Of Effect (One Hex Plus Surrounding Hexes; +¾), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½), Uncontrolled (character removed from quicksand or quicksand pit emptied; +½) (47 Active Points); IAF Immobile (quicksand pit; -1½), Limited Power (radius limited to Telekinesis radius; -¼), Linked (-½), No Range (-½) (total cost: 13 points) **plus** -3 to PER and Concealment Rolls (15 Active Points); IAF Immobile (quicksand pit; -1½) (total cost: 6 points). Total cost: 59 points.



Stars of Blood

by Scott Bennie

Alien Gladiatorial Arena for Champions and Star Hero

"And here they come, those wacky, lovable monowire assassins, the Deathbots."

"Gotta love them, Giglplx. Those crazy engines of destruction can put a smile on anyone's face, even the Uneaten."

"And if they don't, they can easily carve one, Jlpdtdon... Okay our next lucky contestant is a newcomer, from the planet Arrath... is that how you pronounce it?"

"I believe it's called 'Earth' Giglplx."

"Earth? Sounds like a noise people make when they're hit in the stomach too many times. And they say that Urgauntons are a gutteral race! And this warrior's name is... C-Kar?"

"I think that's it. He looks kinda scrawny for a gladiator, though. You think he'd get some armor!"

"I'm sure that his attire has great cultural significance, but it does makes him look like an ankaru."

"Not that there's anything wrong with that, Giglplx. Just as long as he can fight."

In a superhero campaign, there's nothing like a good fight; but fights demand the appropriate venue. The Arena of Magnacentia IV is meant to be a place where your champions can fight *Gladiator* style against the baddest and the best in the entire galaxy.

Stars of Blood is a *Champions* or *Star Hero* scenario location. In *Stars of Blood*, the characters are prisoners (by force or by choice) who must fight their way to freedom in the middle of a crowd.

Stars of Blood requires a lot of customization by the GM, and does *not* include stats for all NPC gladiators – many of which you'll need to supply yourself.

Where To Place It

The setting for *Stars of Blood* is the planet Magnacentia IV. Its proximity to several rising empires made the planet untenable decades ago, and after most of its inhabitants abandoned it, those who remained negotiated its independent neutrality with the empires on its borders, since those governments were in no hurry to go to war over it.

Magnacentians look human, except for their light-green skin, and have human-level abilities, except for an underdeveloped empathic sense (Telepathy 6d6, Only To Detect Emotions (-½)). The planet is ruled by Queen Kultyra, a beautiful monarch who's utterly dedicated to her people, to the point of ruthlessness.

Twenty years ago, a Thane trader named Vilonus approached the Queen with a proposition. She could use the planet's proximity to several empires as a commercial opportunity; import each world's quantum-level (superhuman) criminals, build a giant arena, force them to fight each other, broadcast them for profit, and sell the survivors to the Malvans (Firewing's race). That way, she could eventually afford to build an impenetrable fortress to defend Magnacentia against invasion and protect her people forever.

Of course, the Thane are siphoning off some of her funds and weapons, so what she's *really* accomplishing is building up the Thane battlefleet and helping them scour the universe for Progenitor technology and galactic magicks that they can use to rebuild their empire to the frightening position it held before the Godsbreath trapped the Thane in an interdimensional prison a billion and a half years ago....

Okay, enough exposition, let's cut to the fights.

Getting There

Before you can fight, you have to get the PCs into the arena. Suitable methods include:

1. *Prisoners*: An alien raiding party captures the PCs and takes them back to Magnacentia as prisoners. This is in genre, but as mentioned in the *HERO System 5th Edition*, PCs *hate* being taken prisoner, so it's usually better to come up with situations where the PCs *allow* themselves to be taken prisoner as part of an infiltration.
2. *Retrieval Mission*: An alien recruits superhuman PCs to infiltrate the arena to retrieve the alien's long abandoned offspring/betrothed/long lost sibling/prince who's next in line to the planetary throne; unfortunately, they're not quite sure what he/she looks like (due to disguise, long separation, or incomplete description).
3. *Spy Mission*: Someone's worried about the Thane presence in the system and wants the PCs to go undercover to determine what's *really* going on, and (unfortunately) the easiest way to infiltrate the planet is to allow themselves to be captured and become gladiatorial slaves.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The contents of this article are *not* "official" Champions Universe material, and as such have no effect on the events and characters depicted in published Hero Games *Champions* products.

MAGNACENTIA AT A GLANCE

Planet: Magnacentia
Moons: 3 (each 10-100 km. diameter)

Sun: Immagnus (G3)
Capital: Vygaa base (one of several huge orbiting cities)

Climate: Temperate (wet)

Politics: Independent monarchy beholden to neighboring states

Tech Level: Advanced (fusion power, primitive AI computers, personal robotics)

Exports: Food, clothing, gladiatorial slaves

Imports: Finished goods, computers, electronics, and optronics

PARLEZ VOUS E.T.?

Subdermal Universal Translator
Radio Link To Local Translator Computer: Universal Translator (20 pts) +5 to roll (5 pts) (25 active points only); Local Galactic Languages Only (-¼), Only on Magnacentia IV (-½), IIF subdermal implant (-¼) (12 real points)



NOT... THE SLAVE COLLAR!

This device fastens around the wearer's neck and delivers an electric charge directly into the wearer's nervous system. It is activated by a wristband control worn by any guard; they merely need to point in the approximate direction and push a button.

The slave collars have 22 BODY and 22 DEF, and 15 points of Lack of Weakness and Power Defense. A Security Systems roll at -5 and a toolkit for microelectronics may unlock them, as may the control panel.

Slave Collar

Pain Collar: EB 7d6, AVLD (versus Lack of Weakness, +1½), Trigger (radio control or proximity from arena, +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½) (114 Active Points); OAF (-1) (Total cost 57 points).

4. *Revenge:* “The alien criminal who killed my parents (*sniff*) was shipped from prison to the Magnacentia Arena. But if he thinks he can stop me, he’s wrong – dead wrong!” (This presupposes the character is from a starfaring culture and would probably be better suited to *Star Hero* than Earth-based *Champions* games).
5. *Alien Slave Auction:* When the characters are taken prisoner, they get held for auction, and, being manly PC fighting stock, are bought as a lot by the gladiator handlers of Magnacentia. This set-up has the disadvantage that the PCs have to be captured, but on the other hand, selling the PCs at a slave auction has great possibilities for low humor (much of which will be supplied by the players; this is the sort of situation where they love to rib each other).

Also, the alien slave auction makes a great campaign starter, since starting the PCs as prisoners works much better than forcing them to become prisoners (and losing all their stuff!) after the campaign starts.

Ideally, you want to come up with a scenario where the gladiators *don't* attempt to escape the first chance they get, but actually get to spend some time in the arena first before they turn their attention to the escape.

ARRIVAL AT MAGNACENTIA

The great arena of Magnacentia contains an underground training complex. There are about 20 gladiators on staff at all times, with several retired veterans serving as trainers.

When characters arrive at the gladiator complex, they are “processed.” First they’re decontaminated, stripped of their normal attire, and forced to wear gladiatorial uniforms (leather harnesses which tie together light chest armor, and coverings for the upper arms, legs, and groin). They are also fitted with a sub-dermal universal translator and a “Slave Collar” (see Sidebar) to prevent escape.

Once they’re “processed,” the PCs are escorted by Guard-bots down into the gladiator sub-complex under Magnacentia, where they’re introduced to their fellow gladiators, who are wondering who the hell these new kids are (and who’re pretty sure they’re not going to like the answer).

Characters who aren’t as capable in combat may be given support duties: cooking, making costumes, serving as a medics, making and repairing weapons, cleaning the arena. This, of course, allows some PCs to be in appropriate positions to support PC actions should a rebellion be necessary.

THE GLADIATORS

Stars of Blood is based on Gladiator movies, which is a subset of what can be called “Pec Flicks,” “Cinema Testosterona,” or “Movies For Guys Who Like Movies And Beer.” Much like soldier movies, boxing movies, martial arts films, and even prison flicks, the Gladiator movie is about male ideals, relationships between alpha males, and their competitive rites. As such, there’s a fairly reliable list of stock characters and scenes to choose from.

Gladiator troupes come in two shades. In the *Mostly Good* troupe, the gladiators are a tight-knit band of brothers who will initially close ranks against the PCs, but will slowly come around to accepting them if the PCs if they display both ability and compassion. In the *Mostly Evil* troupe, the gladiators are a pack of bullies (and worse) who want the PCs to die a slow painful death from the moment they enter the building, and then they learn to *really* hate you – and you need to thin their ranks one by one, in gruesome deaths that take place inside and outside the arena.

The Gladiator genre is a very bloody one; if you’re playing close to the movies, most named NPCs will die a bloody death.

Women generally don’t play major roles in gladiator movies, except to confirm the characters’ heterosexuality, though modern movies do interchange women for men in some roles, and it’s perfectly appropriate in the SF setting of *Stars of Blood* that women can compete on the same playing field as men. Women who are forced into such roles tend to be emotionally harder than the men they’re fighting.

There’s about 12-24 gladiators in the stable; figure about three gladiators per PC. One gladiator per PC should be well-below a PC’s capabilities; one gladiator per PC should be slightly below the PC’s abilities, and one gladiator per PC should be a good match.

In the *Champions Universe* version of the scenario, they’re all criminals from nearby empires, though they needn’t be unsympathetic; among the lot, some could be political prisoners, some were framed (or taken prisoner by the Thane), some could be disaffected military, and some few joined up because they wanted to take advantage of Magnacentia’s neutrality. Everyone’s got a story.

Several of the alien NPCs in the *Champions Universe* are ex-star gladiators (Firewing, Herculan, and Ironclad) with big reps, so they could be taken prisoner with the PCs as “star attractions,” though the PCs should assume center stage early in the scenario. Characters such as Ironclad would make good “guest stars” to hand to players who don’t have an active PC in the campaign.

DIGITAL HERO #5

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Prominent members of the *Stars of Blood* troupe in *Champions* (adjust stats for *Star Hero*) include:

IGVUR-JEZI LON, THE BROODING CHAMPION

Race: *Fassai* (House Fyndlei)

Identifying Quote: "Leave me alone or die!"

35 STR	23 DEX	28 CON
15 BODY	18 INT	18 EGO
25 PRE	14 COM	
15 PD	15 ED	5 SPD
11 REC	56 END	47 STUN

Abilities: *Sword-Handling:* All-out Strike (+1 OCV, -2 DCV, +4 DC); Attack (+0 OCV, +2 DCV, +2 DC); Charge (+0 OCV, +2 DCV, +2 DC); Defend (+2 OCV, +2 DCV, Block, Abort); Disarm (-1 OCV, +1 DCV, 45 STR to Disarm); Probe (+1 OCV, +3 DCV, Weapon Strike); Resist (+0 OCV, +0 DCV, 45 STR to resist shove); Shove (+0 OCV, +0 DCV, 50 STR to Shove); Combat Luck; Reputation: Champion Gladiator 13- (planetwide) +2/+2d6; +2 with Combat; +2 with Sword-Handling; +4 with Charge/Shove Multi-attacks; Acting 14-; Combat Piloting 14-; PS: Gladiator 13-; Tactics 13-; WF: Common Melee Weapons.

200+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Enemy Fassai Factions 8-; Hunted: Thane 8- (Watching); Psychological Limitation: Secret Feelings of Shame; Vulnerability: 2x Effect from Mental Powers

Background: Former soldier and political exile. This aging gladiator is a lone wolf who's still grieving over the death of his best friend, who he killed in the arena two years ago. He shuns friendship, though he desperately needs it. He's no longer an outcast at home, but is too proud to return.



GADU, THE BULLY

Race: Gadroon

Identifying Quote: "This guy don't look so tough. In fact, he doesn't look like a man at all – look, it's a woman!"

25 STR	26 DEX	25 CON
13 BODY	13 INT	11 EGO
20 PRE	10 COM	
12 PD	12 ED	6 SPD
10 REC	50 END	39 STUN

Abilities: *Whip Handling:* Choke (-2 OCV, +0 DCV, Grab One Limb, 2d6 NND); Disarm (-1 OCV, +1 DCV, 35 STR to Disarm); Slash (-2 OCV, +1 DCV, +4 DC); Snap (+1 OCV, +3 DCV); Trip (+0 OCV, +1 DCV, Weapon Strike +V/5, Target Falls); Combat Luck; +1 with Combat; +2 with Whip-Handling; Acting 14-; Animal Handling 12-; Escape Artist 14-; PS: Gladiator 11-; Tactics 13-; WF: Common Melee Weapons.

200+ Disadvantages: Hunted: The Gadroon 8-; Hunted: Thane 8- (Watching); Psychological Limitation: Bully; Vulnerability: 1½x STUN from Neural Attacks (such as the pain collar).

Background: A Gadroon criminal who was sold into slavery. When he was young, his mother was a soldier in the second (failed) Gadroon attempt to conquer Earth, so he bears a grudge against humans. He's a sadistic creep who looks for the smallest enemy to pick on. His one redeeming quality is his overwhelming hatred for the guards; even he'd never rat out the PCs to them. Many gladiators (especially the nasty ones) look to him as the leader.



GALT WYKUN, THE ENABLER

Race: Krubit

Identifying Quote: “You give me a day or two, and I’ll be able to scoop together some extra rations and maybe even a *dilvot* to share your bed. You interested?”

20 STR	23 DEX	28 CON
15 BODY	18 INT	18 EGO
18 PRE	14 COM	
15 PD	15 ED	5 SPD
11 REC	56 END	47 STUN

Abilities: *Sword-Handling:* All-out Strike (+1 OCV, -2 DCV, +4 DC); Attack (+0 OCV, +2 DCV, +2 DC); Charge (+0 OCV, +2 DCV, +2 DC); Defend (+2 OCV, +2 DCV, Block, Abort); Disarm (-1 OCV, +1 DCV, 45 STR to Disarm); Probe (+1 OCV, +3 DCV, Weapon Strike); Resist (+0 OCV, +0 DCV, 45 STR to resist shove); Shove (+0 OCV, +0 DCV, 50 STR to Shove); Contacts and Favors (20 points worth); Find Weakness with Sword Attacks 11-; Combat Luck; +1 with Combat; +1 with Sword-Handling; Acting 14-; Conversation 13-; Persuasion 13-; PS: Gladiator 11-; Well Connected; WF: Common Melee Weapons.

Background: A Krubit (a species of dwarf-like humanoids belonging to the Velarian Confederation), Galt is a member of the troupe because it gets him away from a pack of enemies who want to see him dead. However, Galt also amassed a lot of favors over the course of his life, and while he can’t request an escape route, he can easily get his hands on a few small, innocuous-looking things that a smart PC could put to good use.



DAGIUS RAX, MONEY-GRUBBING OWNER

Race: Magnacentian

10 STR	9 DEX	12 CON
13 BODY	18 INT	14 EGO
11 PRE	8 COM	
6 PD	6 ED	3 SPD
4 REC	26 END	24 STUN

Abilities: *Empathy:* Telepathy 6d6, Only To Determine Emotions (-1/2); AK: Upper Magnacentia 12-; Conversation 11-; High Society 13-; Persuasion 11-; PS: Entrepreneur.

Background: Rax is a Magnacentian who prides himself on running a tight ship. He comes down once per week, yells at people for a few minutes, then, satisfied he’s done his job, spends the time sunning himself on a beach. He’s a fat, obnoxious oaf who should be played for comedy.



DIGITAL HERO #5

ORVYSWAULK'YR, SADISTIC CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD

Race: Magnacentian

Identifying Quote: "Oops. Hand slipped on the pain collar control button. Oops. Slipped again...."

40	STR	26	DEX	33	CON
18	BODY	13	INT	14	EGO
18	PRE	14	COM		
16	PD	16	ED	6	SPD
15	REC	66	END	55	STUN

Abilities: *Empathy:* Telepathy 6d6, Only To Determine Emotions (-1/2); *Wrist Blaster:* EB (magnetic, physical) 10d6, Double Knockback, 32 charges; *Sword-Handling:* All-Out Strike (+1 OCV, -2 DCV, +4 DC); Attack (+0 OCV, +2 DCV, +2 DC); Charge (+0 OCV, +2 DCV, +2 DC); Defend (+2 OCV, +2 DCV, Block, Abort); Disarm (-1 OCV, +1 DCV, 45 STR to Disarm); Probe (+1 OCV, +3 DCV, Weapon Strike); Resist (+0 OCV, +0 DCV, 50 STR to resist shove); Shove (+0 OCV, +0 DCV, 55 STR to Shove); Combat Luck; +1 with All Combat; +1 with Sword-Handling; +3 with Disarm/Strike Combination Attack; Animal Handling 12-; Breakfall 14-; Climbing 16-; Conversation 13-; Interrogation 13-; Persuasion 13-; PS: Gladiator 11-; PS: Guard 13-; WF: Common Melee Weapons.

Background: Orvyswaulk'yr's brother died in the arena at the hands of Igvur-jezi's best friend, and he engineered the fight where the Fassai champion was forced to kill him (but the Fassai's too busy blaming himself to realize who's really responsible). Satisfying his vendetta hasn't made the Captain of the Guard any less of a creep, and he's dedicated himself to breaking Igvur-jezi's will so he'll die in the arena, a process he intends to repeat for everyone who earns the public's acclaim.



GEAR AND WEAPONS

Gladiators are expected to fight with weapons and gear except in special "Anything Goes" combats. All gladiators are outfitted with the following gear:

Armor: If the PC lacks natural resistant defenses (e.g. a normal human in a *Star Hero* campaign or a technological super out of armor), they receive a battle harness. If not, they receive a flimsier version of the battle harness.

Harness and Helm: Sight Group Flash Defense (5 points); OIF (-1/2) **plus** Armor +5 PD, +5 ED (15 Active Points); Activation 12- (-3/4), OIF (-1/2). Total cost: 10 Points.

Shield: All characters are outfitted with the following small shield.

Shield: +2 DCV **plus** Missile Deflection versus All Attacks (30 Active Points); May Only Block One Attack Per Phase (-1/2), OAF (-1). Total cost: 12 points.

Weapon: Players have a choice of four weapons:

Battle Axe: HKA 1d6, Armor Piercing (22 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 11 points.

Mace: HA 3d6 **plus** +1 OCV (20 Active Points); HA Lim (-1/2), OAF (-1). Total cost: 8 points.

Sword: HKA 1 1/2d6 (25 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 12 points.

Trident and Net: HKA 1d6 (15 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 7 points) **plus** Entangle 1d6 BODY, 1 DEF, Takes No Damage From Attacks (Physical; +1/4) (12 Active Points); Range Based On STR (-1/4), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1/4), OAF (-1) (total cost: 3 points) Total cost: 10 points.

MEDIC!

Fighters who are killed in the arena are not necessarily dead; the facility has an autodoc with the following capabilities: Healing, Regeneration 1 BODY per Turn, May Heal From Death (+20 points) (30 active points); Healing From Death Is Possible Only If Death Occurred Within 5 Minutes (-1/4); Requires A Paramedic Roll (-1/2); Each BODY Above 5 BODY Requires An Additional Paramedic Roll (-1/4).

This autodoc leave scars and some fractured bones that need to heal on their own. It's located (along with the arena doctor) in a small medical bay just inside the walkway near the Gladiator Gate. Unless the Queen gives an explicit order, or both combatants have made a "fight to the death" pact, the medic will attempt to revive all dead gladiators.

If someone wants to kill the PCs, they'll almost certainly sabotage the autodoc.

OTHER GLADIATOR TYPES

For other gladiators in the troupe, match them to some of the popular types in the movies:

Beast Guy: sure he looks like a dweeb, but animals love him

Kid Corsicus: the kid who's sure he's going to be a star, but doesn't have a clue

Mook With Trident and Net: he never says anything, but his weapons are *always* annoying

Mr. One Fight Left In Him: veteran gladiator with a tragic past

Mr. Strong and Silent: big and easy to get along with

Motormouth: Everyman's sidekick, until his inevitable tragic death

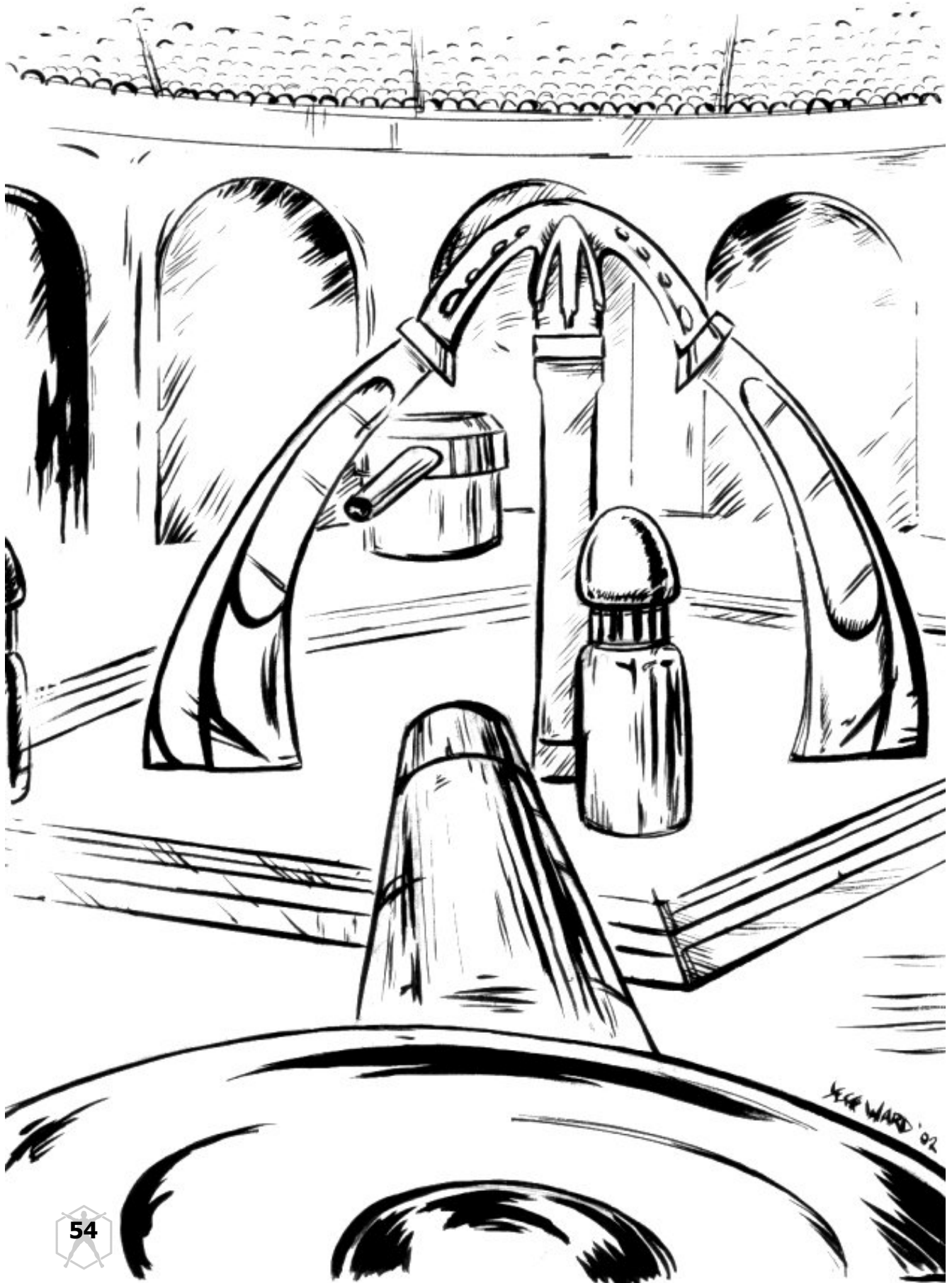
The Psycho: a nut job whom even the bully fears

The Runt: every group of Alpha males needs one Omega

The Sex Symbol: the only people who love him more than the ladies is himself, but he gets you into parties

The Sidekick Wannabe (the guy who's *too* eager to be the Champ's best friend)

The Trustbuster (the guy who acts like your friend, but will sell you out to the guards the first chance he gets)



YEGE WARD '02

The Coliseum

The great arena of Magnacentia stands in the middle of *Ariachyna*, a major island. A beanstalk elevator connects the island directly to a starport that sits in geosynchronous orbit almost directly over the Magnacentia.

The Coliseum of Magnacentia is a circular building, made from steel and glass, the size of a modern sports arena. It's an open-air venue, shielded from bad weather by a force field roof. The Coliseum seats about 16,000 people. Most of the seats in the arena are RED areas (see Stadium Map). Here the majority of people are "the common folk"; they don't pay for seats, but are awarded them by lottery, and the lucky winners are not only entertained, they receive (good) food and drink for free.

People who sit in the BLUE areas are merchants, craftsmen, and other middle class people who choose to pay for seats and food.

Seats in the GREEN area are allotted to the Queen to be given to retainers and nobles.

The GOLD area is the Royal Box. This is where the Queen, her family, and her royal entourage (which often includes his Craftiness, Vilionus the Thane) are seated. This also includes the Royal Bodyguard and several Thane Charnel-Horses.

PURPLE: Behind the Royal Box is the main security area, which controls the arena's trap doors, mounted weapons, force fields, and flood controls.

THE ARENA

There are two entrances into the actual arena itself. The south gate, the Gladiator Gate, is where humanoid competitors emerge, while the north gate is the Guard Gate, from which guards emerge. Animals and robots emerge from the three grey trap door areas.

The Gladiator Gate is also called the Mad Gate, because the wildest, most fanatical spectators congregate there. They like to shut off the local force fields and shower the gladiators with beer as they enter.

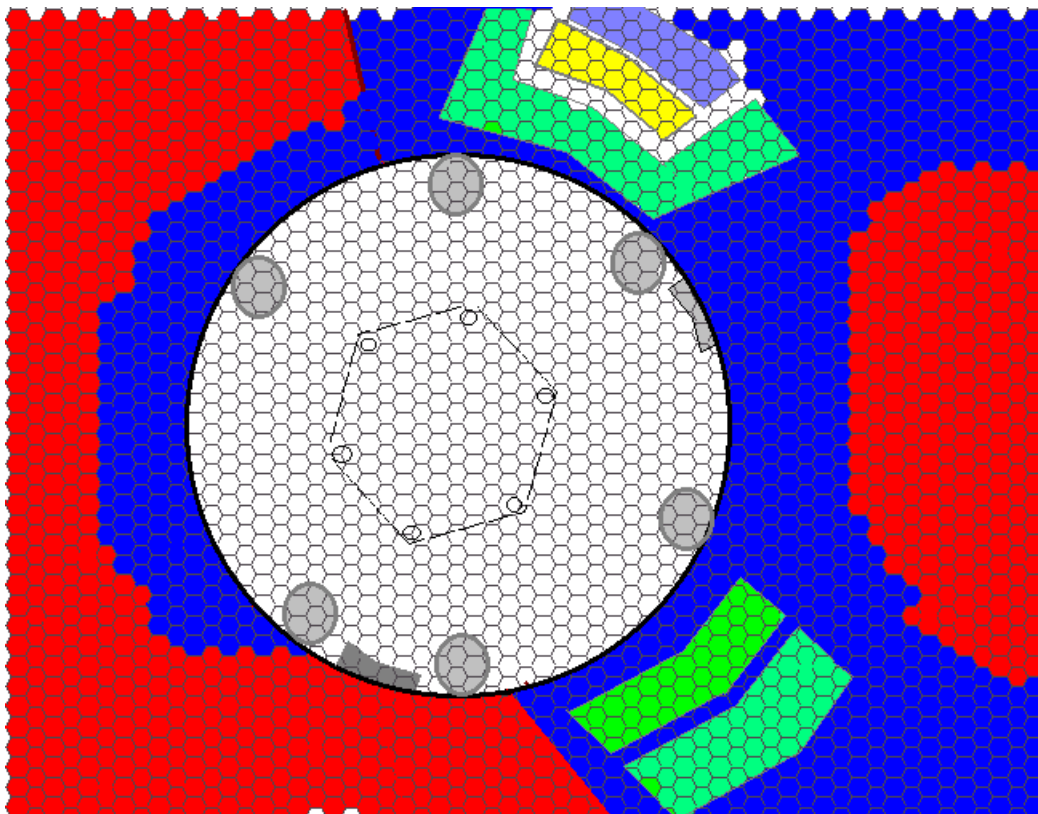
Stationed along the sides of the arena are six cannons. They run from the city's power source (a huge fusion reactor that broadcasts power directly into the arena power grid, which is accessed in a power control station under the area), with an override in the security booth.

The cannons have 20 BODY, 16 DEF, an OCV of 10, +6 versus Range Penalties, and a SPD 6. Their weapons have three settings:

Pain: EB 7d6, AVLD (versus Lack of Weakness, +1½), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½)

Crowd Control: EB 8d6 (sonic), Explosion (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½)

Anti-Supers/Vehicle: RKA 5d6, Autofire (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1)



COMMON SCENES

The plot of *Stars of Blood* has been left as a freeform module for the GM to plot.

However, common scenes in such movies include:

How I Got Into The Arena. Once they've been (marginally) accepted by the other Gladiators, the PCs need to have a quiet scene where they trade their life stories with the NPCs.

Runaway Beast: A beast escapes from its cage and is baring down upon the Runt. The only person who has any shot at saving him is a PC. Saving the Runt will go a long way to earning their trust.

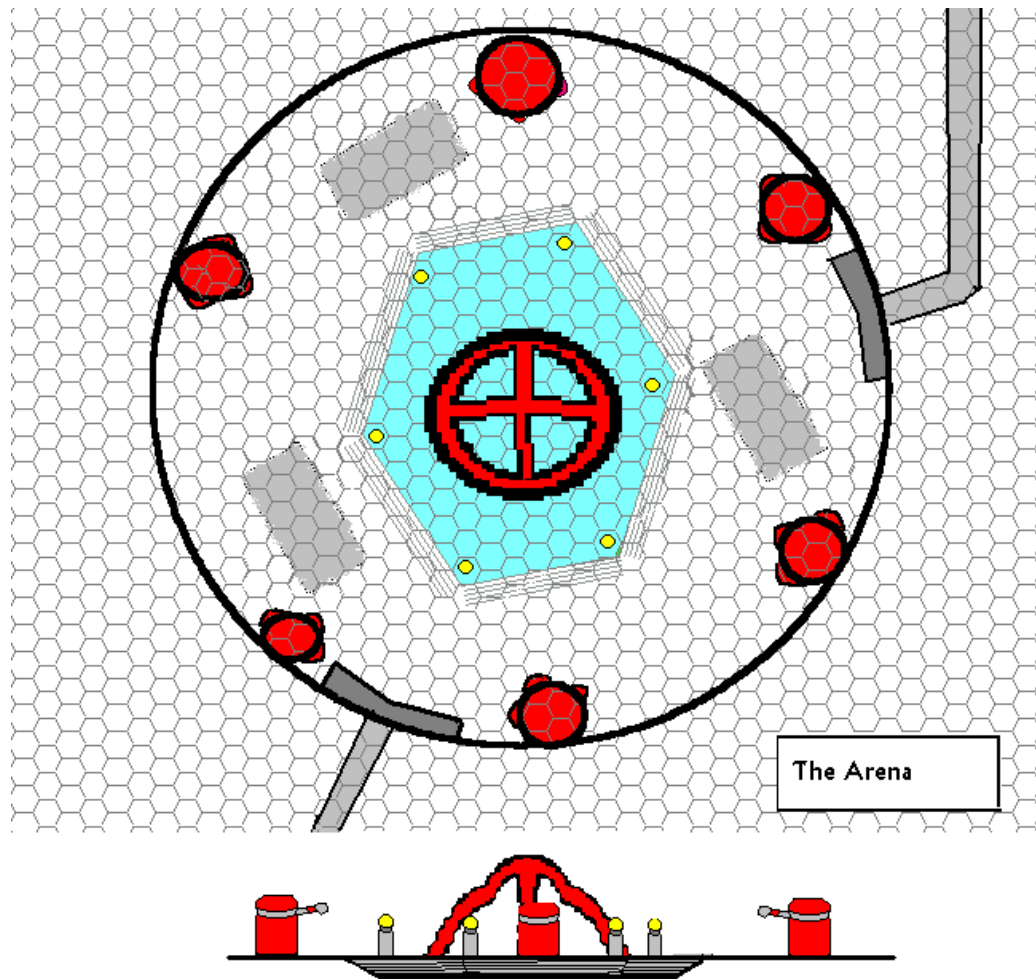
The Party: As a reward for a recent performance, the PCs are taken to a party held by wealthy socialites. They're supposed to be on their best behavior here, but at least one drunken jackass will proceed to insult the PCs and try to provoke them.

Teaming With A Hated Opponent: A PC is forced to team with one of his most hated rival gladiators while fighting space beasts. At some point during the fight, the opponent's knocked defenseless, and the beast will get a *coup de grace* on them. Does the PC save them?

Training and Humiliation: A PC spars with an arrogant opponent and humiliates him (usually by disarming him) and the character attacks him from behind.

Unsuccessful Revolt: Several gladiators decide to embark on a violent scheme (“we’ll grab the innocent bystanders when they get near, hold swords to their throats and demand an escape craft”) that is obviously both vicious and dumb. The PCs need to decide where they stand – if they stand aside and let it happen, obviously *someone’s* going to accuse them of cowardice.

Alternatively, the PCs could be asked to reveal who started it, remain silent, and are flogged. This display of “not breaking the code of manhood” could help bond the PCs with the other gladiators.



The cannons are not typically used in arena combat, except on low power settings (2-3d6 AVLD if a gladiator is fighting too defensively), or in special contests where the gladiators fight to activate the cannon controls and blow the other guy away.

Other features of the arena include:

The central bracket, a four way arch that’s used as a platform for “special” combats. Characters climb to the midway point on each bracket, the pool below them is filled with molten magma, and the competitors then battle to toss the opponent into the fiery death. Otherwise, a statue of the Queen is placed atop the arch, which is then gravitically levitated above the arena in the opening ceremonies.

The six gold and grey control pillars are used in games where one randomly lights and competitors have a limited amount of time (usually five seconds) to touch it or the cannons fire at them. They’re also used as posts which wild animals are tied to on 3” tethers.

The central pool, or depression, can be filled with mud, sand, magma, or other substances.

An invisible force wall (6 PD/6 ED) protects the audience at all times. The force wall around the Royal Box is 12 PD/12 ED. Because of the

force wall, there’s no retaining wall along the side of the arena.

BREAD AND CIRCUSES

The staple of gladiator movies is the competition, which takes place in a festival that’s full of pageantry and pomposity.

1. *Presentation:* At the start of the competition, all participants march into the arena, holding a pike that displays their personal flag or emblem. They stand in front of the Royal Box, plant their flags into the arena ground, robots pluck them, take them to the Queen and she ceremonially ignites them – this is meant to be symbolic of the Queen’s power over their lives.
2. *Robot Duels:* Robot versus Robot competition. Sometimes a lucky member of the audience is handed the controls. Some robot duels are Robot versus Man; Competitors in these competitions need to avoid being killed by the robot buzzsaws so they can press an “off switch” on the robot’s back, then run away as fast as they can before the robot self-destruct five second delay goes off.

DIGITAL HERO #5

3. *Intermission*: Servants pass out ground meat served in rolls of flavored bread, sweet-treats, and the local sweet-beer, all while people are entertained by clowns.
4. *Massacre*: Criminals (non-gladiators) are sent into the arena to battle gladiators in steel chariots. Those (six) criminals who manage to grab one of the control pillars may not be attacked (and will receive an acquittal), the others must fight to the death. Usually, only a couple of criminals survive.
5. *Beast Duels*: Beasts are released into the arena, typically fighting 2-4 armed gladiators. Characters fight until the animals or the characters are beaten. Sometimes, the characters are unarmed, and need to lure the animals into a force field pen, which is activated by a control on one of the six pillars. Suitable creatures for Animal Duels include: Giant Scorpions (*5th Edition Bestiary*, p. 90), Thane Created Undead (use the *Mummy* entry in the *5th Edition Bestiary*, p. 122), Grizzly Bears (p. 137), Tigers (p. 147), and Xenovore Warhounds (p. 213).
6. *Intermission*: Similar to #3, but the arena is flooded and drained to kill the smell of animal carcasses. If the killed beasts are edible, they're butchered on the spot and their meat is wrapped and given to people in the red seats to feed their families.
7. *Mano-A-Mano Duels*: The main attraction is Gladiator versus Gladiator. Most duels are simple duels between teams of four gladiators, two gladiators apiece square off, and when one is defeated, the victor engages the next available opponent from the opposite side until one team is left standing (attacking someone who's already engaged against someone else is illegal).

Most competitions are *Thrice Bloods*: Combatants battle with weapons until someone scores three hits, then the loser must get down on one knee and beg for mercy from the victor. Typically, it's given... though particularly sadistic winning gladiators will strike one more blow before walking away. In *All Blood* competitions, the loser doesn't walk away unless the crowd votes to spare him (which depends on a combination of performance, reputation, and showmanship – it's a GM call).

Most competitions involve weapons, but in *Open Competition* superheroes *really* get to cut loose; they fight using natural abilities until no members of an opposing team is left standing. Some competitions will involve the *Energy Spike*, a spear which does an RKA 7d6 AP when planted in an opponent's chest (3½d6 in *Star Hero*); the spike is placed on top of the bracket and the winner must grab it and dispatch the opponent.

Other competitions involve:

Strap Match: Two opponents, strapped together by a 2" flexi-steel tether, fight each other to reach the statue of the queen that's on top of the archway bracket. This duel is conducted over the lava pit, or a nasty variant where they fight to throw each other in a vat of insect attractant, and once doused, a swarm of *zolnak* (think killer bees) is released.

Spike Duel: In the center of the arena where two unarmed opponents battle on a tilting pit of spikes (this is conducted on a platform in the center of the arena, a DEX roll is required per round to remain standing). People who fall will fall onto 1d6-4 steel spikes, which do HKA 2d6, Armor Piercing each (reduce to 1d6+1 for *Star Hero*; also note that on a roll of 1-4, a character avoids the spikes). Someone doing a Throw maneuver may aim the opponent at a spike (the opponent may abort to a Dive For Cover to avoid, though he remains prone) and a person on the ground who's successfully grabbed a prone opponent may impale him for extra damage.

RUNNING THE PLOT

Oh, there's a plot?

Well, once the character has successfully made contact with the target/gotten the McGuffin, it's time to escape. Naturally, security should be tight and time is short, so the best opportunity to escape is in the arena, when they'll least expect it (and security outside the arena is at its lowest). As an additional plot complication, if you're running a Champions Universe campaign version of this scenario, make sure Ironclad is badly wounded so he becomes an additional burden in the PCs' escape.

Naturally, the bad guys will try to kill the PCs in the arena before they can escape, and when the clueless Queen objects to what's going on, Vilionus the Thane, seeing his grand plan about to fall apart, attempts to directly take control with his minions, the Charnel-Horses. At this point, the PCs and friendly gladiators face those allied to Vilionus, and have a big fight that settles everything.

Alternatively, PCs whose tastes run more to infiltration may attempt a less dramatic ending by desperately trying to smuggle the target of the scenario out of the arena, up the beanstalk, and then out the starport to safety. Security hard points (where battles will take place) will be the arena security center, the beanstalk entrance, and the starport. It's always good to include an obvious finish line (stargate, place where the hyperdrive can be activated) so there's a clear but dramatic finish.

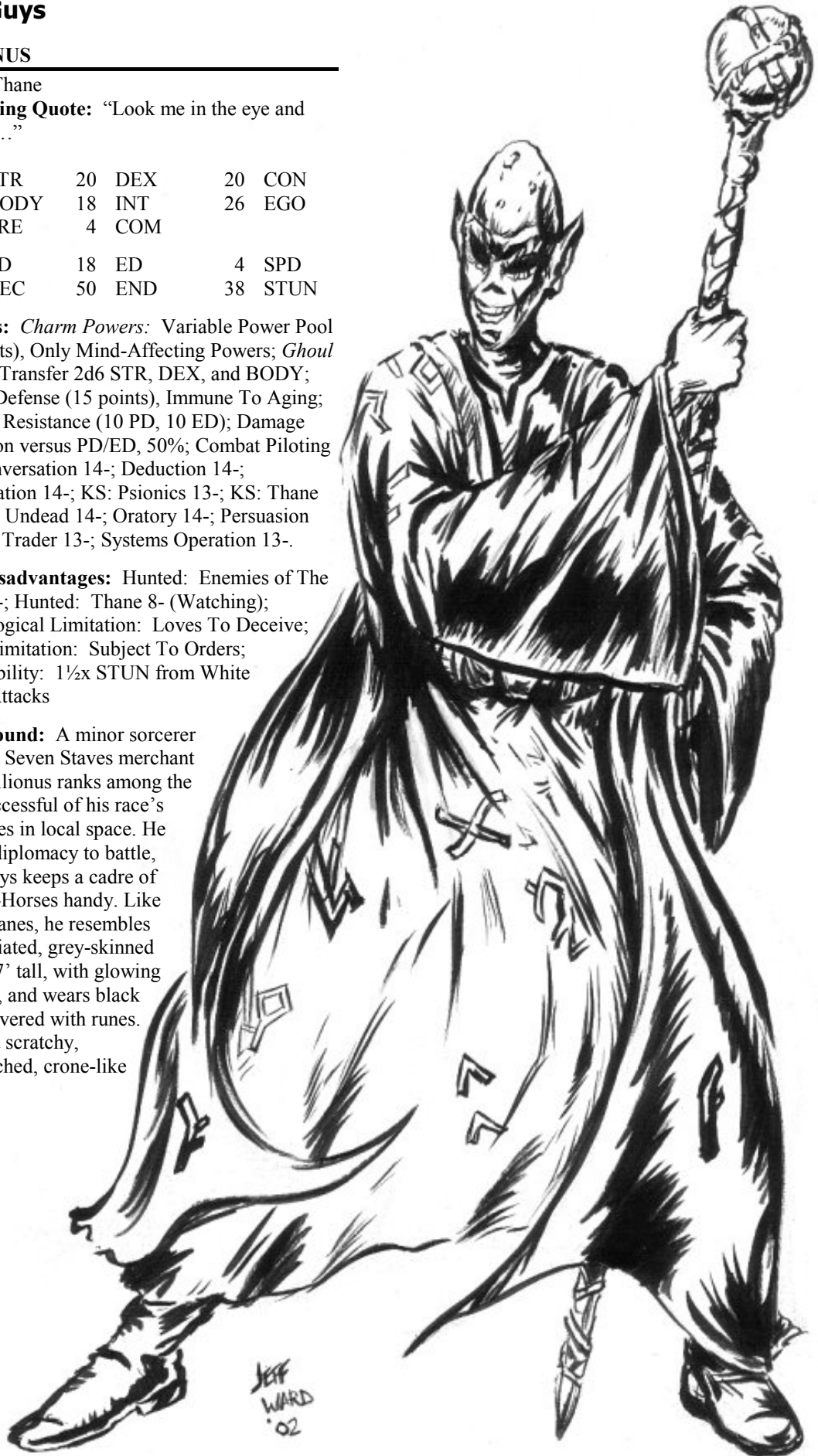
Bad Guys**VILIONUS****Race:** Thane**Identifying Quote:** "Look me in the eye and say that..."

20	STR	20	DEX	20	CON
18	BODY	18	INT	26	EGO
25	PRE	4	COM		
18	PD	18	ED	4	SPD
10	REC	50	END	38	STUN

Abilities: *Charm Powers:* Variable Power Pool (60 points), Only Mind-Affecting Powers; *Ghoul Touch:* Transfer 2d6 STR, DEX, and BODY; Mental Defense (15 points), Immune To Aging; Damage Resistance (10 PD, 10 ED); Damage Reduction versus PD/ED, 50%; Combat Piloting 13-; Conversation 14-; Deduction 14-; Interrogation 14-; KS: Psionics 13-; KS: Thane 13-; KS: Undead 14-; Oratory 14-; Persuasion 14-; PS: Trader 13-; Systems Operation 13-.

200+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Enemies of The Thane 8-; Hunted: Thane 8- (Watching); Psychological Limitation: Loves To Deceive; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders; Vulnerability: 1½x STUN from White Magic Attacks

Background: A minor sorcerer from the Seven Staves merchant caste, Vilionus ranks among the most successful of his race's operatives in local space. He prefers diplomacy to battle, but always keeps a cadre of Charnel-Horses handy. Like most Thanes, he resembles an emaciated, grey-skinned corpse, 7' tall, with glowing red eyes, and wears black robes covered with runes. He has a scratchy, high-pitched, crone-like voice.



DIGITAL HERO #5

CHARNEL-HORSES

Race: Many

Identifying Quote: "Kill them all...and increase our ranks!"

20 STR	20 DEX	30 CON
11 BODY	3 INT	8 EGO
25 PRE	2 COM	
8+ PD	8+ ED	4 SPD
10 REC	60 END	36 STUN

Abilities: *Gravefinder Rifle:* RKA 3d6 (high energy plasma), Penetrating, +1 Stun Multiplier, x25 Max Range, 14- Activation (Jammed), 4 Clips of 8 Charges; *Anti-Entangle Charge:* 3d6+1 RKA, Damage Shield, OAF belt, 1 Charge; Armor +10 PD, +10 ED; *Zombie:* LS: Self-contained, doesn't eat/sleep/excrete, immune to heat/cold/disease/aging; Sight Group Flash Defense (5 points); Regeneration (1 BODY per 5 hours); *War Harness:* 23" Flight, x4 NCM, 30 charges, Not Usable When Power Broadcast Signal Is Jammed (-¼); 8" Running; +4 Range Levels with Gravedigger

200+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Enemies of The Thane 8-; Hunted: Thane 8- (Watching); Psychological Limitation: Bloodthirsty; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders; Susceptibility: 3d6 STUN from Anti-Necromantic Adjustment Powers; Vulnerability: 1½x STUN from White Magic Attacks

Background: People killed by the Thane in battle are animated by the Gates of Darkness, The Thane Conqueror's Guild/Military Caste/Necromancers, and integrated into military technology. They are the Thane's mournful, eternal, ever-obedient soldiers in the army of Hell-On-The-Cosmos.



ROYAL GUARD

Race: Magnacentian

Identifying Quote: "We will protect the Queen... or die!"

20 STR	18 DEX	20 CON
15 BODY	13 INT	15 EGO
25 PRE	14 COM	
10+ PD	8+ ED	5 SPD
10 REC	50 END	40 STUN

Abilities: *Empathy:* Telepathy 6d6, Only To Determine Emotions (-½); *Wrist Blaster:* EB (magnetic, physical) 10d6, Double Knockback, 32 charges; Armor +10 PD, +10 ED; Mental Defense (8 points); *Sword-Handling:* All-out Strike (+1 OCV, -2 DCV, +4 DC); Attack (+0 OCV, +2 DCV, +2 DC); Charge (+0 OCV, +2 DCV, +2 DC); Defend (+2 OCV, +2 DCV, Block, Abort); Disarm (-1 OCV, +1 DCV, 45 STR to Disarm); Probe (+1 OCV, +3 DCV, Weapon Strike); Resist (+0 OCV, +0 DCV, 50 STR to resist shove); Shove (+0 OCV, +0 DCV, 55 STR to Shove); Combat Luck; +1 with All Combat; +1 with Sword-Handling; Animal Handling 12-; Breakfall 14-; Climbing 16-; Conversation 13-; Interrogation 13-; PS: Guard 13-; WF: Common Melee Weapons.

200+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Magnacentians 8- (Watching); Hunted: Thane 8- (Watching); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Background: The Magnacentian Royal Guard are some of the most respected soldiers in the realm. They protect the Queen and are highly photogenic in their royal white and blue uniforms (though they're also good fighters).



Lai Choi San, the Pirate Queen

by Joe Linehan

“This avenging business is where piratical characteristics of the ‘protectors’ come in. There is frequent and profitable avenging going on... Lai Choi San is said to be the worst of them all; she is said to be both ruthless and cruel. When her ships are merely doing patrol duty she doesn’t bother to accompany them, but when she goes out ‘on business’ she attends to it personally. When she climbs aboard any of her ships there is an ill-wind blowing for someone.”

I Sailed with Chinese Pirates
Aleko E. Lilius

Queen of the Pirates

Exotic locales, mysterious women, cunning villains, and swashbuckling action are the trademarks of some of the best pulp fiction. The life of one amazing woman possessed all of these.

Lai Choi San was dubbed the Queen of the Pirates by Aleko E. Lilius in 1930 in his book *I Sailed with Pirates*. His depiction of Lai inspired Milton Cainiff in creating The Dragon Lady and inspired Arthur Ransome in creating Misset Lee. The real life pirate is perfect for spicing up a pulp or golden age campaign in need of a little exotic flavor.

Background/History: A sickly child, her father on his trips around the coasts often took Lai. When all four of her brothers died, it was Lai who inherited his seven armored junks. It wasn’t long before she had more than a dozen ships operating out of Macao where she was granted refuge in exchange for protecting the colony’s enormous fishing fleets.

Lai was a short and slender woman who had a fondness for jade. She began her career as a pirate before her 25th birthday and was the dominant pirate in an area known for its buccaneers and brigands between roughly 1920 and 1940. Lilius described her as being almost regal in bearing, “Every move she made and every word she spoke told plainly that she expected to be obeyed, and as I had occasion to learn later, she was obeyed.”

For most of her life, Lai was single; though she had two husbands, and many lovers. Her first husband was killed shortly after a domestic dispute with Lai. The fate of her second husband is unknown. She raised two sons, as well. Her first child was raised to be a respectable businessman and she hoped he would emigrate

to America. Her second son was raised to inherit the family business.

Lai’s later life is not well documented. Certainly, she would have run into conflict with the Japanese when they began expanding their reach in Asia. She had the money to retire if that was her choice, but whether her son inherited the business or she was captured is not known.

Personality/Motivation: Lai Choi San would probably not go toe to toe in combat with even the weakest pulp hero. It’s not because she is incapable, but simply because that’s not her style. Lai is a shrewd and cunning mastermind. She is also an exotic beauty whose mercenary motivations may make her a powerful ally for the heroes one time and a ruthless enemy another.

Lai is capable of holding the respect of a great number of pirates and ruffians who are not known for their enlightened views towards women. She has earned their respect and obedience through the force of her powerful personality. She is not one to be trifled with.

Quote: “You have entered my waters, merchant. Prepare to be boarded. I believe negotiations are in order.”

Powers/Tactics: The pirates of the South Seas operated very much like American gangsters. They had very large protection rackets, which required fishermen and merchants to pay up to be protected from other pirates. Because of this role as protector, Lai is frequently seen as a Robin Hood type who fought other pirates for the common man in this role.

Kidnapping was almost as profitable as the protection rackets. When one pirate ship defeated another in combat, they wouldn’t kill their captives. Killing captives lead to authorities getting involved in your business and victims’ families swearing revenge. Instead, they would take them prisoner and ransom them back to their families for hundreds of dollars. Only when the family refused to pay – usually because they wished to inherit the captive’s wealth – would the victim be sent to a watery grave.

In addition to those crimes, Lai Choi San and her competitors engaged in murder, robbery, and assorted tactics favored by pirates and gangsters throughout time. However, many in the region who found her easy to deal with than her more bloodthirsty rivals generally perceived Lai as a benevolent force.

The junks that the pirates used were built more for speed and maneuverability than for fighting power. The ships had a flat-bottom with no keel, flat bow, and a high stern. The junk’s

DIGITAL HERO #5

rudder can be lowered to provide for greater steering in deep water or raised to make it more maneuverable in the shallows. Pirate junks tended to be 75 to 100 feet long and roughly 1/3 as wide. They were traditionally built for speed, but their velocity varied greatly based on the amount of weight they were carrying.

The crew of the ship stayed in cabins in the cargo hold, while the captain had a cabin on the poop deck. Lai's cabin was described as "no bigger than a grand piano box," but at the same time, extremely well decorated with intricate hardwood carvings.

Lai's ship was armed with a dozen smoothbore cannons and another two of more modern design. These were augmented by the rifles and pistols of the crew that were kept safely next to the cabin's quarters. Most of the time, the ship sailed with the cannons camouflaged by heavy plates making the ship appear to be an ordinary merchant junk.

The crew of one of the pirate junks varied greatly, but 40 pirates is not a bad estimate. Further, Lai was usually accompanied by two female servants who never left her side. Like Lai, these servants would carry a rifle and fight when the ship went into action.

Campaign Use: The South Seas provide a wonderfully exotic location for a *Pulp Hero* game, and Lai would certainly be one of the more interesting people a hero could meet in the area. Lai's role as protector and gangster opens up a large number of possibilities.

If you wish to, Lai could actually be used as a heroic ally. If the pirates that the heroes are battling are a natural enemy to the boats under her protection, she will definitely aid the heroes.

An even more likely possibility would be that her activities would bring her into conflict with the increasingly imperialist Japanese navy. Heroes finding themselves in conflict with the Japanese Empire, could certainly use a friendly pirate fleet to assist them.

If you want to portray her as a villain, poor fishermen in the area who cannot afford to pay for Lai's protection could have contacted the team. It was certainly beyond the means of the locals or even her rivals to stop Lai.

Lai might have been hired to kidnap or transport the heroes for one of their enemies. The Orient is full of villainous possibilities and Lai could serve as a great mercenary for one of them. She could also kidnap another victim that the heroes need to rescue.

Lai would make a very exotic alternative to the sweet, but dull girlfriend waiting back home for a hero. A romance with the exotic and alluring Lai could lead to all sorts of complications in both the public and private lives of any hero who got involved with her.

In a typical superheroic Champions game, Lai lacks the firepower to directly confront even a weak and inexperienced team. Her pirates may be able to give a weak team a battle by sheer numbers, but few players would probably find watching their GM roll attacks for a couple hundred pirates to be a scintillating evening of gaming.

On the other hand, as a pirate Lai would certainly be well-versed in smuggling both people and items. If a villain of more equal power level found himself in the Far East, Lai would probably be quite happy to provide safe transport.

Lai might also come into possession of an ancient artifact that would make her a match for the heroes. Lai would probably not seek world domination or destruction with such power, but she would most certainly attempt to use it to increase her personal wealth and power.

Above all, La Choi San's motivations are her own. The legends call her both a ruthless mercenary and a big-hearted protector of the innocent. In fact, she was probably neither and both.

Appearance: Lai was a rather slender woman, and fairly short. Her hair was jet black, with jade pins gleaming in the knot at the neck. She also wore earrings and bracelets of jade. She was almost always exquisitely dressed in silk and satin clothing. She had a very intelligent face that was neither purely Chinese nor Mongolian in appearance. She had a very ageless look that made it quite difficult to determine her age. However, she apparently began her career in her late teens and was at her peak in her twenties and thirties.

Lai Choi San, the Pirate Queen**Total Cost: 240**

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

75+ Disadvantages

10	Hunted: Various Governments 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture, Watching)
15	Psychological Limitation: Greedy (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Mercenary Attitude (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Refuses To Be Or Appear Weak (Common, Strong)
15	Reputation: Pirate Queen of the South Seas (11-, Extreme)
5	Rivalry: Other Pirates (Professional)
90	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 240**Total Characteristics Cost: 62**

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

Cost Powers **END**

10	<i>Pistol:</i> RKA 1½d6; OAF (-1), 6 Charges, 2 Clips (-½)	[6c]
3	<i>Hair Pin:</i> HKA 1 pip (½d6 w/ STR); IAF (-1)	1

Martial Arts: Kung Fu**Maneuver OCV DCV Notes**

4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Disarm	-1	+1	
4	Dodge	-	+5	Dodge, Abort
4	Punch	0	+2	4d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	2d6+v/5

Perks

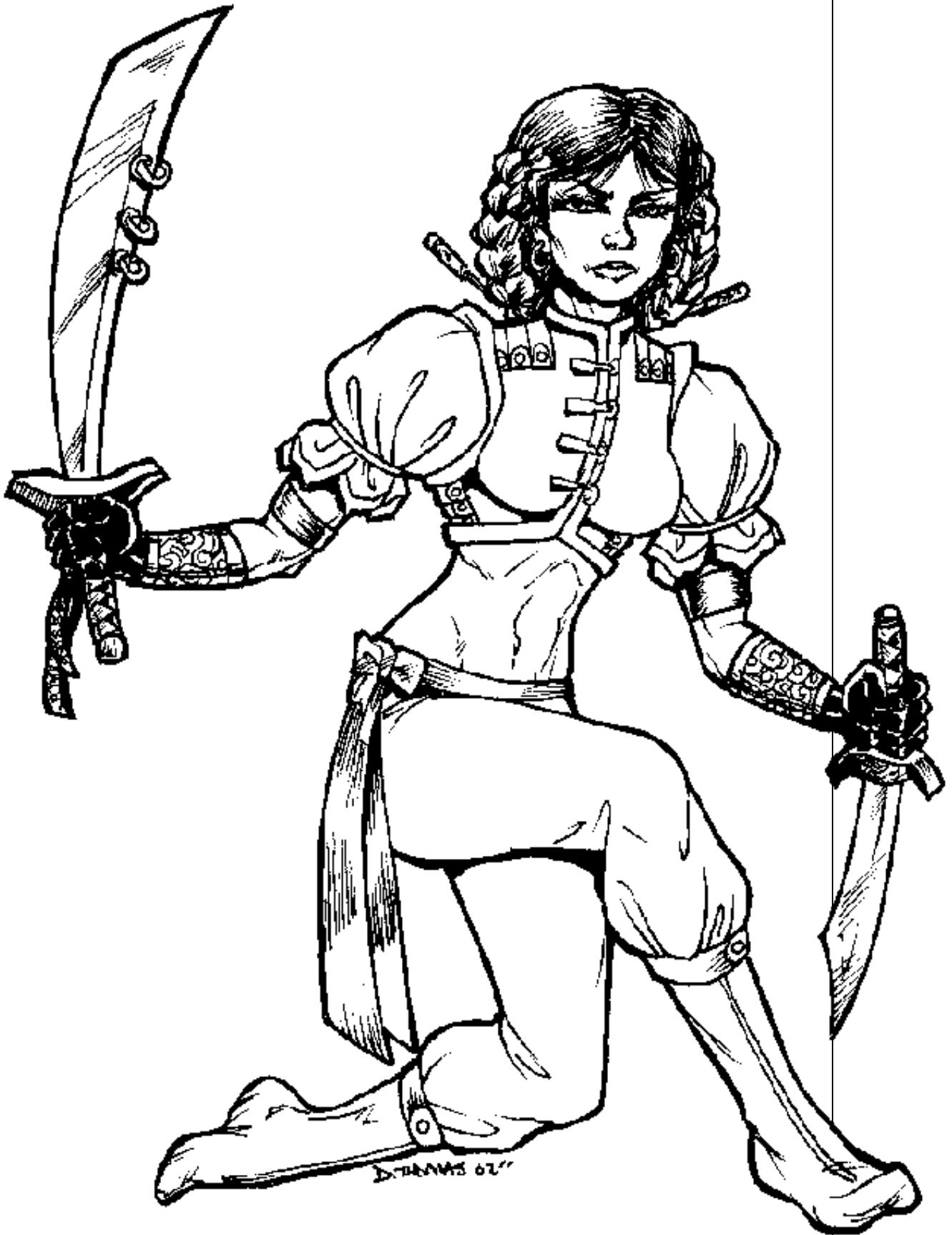
8	Base (40)
15	Money: Filthy Rich
55	Followers: 500 Crew (25 Base, 25 Disadvantages)
15	Vehicle (75)

Skills

16	+2 with All Combat
3	AK: Pacific Ocean 12-
3	Bribery 13-
3	Combat Piloting/Boating (Junk) 12-
3	Concealment 12-
3	Forgery 11-
3	Gambling 11-
3	High Society 13-
1	Language: English (Basic Conversation, Chinese Native)
5	Navigation 13-
3	PS: Pirate 12-
5	Stealth 13-
3	Streetwise 13-
5	Tactics 13-
3	Trading 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 188

Lai Choi San, the Pirate Queen



Pirates

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

Total Characteristics Cost: 11

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

Cost Powers **END**

Martial Arts: Kung Fu

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4 Disarm	-1	+1	
4 Dodge	-	+5	Dodge, Abort
4 Punch	0	+2	4½d6 Strike
3 Throw	+0	+1	2½d6+v/5

Skills

- 3 AK: Pacific Ocean 11-
- 1 Combat Piloting/Boating (Junk) 8-
- 3 Concealment 11-
- 3 Gambling 11-
- 1 Navigation 8-
- 3 PS: Pirate 11-
- 3 Stealth 11-
- 3 Streetwise 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 39

Total Cost: 50

25+ Disadvantages

- 10 Hunted: Lai Choi San 14- (Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Area, Capture, Watching)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Greedy (Common, Moderate)
- 5 Rivalry: Other Pirates (Professional)

Total Disadvantage Points: 50

Typical Pirate Junk

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
60	STR	0	Lift 100 tons; 12d6 HTH [6]
20	BODY	0	
13x4	SIZE	50	100 tons; -10" KB; -6 DCV
4	DEF	6	
13	DEX	9	OCV: 4/DCV: 0
3	SPD	7	Phases: 4, 8, 12

Total Characteristics Cost: 72

Movement: Swimming: 4"/8"

Cost Powers **END**

- 14 *Smoothbore Cannon:* RKA 3d6; Extra Time: Full Phase (-½), OIF Bulky (-1), 12 Charges (-¼), Limited Arc Of Fire (60°; -½)
- 20 *More Cannons:* +13 Cannons (12 Smoothbores, and 2 modern)
- 6 *Sailing:* 4" Swimming, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
- 12 *Water Vessel:* -6" Running (0" Total)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 27

Total Cost: 99

75+ Disadvantages

- 10 Hunted: Various Other Pirates 11- (As Pow)
- 10 Hunted: Government Authorities 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 5 Reputation: Lai Choi San's Ship (8-)

Total Disadvantage Points: 100

Total Character Cost: 15

