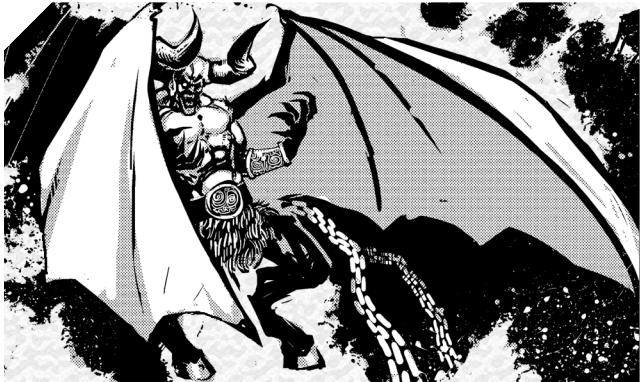


GURPS®

Fourth Edition

MONSTER HUNTERS™ 2

THE MISSION™



Written by JASON "PK" LEVINE

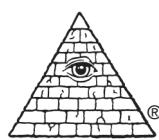
Illustrated by ROD REIS

An e23 Sourcebook for GURPS®

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

Additional Material: Sean Punch

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INTRODUCTION

"Why are you bothering m- oof!" Pitt grunted as the muscular hunter slammed him into the alley wall.

"Four girls dead. Two kidnapped. And word is, you were at the scene," Scott growled. "If I were you, I'd start talking **fast**. What were you doing in Antoine Colby's house?" Behind him, the rest of the team stayed alert for backup.

"Never heard that name in my life," the thug wheezed.

"Save it," Brad snapped, "I hacked your e-mail to be sure. You **told him** to meet you there."

Danielle moved closer. "Murder isn't your style, Pitt. What's really going on?"

Too late, Scott realized that Pitt had been slowly working a bracelet into his grasp. The charm broke with a snap, in a brilliant flash of light that stunned the champions. As the spots cleared, they could barely make out his form leaving the far end of the alley.

Danielle shook her head. "I hate it when they run."

"I don't." Everett grinned and sprinted after his quarry.

The monster-hunting tradition goes back centuries. Beowulf may be the archetypal example: a warrior who stood apart from all other men, taking on impossibly dangerous creatures, risking his life to save others. Today, "monster hunters" remains a popular genre, with new films, books, and TV shows coming out every year. There are few things as viscerally satisfying as a larger-than-life hero defeating a manifestation of pure evil!

GURPS Monster Hunters 2: The Mission attempts to capture this feeling, building on the rules and assumptions from *GURPS Monster Hunters 1: Champions*. Such a game needs to focus on the *hunt* – from the investigation to the final battle – and this book provides streamlined rules allowing you to do just that!

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Players should read the first two chapters to be aware of what kinds of things their characters are expected to do. Doing so *before* making a character, if possible, may help in deciding which advantages, disadvantages, and skills to take. For convenience, all of the important traits for a champion to have in a given situation are listed in **boldface**. With a few specific exceptions, this does not include *wildcard skills*, which are defined as much by the situation as by the skill being replaced. Follow the description of the wildcard skill – for example, any roll against Occultism can be replaced with one against Lore!, even if the rules don't mention Lore! explicitly. See *Wildcard Summary* (p. 5) for more.

The Mission provides the GM with guidance for setting up a challenging, fun hunt, from a simple system for handling

investigations to streamlined combat rules. He'll also find a wealth of advice for setting up an ongoing campaign, with dark conspiracies and interesting bad guys. In short, everything needed to run a great *Monster Hunters* game!

Many of the rules herein intentionally deviate from "official" *GURPS* and are *not* recommended for anything other than over-the-top, cinematic, supernatural action! The advice herein assumes that you're using the templates and rules from *Champions*. For readers without that book, *The Mission* will still provide plenty of useful information about running a high-powered supernatural game.

What Is a Monster Hunter?

Some horror fiction depicts ordinary people surviving a monster attack, and sometimes even going on to defeat the attacker: a household fends off zombies, bar patrons stop a group of vampires, etc. While these "ordinary folks in extraordinary situations" are certainly heroes, they are not the focus of this series. A monster *hunter* is a formidable foe with the will and the strength to seek out and destroy The Enemy. It's about being proactive, but it's also about being special.

The majority of cinematic hunters work alone – but this isn't a genre requirement. *Most* fiction, monster-hunting or otherwise, tends to focus on a single hero known as the "viewpoint character." This makes it easier for the audience to identify with him, but it *doesn't* translate well to an RPG. The *Monster Hunters* series assumes a typical three- to six-gamer group, which is why the templates from *Champions* each cover a distinct niche instead of being omni-competent. For good fictional examples of monster-hunting *teams* (as opposed to lone wolves), see *Vampire\$*, *Blade: Trinity*, and the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Some of the material in *The Mission* was adapted from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons* and *GURPS Action 2: Exploits*, both by Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch. *GURPS Horror*, by Kenneth Hite, was a source of inspiration for this entire book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reverend Jason "PK" Levine became a monster hunter at a very young age, when he first mastered the use of a flashlight as a weapon against the closet creatures. He has since grown up into the Assistant *GURPS* Line Editor and written a few books, including *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 5: Allies*, *GURPS Psionic Powers*, *GURPS Psionic Campaigns*, *GURPS Psis*, and *GURPS Powers: Divine Favor*. He lives in northern Georgia with his adorable wife, a couple of in-laws, two attack dogs, four attack cats, and several hundred (peaceful) Transformers.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE HUNT

"So we know they're locked in a couple of warehouses now. Great. **That** narrows it down." Scott sighed and tossed the city map onto the table.

Danielle raised an eyebrow, "It's more than we knew, right? Look, it's almost dark. Why don't you and Everett hit the tax collector's office? See if you can find a paper trail connecting Colby to these warehouses. Brad and I can track down Shayna for information – the shipyards are her area of expertise."

"Uh, maybe I should stay here, actually."

"She doesn't bite, Brad," Everett said with a grin.

"Ha ha. Seriously, we're going to need the element of surprise. I think I can come up with a charm to help us get in and out quickly." Brad turned to Danielle, "You okay to find her?"

"Of course. So let's all meet back here in six hours. We need to be thorough, but fast – no one deserves what's in store for those girls."

There's a reason champions are known as "monster hunters" and not "monster killers." *Hunting* a monster takes

more than proficiency with a weapon – it requires research, analysis, tracking, chasing, planning, and much more! A typical adventure might go as follows:

1. *Discovery*: Finding evidence of The Enemy's actions.
2. *Investigation*: Amassing clues until the big picture is clear.
3. *Pursuit*: Finding and entering the bad guys' lair.
4. *Confrontation*: A fight or some other resolution.
5. *Aftermath*: Wrapping up loose ends and recovering.

The GM should stick with this formula at first, then find ways to modify it. For example, *Confrontation* might lead back into *Investigation* (*Extracting Information*, p. 16) or could be a starting point for the adventure (*In Media Res*, p. 17). Different motives (*Foiling the Plan*, p. 16) will also keep things fresh; even if two quests have the same structure and type of antagonist, one to stop witches from summoning a city-destroying flame will feel different from one to deal with witches who are being blackmailed. See the adventure seeds under *Sample Campaigns* (pp. 35-37) for more ideas.

DISCOVERY

The discovery will usually make up the *introduction* to the adventure, rather than an active part of it. The team is given, or stumbles across, information which suggests The Enemy is taking some nefarious action. This will generally consist of circumstantial evidence – someone was attacked by an unusually large animal, a murder victim was drained of all blood, etc. – making a more detailed investigation necessary to figure out the *truth*. The information may come from any source, but the most common include:

- A news report (newspaper, TV, or Internet).
- Coincidentally stumbling across a crime scene while out.
- A friend or neighbor, who knows a bit about what's going on.
- A PC's **Ally**, **Contact**, **Dependent**, or **Patron**.
- An organization represented by **Duty** (see below).
- One of the bad guys coming after a hero with **Divine Curse** (**Monster Magnet**) or **Enemies** (**Monster of the week**).

I live in the weak and the wounded.

–Mary Hobbes, Session 9

- A stranger in need (if the team advertises or has a reputation).
- A vision, via **Blessed**, **Precognition**, or **Prophetic Dreams**.

DO YOUR DUTY

An organization to which one or more PCs has a **Duty** may simply show up, dossier in hand, with orders to get to the bottom of this. However, even if the employer is also a **Patron**, the GM will usually keep this dossier light on details . . . and thus still in need of a full investigation. After all, if the agency had all the answers, they wouldn't need the champions, right? (Handing the team a *complete* dossier makes it possible to skip right to the *Pursuit* phase, which can make for a fun one-shot for the dedicated slayers, but may make things boring for the sages, sleuths, etc.)

If the entire team has a **Duty**, it's logical for this to be what motivates the mission. But when only *some* members do, it's important that this not become "free points." In such a case, the GM should roll to see if anyone's **Duty** comes up; if it does, take the player of that PC aside and give him an *extra* responsibility. This doesn't have to be anything negative, just something extra to be accountable for: Obtain blood samples from each bad guy; carry, safeguard, and use a new psychotronic meter; accompany and protect an NPC expert; etc.

Wildcard Summary

The GM and players can use this “cheat sheet” as a reminder of which normal skills can be replaced by the wildcard skills from *Champions* (pp. 28-31). As explained there, this is *not* an exhaustive list; the GM should always be extremely lenient in allowing a wildcard skill to handle any roll related to its concept!

Blade! – *When using a cutting, impaling, or piercing weapon:* Acrobatics, Axe/Mace, Broadsword, Climbing, Dropping, Fast-Draw, Forced Entry, Holdout, Intimidation, Knife, Polearm, Rapier, Saber, Shortsword, Smallsword, Spear, Throwing, Two-Handed Axe/Mace, and Two-Handed Sword. *For rolls involving such weapons:* Armoury, Connoisseur, Current Affairs, Merchant, Observation, Search, and Streetwise.

Detective! – Administration, Body Language, Criminology, Detect Lies, Electronics Operation (Security or Surveillance), Forensics, Intelligence Analysis, Observation, Research, Search, and Shadowing. *To analyze clues:* Biology, Chemistry, Housekeeping, and Physics. *For interviews:* Savoir-Faire, Interrogation, and Streetwise.

Gun! – Beam Weapons, Crossbow, Gunner, Guns, and Liquid Projector. *For rolls involving guns:* Acrobatics, Armoury, Brawling, Connoisseur, Current Affairs, Dancing, Dropping, Fast-Draw, Holdout, Jumping, Merchant, Observation, Search, Spear, Streetwise, and Throwing. *Using a gun for the task:* Electronics Operation, Explosives, Intimidation, and Mechanic.

Inventor! – Bioengineering, Engineer, and Mathematics. *For invention or gadjeteering:* Any skill except those needed to find parts (e.g., Scrounging).

Lore! – Exorcism, Occultism, Research, and *monster-related* Hidden Lore. *For investigating The Enemy:* Area

Knowledge, Biology, Criminology, Current Affairs, Diagnosis, Expert Skill (Psionics), Forensics, History, Intelligence Analysis, Observation, Physics (Paraphysics), Psychology, Search, Tactics, Thaumatology, Theology, and Veterinary.

Medic! – Bioengineering, Biology (Biochemistry), Diagnosis, Electronics Operation (Medical or Scientific), Esoteric Medicine, Expert Skill (Epidemiology), Hazardous Materials (Biological), First Aid, Hypnotism, Physician, Physiology, Psychology, and Surgery. *When dealing with drugs or toxins:* Chemistry, Herb Lore, Naturalist, Pharmacy, and Poisons. *With medical systems or records:* Administration, Computer Operation, and Diplomacy.

Science! – Anthropology, Astronomy, Bioengineering, Biology, Chemistry, Engineer, Geology, Mathematics, Metallurgy, Meteorology, Naturalist, Paleontology, Physics, Physiology, Psychology, and Sociology.

Talker! – Acting, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Intimidation, Leadership, Propaganda, Public Speaking, Savoir-Faire, Sex Appeal, Streetwise, and Teaching. *For social use only:* Administration, Carousing, Fortune-Telling, Merchant, Politics. *For casual interviews:* Interrogation.

Ten-Hut! – Armoury (Body Armor, Heavy Weapons, and Small Arms), Camouflage, Electronics Operation and Repair (Comm, EW, and Sensors), Engineer (Combat), Explosives, First Aid, Forward Observer, Gesture, Hiking, Interrogation, Leadership, Mechanic (for military vehicles), Parachuting, Propaganda, Running, Savoir-Faire (Military), Scuba, and Stealth. *To fit in on a base:* Acting, Architecture, and Area Knowledge. *To discover or plan a combat:* Intelligence Analysis, Strategy, and Tactics.

INVESTIGATION

Rogues and monsters are rarely polite enough to give the champions advance notice of their plans. Figuring out what's going on will require some legwork, and there are many different angles to explore. The goal of investigation is to make successful *deductions* – analyzing the clues at hand to figure out the “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” and “why” that reveal the big picture. See *Deduction* (pp. 9-11) for more on the skill rolls – and the substantial penalties! – involved.

Fortunately, those huge penalties can be worn away by finding *clues*. Clues are the “raw material” that fuel deductions – no deduction roll can be made without first obtaining an appropriate clue! (See *Lucky Guesses*, p. 6, for exceptions.) Whenever a hunter obtains a new piece of information that is relevant to the case (in the GM's opinion), it counts as a clue! For each clue, the GM will decide which kind of deduction roll it would help (e.g., “what” or “where”). This gives the team two benefits:

1. For this investigation, that type of deduction roll gets a cumulative +1 (or +2 if obtained with a critical success).

2. The GM will make that type of deduction roll for everyone on the team, immediately after they learn the clue.

Failure to obtain a clue has no adverse effect, but a critical failure confuses the situation so badly that *every* type of deduction for the rest of the adventure gets a cumulative -1!

Example: Many “new-age” practitioners have recently gone missing. Danielle calls her Contact (p. 8), a shaman who tells her his community has been feeling “bad vibes” lately, though no one has yet gone missing. The GM declares this a “what” clue and rolls a “what” deduction for everyone (at +1), but no one succeeds. Everett searches the web (p. 7) and finds a news report in which the victim's roommate describes coming home to the door “smashed open.” The GM rules this is another “what” clue, and rolls for everyone again, but this time at +2. Danielle succeeds by 1, and concludes that this is consistent with a demonic attack.

Nothing Can Be Something: A success that refutes some hypothesis isn't the same as a failure that doesn't test it – or a critical failure that results in a “false positive.” Certain knowledge that something *didn't* happen is useful information in itself! Suppose a team decides to check whether anyone bought a destructive grimoire recently (p. 7). Success on the Research roll might reveal that no such sale happened, which is *still* a clue, while failure leaves the subject up in the air.

Minor Clues: Sometimes a piece of information is only somewhat related to the investigation, and the GM isn't sure whether it should count as a clue. If so, he can treat it as a “+0 clue” – one that still allows a deduction roll, but without a bonus.

Major Clues: The GM is always free to increase the bonus of a particularly important clue. Learning a critical piece of information may give +2 or more to a particular deduction roll! This can be a good way to reward a team for intelligently following up on existing data. Alternatively, the clue may give the usual +1, but to *multiple* types of deduction rolls! For example, access to a detailed police report may count as a “what, when, *and* where” clue, if the cops have been heavily involved in the case.

Beating a Dead Horse: Hammering away at the same source is rarely effective. If a champion fails a roll to obtain a clue (or succeeds, but wishes he'd done *better*), he or another member of the team can try again, but at a cumulative -4. Only queries that are *significantly* different avoid this penalty. It can only be removed by coming back with new information that casts the potential clue in a new light; e.g., coming back to talk to a witness after finding proof that he lied to you.

Lucky Guesses: Once per *adventure*, an investigator with **Intuition** may make a single deduction roll without having to find a clue. A smart detective will wait until a few clues have accumulated, then use this for a “bonus roll.” Similarly, **Serendipity** may be used to simply *find* a clue, though the GM decides what type.

Pieces of the Puzzle

Investigation is a key part of monster hunting; it will likely take up more game time than any other aspect of the campaign. Because of this, the GM may instinctively try to make the plot as rich and complex as possible. Unfortunately, the line between “complex” and “convoluted” is a thin one. What seems obvious and logical to the GM may not seem so to the players as they try to unravel the truth. The following guidelines may help the GM plan and run a investigation that's fun for *everyone*.

- *Keep it simple.* Resist the urge to include more than one plot twist, conspiracy, or false cover story per adventure. If a witness is secretly in league with the demonic bad guy, don't *also* have said bad guy turn out to be a witch masquerading as a demon. Such things are easier to follow on paper than when learned in the middle of a game session.

- *Advance the plot.* As much as possible, try to have each clue suggest where to find the next one. A report may list witnesses by name, a witness may mention the nearby crime scene, and so on.

- *Pay attention to your players.* If they seem frustrated and confused, throw them a bone. A witness calls back with more information, the television news mentions something useful, etc. Because this is a freebie, it doesn't count as a clue for deduction purposes, but it's a way to point them in the right direction.

CRIME SCENES

The scene of a murder, abduction, theft, etc. will often contain several clues. The GM decides what, if any, physical intelligence is in each area, and rolls *secretly* against the skill(s) being used to search. That way, champions who turn up nothing won't know if there really were no clues or if their rolls simply failed. In all cases, if the perpetrator used Housekeeping to destroy evidence, all of the unopposed rolls below become a Quick Contest against his skill!

If the players are about to walk away from a useful scene without searching it, the GM should make a secret IQ roll for anyone with **Intuition**. Success gives the feeling that there's something important here – but *not* what it is!

Getting into an actual crime scene (occupied by the authorities), or one in an area with restricted access, may require *Breaking and Entering* (pp. 12-13), *Social Engineering* (pp. 8-9), or help from a Patron (pp. 26-27).

Corpses: To determine any cause of death unobvious enough to rate as a clue, the roll is against **Diagnosis** or **Surgery**. Use **Veterinary** for animals.

Forensics: Analyzing samples for clues requires a forensics lab and a **Forensics** roll. Some samples can be further analyzed with a scientific skill like **Biology** or **Chemistry**; this *may* provide another clue.

General Analysis: At a crime scene, a success on **Criminology** will deduce enough about what was done to reveal a clue; critical success might figure out something about the enemy's organization or identity. After examining multiple scenes, **Intelligence Analysis** can provide further clues.

Hidden Items: Finding something that has been deliberately concealed in a room or a vehicle, or on a corpse, requires a **Search** roll. If the hider used Holdout or Smuggling to do so, the searcher must *win* a Quick Contest against that skill; otherwise, this is an uncontested roll, though the GM can apply modifiers for the item's size.

Trails: A successful **Tracking** roll can discover how many people or creatures were present and the general direction that someone who left the area went, either of which might qualify as important. A follow-up appropriate **Hidden Lore** roll at +4 will reveal what kind of monsters were at the scene; the GM will make this roll secretly. For animals (including shifted lycanthropes), you may substitute **Veterinary** for **Hidden Lore**, if higher.

RESEARCH

Hitting the books is a time-honored tradition among monster hunters. The GM will always adjudicate whether a source will hold the information sought by the heroes – if the information isn't there, no degree of success will uncover it. Of course, a critical success *may* reflect stumbling across a book in the wrong place or an intriguing note; e.g., the DMV records certainly won't reveal who in town is a witch, but on a critical success, the team may find unofficial notes (in the desk of one paranoid employee) on that very subject!

Unless stated otherwise, all research attempts take an hour. For *Books and Records* (p. 7), a successful **Speed-Reading** roll reduces this to 30 minutes.

Books and Records

Access to an occult library allows a roll to find information pertinent to the monster. The GM will roll against the *higher* of the champion's **Occultism**, **Research** or appropriate **Hidden Lore**. (This assumes a monster; replace Hidden Lore with **Expert Skill (Psionics)** for psis, **Thaumatology** for witches, **Biology** for experiments, etc.) Since the best books are *old*, add +1 for every three points the researcher has in ancient written **Languages**, using the costs *before* any discount for Language Talent.

A religious library (whether in a seminary or the back room of a charms dealer) allows a roll against **Theology**, though this will only turn up clues for certain monsters, depending on the specialty – see *Know Thy Enemy* (**Champions**, p. 16).

Public libraries only allow rolls against **Research** (for general information) or **Current Affairs** (for newspaper and magazine headlines relevant to the specialty), and do not contain answers to most supernatural queries (-4 to all such requests). Public records (e.g., the back room of the DMV) are often harder to access – like crime scenes (p. 6) – but you may use the higher of **Administration** or **Research**, and the information obtained will be more detailed.

High-quality libraries or records sources give a bonus, from +1 for a large university's stacks to +3 for the Library of Congress. In all cases, multiple attempts to find information from the same library or records source are at a cumulative -2 instead of the usual -4 (*Beating a Dead Horse*, p. 6).

Computers

Web Search: Researchers may use the Internet as a broad but shallow source of information. Use **Computer Operation** (not Research!) to make the best use of a search engine. The lack of depth only nets a minor clue (p. 6), however, and the GM will not answer the question in detail *unless* the answer was publicly available. A critical success obtains hard-to-find information, giving the usual +2 clue. Multiple search attempts are as for libraries (see above).

Hacking: A savvy computer geek may obtain better data by hacking his way into an appropriate database. This requires a **Computer Hacking** roll, at no penalty for a personal database, -2 for a corporate one, -4 for a government one, or -8 for "black ops" (whether government or private). The hacker chooses what type of database to attack – there are *millions* of them out there – though the GM is free to declare that certain pieces of information are only available in databases with a minimum level of security.

Success doesn't net a clue, but gets him in, so he can use the better of **Computer Operation** or **Research** to pull up specific data, as for records (see above); since well-guarded databases have more information, these rolls are at -2 for a personal database, no modifier for a corporate one, +2 for a government one, and +4 for a "black ops" database.

Failure may mean he made himself known; roll against the system administrator's Computer Operation skill (assume 10 if unknown), at a bonus equal to the hacker's margin of failure. Success means the administrator is aware of the intrusion *and* has a rough idea of what the hacker was looking for! Critical

Grimoire Sales

Dealers in grimoires (**Champions**, pp. 39 and 56-57) are part of a niche market, which makes it almost impossible to guarantee privacy. When someone buys a +7 compilation of destructive spells, the magical underworld keep their heads down for the next few weeks. Thus, champions can try to research recent grimoire sales if they suspect a situation involves magic.

There are a few different approaches: asking a magical **Contact** (p. 8), finding the word on the street (p. 8), hacking (see *Computers*) a dealer's database, or using social engineering (pp. 8-9) on a grimoire merchant that a teammate already buys from. In all cases, the roll to obtain the information is at -5 with only a vague idea of what kind of grimoire may be involved, -3 with a detailed description, or no penalty if the exact ritual(s) are known. If the GM has decided that a grimoire of that type *was* sold recently, he secretly adds (its ritual bonus - 2) to this roll – but also applies penalties equal in size to any Reputation the seller has for discretion and/or the buyer has for being scary ("You talk – you die!"), which may give a net penalty!

If the modified roll succeeds, the champion learns whether someone bought such a grimoire, and when. Success by 5+ or a critical success *also* reveals a fair amount of detail about who bought it.

Casters should note that their enemies can use this technique against them! If a sage or witch obtains a powerful grimoire, some people in the local magic scene *will* eventually find out about it. Some paranoid casters avoid grimoires for this very reason . . . or work hard to develop a scary Reputation!

success also nets him the hacker's IP address, location, etc., which may mean a visit . . .

Self-Assistance: Before searching or hacking, the champion (or his teammate) may use **Computer Programming** to create a custom program to help mine relevant data. This takes 1d hours but gives +1 to all web-search and hacking rolls for this investigation – or +2 with a critical success! Only one such attempt is allowed per adventure.

Magic 8-Ball

Some champions can simply ask the universe for clues! **Path of Chance** makes divination (**Champions**, p. 34) possible for casters, crusaders may have **Blessed** or use **Prayer** to seek guidance, and psis can make active use of **Precognition**. (Always use the stated time for these abilities instead of assuming an hour.) This is a good way to get a clue, though multiple uses are subject to *Beating a Dead Horse* (p. 6) – "information flowing from the universe" counts as a single source, even if different people use different abilities to ask the same question.

Even a non-powered quester can use **Meditation** to focus his mind in an attempt to understand the big picture. If successful, he achieves a new perspective on the hunt, which counts as a clue in itself. (The GM decides which type of clue, and is not obligated to provide *actual* spiritual insight; fortune-cookie wisdom is fine!) Hunters without **Meditation** may use their Will-6 default, but if so, success only nets a minor clue (p. 6), while critical success grants a normal one. Only one clue per adventure can be derived in this manner, no matter how many hunters end up sharing the same point of view.

Occultism

Occultism is the study of folklore, legend, myth, and superstition – the fictions that humanity shares regarding the supernatural. A successful roll tells you *what people believe* about any given monster – which doesn't always line up with the truth! Still, this "shotgun" approach makes it a useful backup skill if you never studied up on a particular type of enemy.

Whenever you need to roll against **Expert Skill (Psionics)**, **Hidden Lore (any supernatural)**, **Theology (any)**, or **Thaumatology**, for informational purposes, you may use **Occultism** instead. Your roll then takes the following *additional* modifiers:

Modifiers: No penalty for broad generalities or questions about cultural perceptions ("Do members of this religion believe in demons?"), -2 for concrete questions on a general topic ("Can demons drink alcohol?"), -4 for more focused questions ("What type of demon are we tracking?"), or -6 for specific questions ("What are Azabath's particular weaknesses?"). If the roll is already penalized for dealing with an obscure topic, *double* that penalty.

When using this "default" roll to discover a clue, ordinary success uncovers a minor clue (p. 6), while a critical success gives a normal one.

SOCIAL ENGINEERING

People are often the best source of information. While the focus of the rules below is on obtaining clues, the same rolls can be used to ask for small favors. The rolls below are modified by any applicable **Reputation**, and asking for significant (or dangerous!) help imposes from -1 to -5 on the attempt.

There are two ways to improve your odds of social engineering:

Bribery: Not everyone is amenable to bribery! If you aren't certain, roll against an appropriate **Savoir-Faire** specialty for the subject; use **Streetwise** if no such specialty applies. If your mark *can* be bought, the minimum is \$100, which grants +1 to your Influence or reaction roll. More is better: \$500 buys +2, \$2,000 nets +3, and \$10,000 is worth +4. Multiply this by the mark's Wealth factor; e.g., $\times 1/5$ if he's Poor or $\times 2$ if Comfortable. Offering less than the minimum means your roll fails automatically!

Making an Impression: You may try to first impress your mark by using a skill appropriate to him or to the situation. This modifies your Influence or reaction roll: Critical success gives +2, success gives +1, failure gives -1, and critical failure gives -2. Use **Administration** when dealing with bureaucrats, **Carousing** at a club or party, **Gambling** at a casino, **Law (Criminal)** around cops or judges, **Merchant** if money is changing hands, and **Sex Appeal** if you're his type. Other skills may certainly apply to a given person or situation – e.g., **Connoisseur (Wine)** to impress a high-society type – the GM will rule. **Talker!** can *always* be used to make an impression, even if you're also using it as your social skill, but you must explain how you're doing so. You can claim a bonus for multiple skills, but only if all are applicable.

Contacts

Contacts and **Contact Groups** can provide information. You must first succeed at an appearance roll for a connection the GM agrees would know something relevant. Then roll against your associate's effective skill *instead* of yours. This yields the usual results for that skill. *Making an Impression* (above) cannot help this roll.

Word on the Street

If you have a lead, you can ask around casually to discover more. This uses a suitable **Current Affairs** specialty for legitimate info, or **Streetwise** for underground tips. Either can benefit from bribery (at no Wealth multiplier) and/or making an impression with **Carousing**; this represents the expense and effort of informal socializing. Critical failure on the latter roll customarily means an impromptu barroom brawl!

Interviews

Witnesses, police officers, reporters, etc., often have a piece of the puzzle. Interviewing a *friendly* or *neutral* individual to learn what he knows is an uncontested **Interrogation** roll. This isn't a hostile attempt to squeeze out information – the roll is to channel the discussion productively. Bribes (if any) should be subtle, in the form of gifts or a nice dinner.

Surviving victims of monster attacks or similar events often have more information; use **Psychology** to learn more about their experience, for another clue! A *traumatized* victim is harder to get through to (-1 to -3 to both rolls).

Crusaders and psis can use **Spirit Channeling** or **Spirit Communication** to speak with the dead, provided that person had a reason to stick around instead of moving on to the afterlife. In the case of a violent crime, one of the victims may have stayed at the scene to answer questions – see the *Powers* vignette (**Champions**, p. 40) for an example. The GM may determine this by fiat, rolling randomly (a ghost is present on a 6 or less on 3d), or allowing heroes to use **Serendipity** or spend 2 character points to ensure it.

Manipulation

Mind games can be useful, especially when trying to keep civilians in the dark. For all of these skills, roll a Quick Contest of skill against the mark's Will. Victory acquires the information, distracts the person, etc. To convince someone to help you *actively* requires victory by 5+.

Diplomacy can convince neutral (*not* hostile) NPCs to share information, or defuse a situation turned bad by failing a different roll. Victory by 5+ can gain minor aid from a neutral party.

Fast-Talk can distract a guard while friends sneak past, or gain a peek at sensitive info. Victory by 5+ can convince a guard to admit *you*, or trick an NPC into giving you files, a key, etc.

Public Speaking can stir up a crowd of neutral folk enough that the noise and shoving screen suspicious activities; roll against effective Will 12. The *full* margin of victory is the penalty to rolls to observe or follow the team – and a victory by 5+ means an actual riot! Calming a riot also requires victory by 5+.

Savoir-Faire works like **Diplomacy** when dealing with its target group, or like **Fast-Talk** if the goal is to convince someone that you belong to that group. Bribery is fine when posing as a higher-up and tipping a lower-down; otherwise, it *always* insults.

Sex Appeal can distract, convince the doorman at the club to let you in, etc. Victory by 5+ can convince someone to leave his post to appreciate your charms up close.

Arm-Twisting

If you're sure that someone knows something, but he refuses to talk, you can always throw him against the wall and hold a sword to his throat! Roll a Quick Contest of **Intimidation** versus Will. A critical failure on the roll means a violent response. If you end up killing him, you'll *never* learn what he knew (if this was crucial, the GM may assess a penalty to one or more deduction rolls).

Alternatively, you can kidnap him for a full-on interrogation. (This is highly illegal for human victims and *dangerous* for most inhuman ones!) Handle each session – not each question – as a Quick Contest of **Interrogation** against Will. With two interrogators, you can play “good cop/bad cop”; use the higher **Interrogation** skill of the two, at +1 if one succeeds at an **Acting** or **Psychology** roll, or +2 if *both* do.

Monster Underworlds

In many settings, certain groups of intelligent monsters may form entire societies. Vampires may live in the shadows of the city, above demon-infested sewers, while werewolves dominate much of the rural countryside. If this is the case, these communities can be an excellent source of information . . . but unless the *entire* team consists of this type of inhuman, just entering and passing through can be dangerous. The champion with the highest appropriate **Hidden Lore** skill must roll, at a penalty equal to the size of the team, but at +1 for every member who *either* possesses the appropriate Hidden Lore or is the appropriate type of inhuman. Failure means the entire team sticks out; *all* social rolls are at a penalty equal to the margin of failure. On failure by 5+ or a critical failure, the team is attacked!

DEDUCTION

Once the adventurers have obtained their first clue, they can begin making deduction rolls to figure out what's going on. Each type of deduction must be arrived at separately – it's entirely possible to realize *what* kind of monster is attacking without realizing *why* it started, *when* it's doing so, *who* it's masquerading as, or *where* it's coming from. That doesn't mean the team has to succeed at each one before proceeding! Figuring out *who* is involved, for example, may allow the hunters to identify a minion, follow him to the lair, then twist his arm until he talks!

These deduction rolls are often at a very high penalty – obtain clues (using the tips on pp. 5-8) to get around this. In some cases, however, certain information may be blatantly obvious! If a dozen victims are dead, and all have two small puncture wounds on the neck and no blood, it shouldn't require any sort of roll to suspect vampires! Of course, the smart investigator will *still* look for clues and make deductions, just in case that's a ruse (e.g., demons did the killing but made it *look* like vampires did) or only *part* of the story (e.g., it was

vampires, but they were mind-controlled by rogue psis). In all cases, if the players guess right and are making a deduction roll to *confirm* this, the roll is at +4.

The GM makes these rolls in secret, to keep the players from knowing the skills and penalties involved. If more than one skill can apply, use the highest. Success provides accurate information, as described for each type of deduction. Failure provides no information. On a critical failure, the GM makes a second roll against the *unmodified* skill being used; if this fails, he lies. Otherwise, treat it as a normal failure. (This “*verification roll*” helps offset the frequency of critical failures when huge penalties are involved.)

If the team isn't happy with a deduction, they may continue to accumulate appropriate clues and make rolls for it. Enough clues can almost guarantee high levels of success! If this becomes abusive, the GM may simply declare that there are no more clues to be had; also, this may be a bad idea if the clock is ticking – see *Time Constraints* (p. 28) for more details. Heroes in a rush may simply *buy* success with character points (**Champions**, p. 31), but *not* critical success.

Who

Does the bad guy have a human identity, or otherwise possess contacts within our society? Many enemies *are* human (psis, witches, etc.) and an inhuman often masquerades as one, or at least builds enough social contacts to be identifiable. If not, then there's nothing to deduce here! The GM should still give out the occasional “*who*” clue (and roll for it), though, just to keep the players in the dark.

Use **Streetwise** to identify criminals, or an appropriate **Current Affairs** for a legitimate cover identity: Business for a CEO, People for a celebrity, etc. (Remember that *every* **Current Affairs** specialty defaults to any other at -4.) Local folks can be identified with **Current Affairs (Regional)** or an **Area Knowledge** specialty that includes the foe's residence (up to the town or city borough specialty; apply an extra -2 for city, -4 for state, or -8 for large nation). *If* at least three clues came from public records, you may use **Intelligence Analysis** to put this together instead.

Modifiers: -6 if the foe makes no real attempt to hide what he is, -8 for one who takes reasonable precautions, -10 for serious effort, or -12 for true paranoia. A modifier equal to *half* the identity's Status, rounded down (e.g., +2 for a Status 5 CEO, -1 for a Status -1 gang member). +1 for every *full* -5 points in the foe's Appearance, Supernatural Features, and Unnatural Features, or in any Compulsive Behaviors or Odious Personal Habits that would give his secret away.

Success by 0-2 gives vague information about the bad guy's social position (e.g., “someone of reasonable wealth, likely with ties to local government”). Success by 3-4 gives specific information, but not specific enough to positively ID him – though enough legwork might narrow it down (e.g., “a professor at the university, vastly wealthy but living at believable means, with close, hidden ties to Aperture Industries and the Fourth Precinct police”). Success by 5+, or a critical success, gives a name (or all information necessary to identify him, if nameless); if his base of operations is what's listed on his driver's license, all “*where*” deductions are now at +4 (for *confirming* what the team already knows).

What

What sort of monster or rogue are you facing? The deductive skill depends heavily on the monster(s) involved:

Enemy	Skill
Cryptids	Biology (at -2); Hidden Lore (Cryptozoology); Veterinary (at -4)
Demons	Hidden Lore (Demons) ; Theology (Abrahamic)
Free-Willed Spirits	Hidden Lore (Free Spirits) ; Theology (Shamanic or Voodoo)
Ghosts	Hidden Lore (Restless Undead) ; Theology (Shamanic)
Lycanthropes	Hidden Lore (Lycanthropes) ; Veterinary (at -4)
Mummies	Hidden Lore (Mummies)
Outcast Angels	Hidden Lore (Angels) ; Theology (Abrahamic)
Parasites	Biology (at -4); Diagnosis
Rogue Psis	Expert Skill (Psionics)*
Rogue Witches	Thaumatology
Vampires	Hidden Lore (Vampires)
Zombies†	Hidden Lore (Restless Undead) ; Theology (Voodoo)

* Or **Psychology** to recognize telepaths, or **Physics** or **Physics (Paraphysics)** to identify psychokinetics or teleporters.

† Or skeletons, etc.

If multiple kinds of enemies are working together, roll for each. If *no* supernatural foes or powers are involved in the adventure, roll **Occultism** to recognize this. If the whole team lacks the necessary skill, see *Occultism* (p. 8).

Modifiers: -2 for a nonsapient creature. For an intelligent foe: -2 if he doesn't care about being caught, -4 if he takes basic measures to cover his tracks, or -6 for fastidious measures. A further penalty based on commonness, from 0 for a type of foe encountered frequently, through -2 for one the champions didn't realize existed in the area, to -6 for one they didn't realize existed *at all*. From -1 to -4 if the foe is acting unusually (e.g., a horned demon stabbing a victim instead of goring him).

Success by 0-2 reveals the general class of foe (e.g., "psi," "demon") and a very rough estimate of how many are involved (e.g., "less than 10," "10 to 25"). Success by 3-4 also gives some detail about the foe's capabilities (e.g., a psi's powers, what kind of free-willed spirit). Success by 5+, or a critical success, reveals the foe's true name *if* it is a powerful inhuman (e.g., "Xervax the Unholy, Lord Over One Thousand Lesser Demons"); for multiple enemies, this will be the leader's or group's name, as appropriate. If not, this will instead reveal detailed abilities *or* provide a free +2 "why" clue (for monsters) or "who" clue (for humans).

When

What's the timeline here? This deduction involves noticing patterns in existing data, which *may* let you estimate the timing of your enemy's goal. See *Time Constraints* (p. 28) for why this matters. Use **Intelligence Analysis** to analyze patterns in existing data or **Computer Programming** or **Computer Operation** (at -4 for Computer Operation) to have your computer

do it for you. If the plan involves manipulating an organization in some way, **Administration** can stand in. For upcoming attacks, use **Tactics** to estimate the most likely time.

If the "why" has already been deduced, *any* skill that directly relates to the plan can be used instead. For example, use **Biology** and **Chemistry** if timing revolves around a certain organic or chemical reaction, **Physics** for plans involving strange energies, **Thaumatology** for spells, **Theology** for mystical alignments, and so on.

Modifiers: -4 if timing isn't a factor at all. Otherwise, -4 if the enemy's initial actions *and* final result both depend on specific timing, -6 if just one end hews to a schedule, or -8 if nothing about the plan requires specific timing. An additional -4 if time warping or time travel is involved in *any* way!

Success by 0-2 reveals any meaningful pattern in existing data, which may predict further actions, attacks, etc., but reveals nothing about "big picture" deadlines. Success by 3-4 gives vague information about any deadline (e.g., "this is going down sometime next week"); if there isn't one, you realize this. Success by 5+, or a critical success, gives as detailed a timeline as there is.

Where

Where is the enemy's base of operations? If there's a plot, this is where it's coming together; if not, it's the monster's lair. Either way, it isn't *necessarily* where the foe normally lives. For cryptids, demons, free-willed spirits, ghosts, lycanthropes, mummies, outcast angels, vampires, or zombies, use the skills listed under *What* (above) – knowledge of these creatures includes an understanding of their habitats. For mummies *or* any foe living in a crypt or normally uninhabited, ancient structure, you may substitute **Archaeology**. For humans, use **Psychology**. Parasites don't have a lair; to find "Patient Zero," use **Biology** or **Physician** (at -2 for Physician). In *all* cases, you can instead use **Area Knowledge** for a specialty that includes the lair (up to the town or city borough specialty; apply an extra -2 for city, -4 for state, or -8 for large nation).

Modifiers: -6 for a foe who's easy tracked (e.g., rotting zombie, slimy demon) or who cannot leave the lair; -8 for most foes, or -10 for an intelligent foe who's intentionally chosen an unobvious location. No additional modifier for 1-2 foes, +1 for 3-4, +2 for 5-8, +3 for 9-16, and so on, with the upper limit doubling for each further +1; treat a *dormant* or *inactive* swarm, horde, or hive of identical monsters as *one* foe.

Success by 0-2 reveals the general area, but not the specific location (e.g., "somewhere on the northwest side of town").

Roleplaying Investigations

Hunting for clues gets boring quickly if it comes down to a series of rolls. There's little excitement in, "You succeed at Carousing. Roll Streetwise at +1 to work the bar; critical success! Take a +2 'why' clue." Players should describe their efforts dramatically – see *Add Some Color!* (p. 19) for a reason to. Then the GM ought to present the results in a cinematic manner, stealing from the style of his favorite action shows or movies, and introducing chases or fights whenever things need livening up!

Success by 3-4 does the same, and also gives the PCs a chance to pick up the trail from an optimal starting point with **Tracking** (below); get close enough to identify it with **Observation**; or find a weak foe, minion, or contact heading that way to follow (see below), either with **Shadowing** or as an outright chase. Success by 5+, or a critical success, reveals the specific location, allowing the team to plan their own approach.

Why

What is the motive or cause driving what's happening? Is there a master plan behind these seemingly random attacks . . . or are they actually just random attacks, with "these vampires were hungry" as the sole motivation? **Intelligence Analysis** is always valid for this deduction. Against *intelligent* foes, **Psychology** works as well. An appropriate **Hidden Lore** roll at -3 can be used against inhuman foes, as it includes *some* psychological understanding of the foe. **Law** can puzzle out crimes (Criminal for common violations or Liturgical for religious ones) as can **Criminology**. If a champion has a particular skill that is directly applicable to the reason –

e.g., **Engineer (Psychotronics)** when the enemy is stealing parts to build a massive psi-bomb – he may use that instead.

Modifiers: -4 for no motivation past primal urges; -6 for a simple, obvious goal (e.g., vampires kidnapping humans for a corral); -8 for a more complex or subtle goal (e.g., compromising businessmen to make insider trading possible); or -10 or worse for something that would make the Illuminati proud. No modifier if the bad guys are doing their own dirty work, -2 if done through one remove (e.g., demons using a street gang to commit the actual crime), and a further -2 for each additional remove.

Success by 0-2 explains what they're doing and *vaguely* what they want, but no master plan details (e.g., "they're blackmailing and extorting businessmen; they appear to want confidential data"); if there's no plan at all, you realize this. Success by 3-4 gives the rough outlines of the plan (e.g., ". . . so they can do some insider trading"). Success by 5+, or a critical success, reveals the full plan or reason (barring any information the GM sees as impossible to deduce).

PURSUIT

After figuring out the big picture, it's a good idea for the team to take a moment to survey their gear and stock up (below) on anything needed to confront this enemy. Unfortunately, that's not always possible! Some lairs can only be found by tailing a bad guy (or associate), who's unlikely to accept a request to stop and wait while you grab your special bullets! Many plots also have a specific time constraint that doesn't permit travel back to base to tweak your loadout.

The following rules detail some of the myriad obstacles that can make it difficult to get from point A to point B. The GM may use as few or as many as he likes for each adventure, and may *certainly* come up with new challenges to throw at the party!

Stocking Up

If the team knows where the bad guys are *and* aren't racing to beat a deadline, they can stock up on supplies before heading in. The GM should make *one* IQ-2 roll for each champion with **Absent-Mindedness**; failure means he *thinks* he packed a minor piece of gear (e.g., duct tape, industrial cleanser) but actually forgets to – critical failure means he forgets something important! However, if any PC with **Common Sense** leaves off a crucial piece of gear (in the GM's opinion) for the situation to come, the GM should roll against his IQ and (if successful) inform him of this.

TRACKING

If you weren't able to pinpoint the lair's location (*Where*, pp. 10-11), it may still be possible to follow foot tracks there. You *must* start from a set of tracks that you were able to identify as the bad guy's (*Trails*, p. 6). The GM rolls against your

Tracking to begin, and then once every quarter-mile to maintain the trail.

Modifiers: A base -3, or +1 if you found an optimal starting point (*Where*, pp. 10-11). +3 to track multiple foes. +6 in a rural area; no modifier in the city. -3 to track an animal, including a shifted lycanthrope. -5 if the trail is over a day old. A bonus equal to your Acute Vision level, plus that of any superhuman sense (e.g., +4 for Discriminatory Smell).

Success means you follow the trail at Move 1; critical success lets you move at full speed. Failure loses the trail completely, while critical failure points you at the wrong location!

FOLLOWING

To tail someone subtly, use **Shadowing** in an occupied area or **Stealth** if no one is around; you may substitute one for the other, but at an extra -4. This is a Quick Contest against the target's Perception or Observation; you must *win* to remain unnoticed. Repeat this Contest every quarter-mile; if you ever tie or lose, keep reading . . .

Chasing

On level ground with no cover, a foot chase is all about speed; the faster party either flees or overtakes the slower one, and a Quick Contest of **Running** skill breaks ties. But *fun* chases take place in much more interesting conditions: through alleyways, over rooftops, or in narrow underground passages. In these places, a runner who knows the area well can get an edge on even the fastest opponent!

These rules refer to the person trying to flee as the *quarry*, while the one chasing is the *pursuer*. For simplicity, chases take place in *rounds* of about a minute each.

If the quarry is trying to reach a particular place, the GM should estimate about how many minutes it will take him to reach it from his current location (better to guess high than low); this is an upper limit on the number of possible rounds. If the quarry's only goal is "get away," the chase could (in theory) last indefinitely.

At the beginning of the chase, the GM will set the range, using the *Range Band Table* (p. 21), based on how the chase began. A failed **Shadowing** attempt is always at Medium range, for example, while bumping into a bad guy by accident would start the chase at Close range.

Each round, roll a Quick Contest between the pursuer and quarry; each uses the highest of **DX**, **Area Knowledge**, **Running**, or **Urban Survival**. If one has a higher Move than the other, he is at +2 for every point of difference – speed does still matter! **Enhanced Move** helps, but is drastically limited by the need to make sudden turns; *instead* of improving Move, it adds a bonus in the Quick Contest equal to its (level×2); e.g., Enhanced Move 1.5 (Ground) would add +3.

For group chases, use the lowest skill *and* lowest Move in each group. A slow pursuer may voluntarily "drop back" and let his friends race ahead; if so, his skill and Move are not factored in, but the range band is automatically one higher for *him* throughout the chase.

The outcome of the Quick Contest sets the range band for the *next* round:

Victory by 0-4: No change.

Victory by 5-9: Winner may shift range band by *one* step in either direction.

Victory by 10+: Winner may shift range band by *two* steps in either direction.

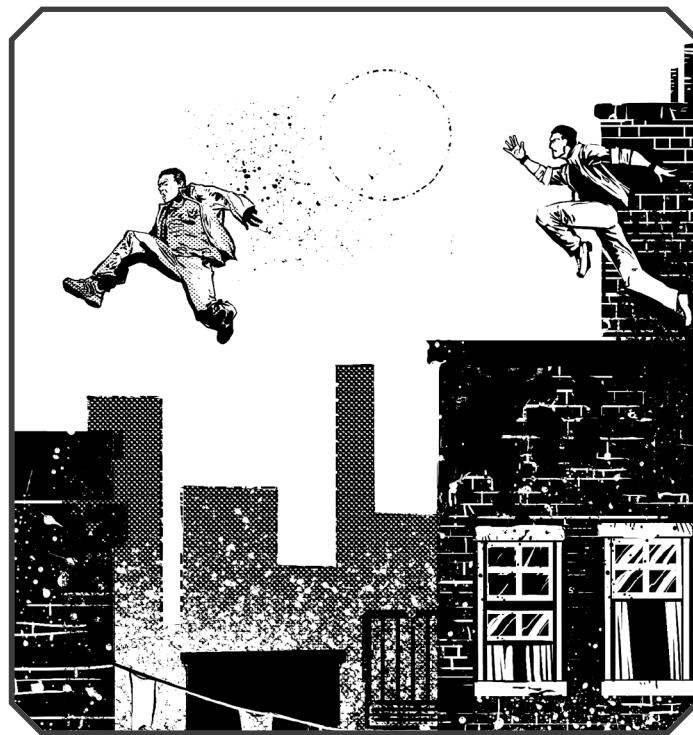
If the quarry can shift range *beyond* Extreme, he escapes! Otherwise, the chase continues until he's caught or reaches his destination. Each pursuer *and* quarry may make one attack each round, as a Move and Attack (p. B365), using the range penalty from the *Range Band Table* (p. 21). This represents taking a shot when one becomes available. These are normally ranged attacks, but can be melee attacks at Close range! A slam (p. B371) is often a good chase-ender, as it suffers no penalties for a Move and Attack.

BREAKING AND ENTERING

From guarded tombs to modern buildings, many lairs (or investigative sources!) are designed to keep people out. When this is inconvenient, there are alternatives (also see *Blowing Stuff Up*, p. 13). Note that lockpicking is the only silent option; for all others, everyone in the area gets an uncontested Hearing roll to detect the attempt.

Lockpicking: Use **Lockpicking**, at -5 for a multi-tool, no modifier for lockpicks, and +1 or +2 for good- or fine-quality tools. In addition, the quality of the lock matters, from +5 for a low-tech or very cheap padlock to -5 for extremely expensive, cutting-edge hardware. Electronic locks (e.g., keypads, card swipes) use the same rules, but high-quality lockpicks don't give a bonus, and the difficulty ranges from 0 to -10.

Bashing: You can *destroy* a door or barrier with a crushing or cutting weapon – no attack roll needed! Roll damage at +2, or +1 per die, for All-Out Attack (Strong) – plus *another* +1 per



die with **Forced Entry** at DX+1, or +2 per die at DX+2. The GM will subtract DR, multiply by 1.5 if you used a cutting attack, and reduce the target's HP until it reaches 0 (which allows entry). Swords dislike such abuse, and have a 3 in 6 chance (2 in 6 if fine, 1 in 6 if very fine) of bending; a bent sword is at -1 to skill for *all* purposes. Go-bars revel in destruction, and deliver swing+2 crushing.

Forcing: Another option is to apply boot or shoulder to the door and overpower its attached hardware (that is, the lock, chain, or hinges) without annihilating it. Roll a Quick Contest: ST vs. the hardware's HP. You may add **Lifting ST**, +2 for a go-bar, and +1 with **Forced Entry** at DX+1 or +2 at DX+2, but have a penalty equal to the hardware's DR. For a *barred* or *wedged* portal, use the bar or wedge's DR as a penalty, if greater than the hardware's; similarly, the portal resists with the bar or wedge's HP, if higher than the hardware's. You must *win* to open the door. Repeated attempts are at a cumulative -1 and cost 1 FP each.

Bending: To pry apart metal bars in a grate or a portcullis, use the rules for forcing, using the bar's DR and HP. Each successful attempt bends a single bar; one bar will let a Skinny person through, two will accommodate most people, and three admits Fat or Very Fat individuals. (Add an *extra* required bar for those with more than Light encumbrance!)

Severing: Exposed chains, padlocks, bars, etc., can be cut instead of beaten apart, using a cutting weapon, hacksaw, etc.; use the rules for *Bashing* (above). If using bolt or wire cutters (not a saw or weapon!) for this, you may attempt to be sneaky; roll against the *lower* of **Forced Entry** or **Stealth** to not be heard. When severing bars, see *Bending* (above) to know how many you must cut.

Lifting: If the problem is a *heavy* barrier (fallen lintel, unlocked portcullis, etc.), the solution is to lift it. This is a two-handed lift; use Basic Lift × 8 lbs., figured using ST plus **Lifting ST**. Add another 5% to BL per point by which you make a **Lifting** roll.

Doors and Attached Hardware Table

Obstacle	Door		Hardware	
	DR	HP	DR	HP
Door, Blast	70	60	33	66
Door, Home Exterior	1*	23	6	11
Door, Home Interior	1*	18	3	6
Door, Home Reinforced	4	23	6	11
Door, Security	30	47	11	22
Door, Stone (4")	52*	65	24	46

* DR is ablative.

Bars, Wedges, Grates, and Portcullises Table

Construction	DR	HP	Weight	ST
Ornamental or Improvised	3	6	50 lbs.	6
Home or Cheap Commercial	6	11	200 lbs.	12
Commercial or				
High-End Home	11	22	1,000 lbs.	25
Teller's Cage or Light Tomb	17	33	2,000 lbs.	36
Prison Cell or Heavy Tomb	22	44	3,000 lbs.	44

Weight is for a typical portcullis of that type. *ST* is the minimum effective *ST* needed to lift that weight without extra effort or **Lifting**.

Blowing Stuff Up

As discussed in *Hearing Shots* (*Champions*, p. 61), explosives are great for attracting unwanted attention (p. 18)! However, they are the fastest way to demolish things and are thus sometimes necessary. It takes about $(DR + HP)/3$ dice of damage to render something useless until repaired, or $(DR + 2 \times HP)/3$ dice to obliterate it forever (drop fractions).

Example: A blast door with DR 70, HP 60 calls for $(70 + 60)/3 = 130/3 = 43d$ to blow open, or $(70 + 2 \times 60)/3 = 190/3 = 63d$ to blow away.

To convert dice to a number of standard explosive charges from *Champions*, estimate the nearest whole multiple of 9 for dynamite (9d+1) or 15 for plastique (5d×3), and square it. Any hero with **Explosives (Demolition)** will know how many charges to use (no roll needed); other champions must roll against IQ-5.

Example: 43d is about 5×9 or 3×15 , so it takes $5 \times 5 = 25$ dynamite sticks or $3 \times 3 = 9$ plastique blocks to open a blast door.

When the charges are *prepared*, the GM will secretly roll against the maker's **Explosives (Demolitions)** skill; failure means a dud, while critical failure means an explosives disaster! Getting the charges in place and activating the detonator requires no special skill. However, a demolitions expert can use **Explosives (Demolition)** to tamp his charges (loud and requires tools) or **Architecture** to target a structure's supports (quiet but requires internal access). Success with either option halves the number of needed charges, rounding up; e.g., merely 13 dynamite sticks or 5 plastique blocks for that blast door. Failure means the explosion doesn't do its job. Try again! Critical failure means it blows up while the hero is still within the blast radius!

THE APPROACH

Once you've made your way into a lair, the hard part is just beginning! If possible, you want to attack from a position of surprise, which means not being detected as you approach. Whether you're heard or not, staying in a proper tactical formation and keeping your wits about you is absolutely essential.

Forming Up

The players must agree on what formation their champions take as they move through an area – who's on point (in front), who's guarding the rear, etc. For simplicity, it's best to establish some options ahead of time: one formation for sneaking, one for charging, and so on. Unless someone *explicitly* specifies otherwise, the GM will assume that everyone is in their respective positions as they move.

Staying Undetected

Not only is subtlety important for setting up an ambush, it's also vital when acting in inhabited areas. A group sneaking through the crawlspace underneath a college auditorium has to avoid alerting the monsters *and* the students! Some of these rolls thus relate to social situations instead of merely combat-related ones.

A PC with **Common Sense** should always get an IQ roll if there's any doubt as to his "stealth mode"; e.g., whether he's properly concealed his SMG before approaching a civilian. All other champions should be very explicit about such things, to prevent misunderstandings with the GM! ("Of course he saw you; you didn't say you were crouching behind cover!")

Remember that the bad guys can be subtle, too! When that happens, use the same rules, just flipped around on the heroes.

Basic Stealth: When moving through alleys, forests, tombs, and so on, roll against **Stealth** to be sneaky. A successful uncontested roll is all that's needed not to stand out to casual observers. If there are sentries, however, you must *win* a Quick Contest against their Hearing if you're behind something (climbing shoes give you +1), the *better* of Hearing or Vision if you're merely in the shadows, or Electronics Operation (Sensors) if they're using radar or the like. You *can't* sneak with a light source . . . which makes night-vision gear (and **Infravision** and **Night Vision**) rather useful.

Camouflage: Staying put behind something is an effective form of stealth, but there must be *some* concealment in the area. If there is, anybody looking for you must *win* a Quick Contest of Vision or Observation skill vs. your **Camouflage** skill.

Concealed Carry: Roll just *once* against **Holdout** for all gear; at the modifier for the bulkiest item plus another -1 *per item* larger than a CD that you try to hide at the same time. Apply the +1 or +2 for undercover clothing, and/or +4 for a long coat, at the very end. This roll becomes a Quick Contest against Observation or Search for an enemy actively looking for weapons, and you must *win* not to arouse suspicions.

Silent Communication: **Gesture** can stealthily communicate a *simple* concept – “two vampires,” “move in,” etc. **Soldier** and **Tactics** can do the same, but *only* for battle orders. The player writes down his intended meaning, the GM rolls in secret, and success means the GM tells everyone the message. Failure, or an attempt to relate anything complex (e.g., “Professor Jones is a vampire now”), means the GM says nothing. Critical failure means he *lies*. Communicators with headsets can be used at no more than a whisper; only enemies with Discriminatory Hearing get a roll to pick that up.

Light

Every sane champion packs at *least* a good flashlight – often a hands-free tactical light mounted to his favorite gun – and it doesn’t hurt to bring an assortment. Unlike the average monster hunter, many enemies can see in the dark. Each player should specify his PCs’ usual light; see *Light Sources (Champions*, p. 56) for options.

Some light must be improvised. A backlit digital display – common on cell phones and GPS units – will light a 1-yard × 1-yard area in front of the user well enough to see at -3. A match or lighter similarly lights a 1-yard radius, but blows out if the carrier attempts any DX-based roll (athletics, attack,

defense, etc.), unless he can make a DX-4 roll. Relighting a lighter takes a second; a new match takes two seconds.

All Who Wander . . .

Some lairs are almost maze-like in their complexity. If so, heading in the right direction is a function of **Architecture** in buildings designed for habitation, or **Archaeology** in tombs, tunnels, etc. If the team gets lost, the GM may roll against the *best* appropriate skill in the group, at +1 for every *other* teammate with that skill, and +3 for **Absolute Direction**. Success means the GM points them back on track; critical failure means he *lies*!

If the players want to draw a map as they progress, one champion *must* volunteer to serve as “mapper” – this requires a light source, pencil and paper, and *both* hands free. If the mapper has **Absolute Direction**, ignore these needs; the player is simply making a map of what’s in the character’s head. If the mapper gets something wrong, the GM may roll as above to correct him.

Locating *hidden* passageways requires an active search. The GM rolls against the best of Vision, **Observation**, or Per-based **Traps** for each searcher. Some secret doors require a **Traps** roll (often at a penalty) to activate, once located.

Sentries

Sentries cannot always be avoided (*Staying Undetected*, pp. 13-14). The following options require successfully sneaking up on the sentry (a Quick Contest of **Stealth** versus Hearing, or Smell+4 for sentries with Discriminatory Smell). If successful, the teammate with the best **Knot-Tying** should quickly bind him.

Choke Hold: Roll **Judo** at -2 or **Wrestling** at -3 to grapple the neck. If successful, your target cannot speak as long as you maintain the hold, and you are at +5 to resist his attempts to break free! On subsequent turns, roll a Quick Contest of your ST+3 (plus bonuses for **Arm ST**, **Lifting ST**, and **Wrestling**) against the *higher* of the target’s ST or HT; this counts as an attack. If you win, the foe loses HP equal to your margin of victory. *If he breathes*, you may choose to inflict FP instead; this is a much faster way to drop most opponents.

Brain Him: Roll any unarmed striking or Melee Weapon skill at -1 to target the skull from behind (this includes +4 for making a “telegraphic attack,” and is not cumulative

with an Evaluate bonus). You may opt to All-Out Attack, for either +4 to hit or +2 damage (or +1/die, if better). If successful, roll your damage, subtract DR (including the DR 2 for the skull), and multiply by 4 (unless the target has Injury Tolerance (No Brain))! If this causes *any* injury, roll for knockdown (p. B420).

Kayo: When you successfully brain someone (above) with a *crushing* attack, you may choose to “kayo” him *instead* of causing injury. The target must roll HT, at a penalty equal to the penetrating damage (a straight HT roll if the damage is *exactly* 0 after DR); Resistant to Metabolic Hazards adds to this roll, and Immunity to Metabolic Hazards or Injury Tolerance (No Brain) makes the sentry immune. On a failure, he falls unconscious for 15 minutes.

Reach for It: Make your presence known via an *immediate* threat to the sentry’s life; e.g., a stake to his heart, a gun to his head, an axe poised to strike – and make a Quick Contest of **Intimidation** vs. his Will to convince him to submit quietly. This takes the modifiers under *Threats* (pp. 15-16).

CONFRONTATION

A monster hunter’s goals are *not* always “kill, kill, kill”! Confrontation can mean different things for different types of enemies. The specifics will vary by adventure, but some general guidelines apply depending on what kind of enemy you’re dealing with:

Mindless Monsters: Zombies, animals, most parasite-infested foes, etc., rarely have a set goal. They’re driven by primal urges and must be usually be fought (p. 17). A common exception to this is when someone or something is *driving* them to attack; see *Foiling the Plan* (p. 16) for advice in that situation.

The Untouchable: Intangible foes, like ghosts, limit fights (p. 17) to teams with a good supply of supernatural powers or psychotronics. More often, some weakness must be exploited (pp. 16-17) to drive them away. Some can be reasoned with (*Talking It Out*, below), while others may have something tying them to this plane; e.g., a demon may be linked to an ancient artifact, a ghost may be unable to move on until his murderer is punished, or a fae boggart may have been summoned via a 100-year-long spell. See *Foiling the Plan* (p. 16) for the latter case.

Rogue Humans: While psis, witches, and such can be quite evil, their intelligence makes negotiation (below) a possibility. A fight (p. 17) is just as likely, of course, but even the most battle-hardened champion should hesitate to *initiate* such a conflict with lethal force – if only because putting a bullet in a human's head (as opposed to a mummy or angel's) can lead to murder charges! Thus, attacks to incapacitate should be common: blows to the head, crushing attacks, bullets in limbs, etc. Since humans are the most likely to have a plan that needs foiling (p. 16), keeping a few alive is a doubly smart idea.

Intelligent Inhumans: Dealing with smart monsters is very similar to dealing with rogue humans (above), except for the greater justification for using lethal force. It's unlikely that a champion will end up on death row for killing a vampire, after all. Lycanthropes are a special case, as they revert to human form when dead; see *Disposing of the Bodies* (p. 18) for more.

Cordelia: I personally don't think it's possible to come up with a crazier plan.

Oz: We attack the Mayor with hummus.

Cordelia: I stand corrected.

Oz: Just keeping things in perspective.

– **Buffy the Vampire Slayer** #3.22

TALKING IT OUT

Dealing with intelligent (IQ 6+) foes has its advantages. The smart hunter knows when a fight would be counterproductive ... or suicidal! In all cases, make a reaction roll *before* attempting anything below. Add bonuses for the *speaker's Charisma, Voice, and Reputation* – no one else's! A negative Reputation (e.g., for being ruthless) *will* hurt. Also add any of the following modifiers that apply:

- -1 for every point of enemy IQ below 10 – dumb foes are less likely to listen.
- -1 to -4 if the champions and their opponents are morally opposed (e.g., a crusader vs. a demon) or +1 to +4 if they're technically on the same side (that same crusader facing an outcast angel).
- -1 if the enemy has alien motivations (e.g., certain demons or ghosts).
- -2 if the champions invaded the bad guy's territory, or no modifier on neutral ground. (If they were *invited* into the territory, from +2 to +5 depending on the sincerity of the invitation.)

• -5 if a fight is already in progress. If *all* champions willingly cease hostilities and sheathe or stow their weapons (even while being attacked), they can avoid this penalty.

• A penalty equal to 1/5 the value of any disadvantages (e.g., Reprogrammable or Slave Mentality) compelling the foe to fight – whether intrinsic or imposed by magic, a curse, etc. Round down (for the worse).

• If the enemy needs the hunters' life force – to heal, perform a ritual, etc. – a penalty equal to 1/5 the HP, FP, or energy that it could gain from them. Round down (for the worse).

• +2 if the speaker, or anyone in communication with him, is able to use **Mind Reading** (or an equivalent spell or ability) on one of the enemies, or +3 if he can use it on their leader.

The speaker must achieve at least a Neutral (10+) reaction to attempt any of the following actions.

Negotiation

Sometimes the enemy's goals aren't all that unreasonable – or they are, but it wouldn't take much compromise to *make* them reasonable. Roleplay the offers, counter-offers, and so on. When an agreeable accord is reached, roll **Diplomacy**, at -3 for dealing with inhumans *unless* the bargainer has the appropriate **Hidden Lore** skill. (If the GM has decided that these inhumans don't speak the same language as the champions for some reason, apply another -1 for knowing their language at Accented, -3 for knowing it at Broken, or use the *lower* of **Diplomacy** or **Gesture**, both at -3, if the speaker doesn't know it at all.) Success results in the monsters accepting the deal, failure means they insist on an extra concession, and critical failure means they attack!

Bribery

Paying off the bad guy should leave a bad taste in *everyone's* mouth, but the **Bribery** (p. 8) rules can be used for a bonus to the **Diplomacy** roll when negotiating (above).

Threats

Strong-arming the enemy into leaving without a fight requires a Quick Contest of **Intimidation** vs. the leader's Will. The side with more combatants is at +1; this bonus becomes +2 for outnumbering the other side by at least 2:1, +3 for 3:1, +4 for 4:1, and so on. This assumes strength on par with the champions; count weak fighters (e.g., zombies or sidekicks) as *half* a combatant, and incredibly powerful ones (e.g., master vampires) as *two or more* combatants (GM's call). In addition, the monster leader is at +1 if he is inhuman or otherwise possesses supernatural powers, +1 if everybody on his side has them, and +1 if his side has more people than the heroes have with them, all cumulative. He is also at +1 for every 5 points of ST above 10 he has, and at +5 if none of the champions' visible weapons can kill him.

Optionally, you can try to convince your opponents that your backing is far more powerful than it actually is; e.g., if they don't leave willingly, *dozens* of hunters will come! This requires that you first *win* a Quick Contest of **Fast-Talk** vs. the leader's IQ (or the enemies' *average* IQ, if better). Victory earns you another +3 to **Intimidation**. If you tie or lose, or if they're able to read your mind, ignore everything else in this section – the enemy attacks!

Victory causes the bad guys to stand down and evacuate the area; getting them to *surrender* requires victory by 5+. A tie or loss allows you to try a different tactic, at -2; but loss by 5+ prompts an attack.

We're on Your Side . . .

Convincing an enemy that you want to help can be the easiest way to achieve a tactical position, get access to an artifact or book, or get enough information to foil a plan (below). This requires a Quick Contest of **Fast-Talk** vs. the leader's IQ (or the enemies' *average* IQ, if better). Some situations may allow for a different skill to be used; e.g., **Sex Appeal** if the enemy is of the same "race" (that is, vampire, human, demon, and so on).

No matter what skill is used, this roll is at -1 for every member of the team who doesn't possess that skill – even if only one person talks, *everyone* must play along! It is at -5 if any weapons are visible, or -10 if any are currently held ready! Apply +1 for every teammate of the same "race" as the leader and -1 for each teammate of a different "race"; **Disguise** can be used to fake this.

If you lose, or if they're able to use Mind Reading or a similar ability on you, they attack – no one likes being lied to.

Victory means you've earned some trust; they will talk to you and allow you some freedom to move around, under guard. You may extract information (below) as for a helper who is willing but unable to help. If you make an aggressive move against your "hosts," your first action or attack is at +2 to skill, and their reaction or defense is at -2; if you coordinate things so everyone attacks at the same time, this applies to the entire team!

Victory by 5+ means you've earned a great deal of trust; you can move and talk with only a nominal guard keeping an eye on you (use **Stealth** to slip away), and they are considered *willing* for information extraction. Any aggressive move or attack automatically achieves partial surprise (p. B393)!

FOILING THE PLAN

If there's a specific *reason* the bad guys are doing what they're doing (*Why*, p. 11), and you've managed to deduce this, addressing this is often your most important priority! Motivations vary greatly, but usually fall into one of the following categories:

The enemies' actions are working toward a particular goal. While some goals are mere get-rich-quick schemes, the notable ones put innocent lives in jeopardy. In such a case, stopping it in time (*When*, p. 10) becomes more important than anything, including slaying those behind it. If the champions are about to take an action that will inadvertently complete (not just assist) the bad guys' goals, a successful **Danger Sense** roll will provide its usual tingle.

The enemies are taking action because of something external. This differs from the above in that the enemies aren't trying to *accomplish* something specific – they're being *driven* by something specific. Why are zombies coming back? Because a *bokor* is animating them. Why are werewolves attacking? Because their drinking stream is tainted. The heroes *can* just deal with the bad guys, but in most cases it won't solve the problem (e.g., the *bokor* will just raise more zombies). In *all* cases, it's generally easier to tackle one problem than to take on a horde of enemies!

The enemies cannot be stopped unless something external is dealt with. (Or "cannot easily be stopped," in some cases.) Something is giving the bad guys power. This may be political, physical, or mystical power, but they're either impossible or

incredibly dangerous to take on until this is addressed. See the *Gear* opening vignette (**Champions**, p. 52) for one example.

The necessary skills to deal with the plan will vary *greatly*, from **Forced Entry** for smashing a magical idol to **Psychology** for convincing a ghost that the Civil War is over. In all cases, it's easy to lose sight of the big picture; e.g., going off on side quests or getting caught up in slaughtering minions. If this happens, the GM should roll for anyone with **Common Sense**, pulling him back on track if successful.

Extracting Information

Sometimes, the confrontation is just the beginning of discovering the big picture! For example, the team may realize a ghost is driving people away from a park, only to learn (when trying to banish him) that he's doing so against his will. This brings the adventure back to *Investigation* (pp. 5-11), as the heroes try to learn what's *really* going on.

Fortunately, if the "bad guy" is willing and able to help, he can provide some excellent clues! The GM decides what the NPC knows, in terms of deduction types (pp. 9-11); e.g., the ghost may have ideas about *what's* controlling him, *when* he gets orders, and *why* it's happening, but not *who's* doing it or *where* they are. The NPC willingly provides normal clues for *any or all* of the areas he knows about – no rolls are needed. Additionally, one champion may use **Interrogation** to draw out further details, **Intelligence Analysis** to relate this information to the existing clues, or **Psychology** to read more into the foe's comments. Success at any of the three raises each clue bonus to +2 (or +3 on a critical success)!

Some enemies are willing to talk but not to help. Maybe they don't trust the champions, or they're bound by a geas. This works as above, but reduce all clue bonuses by 1 – that is, only a minor clue (p. 6) normally, a full (+1) clue with a successful roll, or a major (+2) clue on a critical success.

EXPLOITING WEAKNESSES

Many foes have specific weaknesses, which champions can use against them in a fight. Knowledge of these vulnerabilities and how to use them is covered by **Hidden Lore** for monsters (use **Veterinary**, if better, for the *natural* weaknesses of animals or lycanthropes); **Expert Skill (Psionics)**, **Physics**, or **Physics (Paraphysics)** for psis; or **Thaumatology** for witches, wild magic, etc. Some unique enemies may call for different skills (GM's decision). Use the appropriate skill when a hunter needs to recall how to defeat a foe, or is trying to figure out if a particular bit of myth is true.

The GM should estimate how well-known the weakness is. For an *obvious* one (e.g., vampires don't like stakes through the heart), a champion with the appropriate skill doesn't even have to roll; anyone else may make an **IQ** or **Occultism** roll (at +2 for Occultism) to realize it. For a *known* weakness (e.g., vampires are especially flammable), roll against the skill at +4 or against straight **Occultism**. For a *slightly obscure* one (e.g., vampires are not affected by garlic), roll against the unmodified skill or against **Occultism** at -4. For an *obscure* vulnerability (e.g., certain clans of Slavic vampires are allergic to garlic), roll against the skill at -4 or against **Occultism** at -10. For a *highly obscure* fact (e.g., this *particular* vampire is bound to obey anyone with Romany blood), roll against the skill at -8; no Occultism roll is possible.

Sometimes the weakness can *replace* a fight. With an abandoned warehouse full of vampires, why not bar the doors, wait until sunrise, then rip the boards off the windows? If a player comes up with such a vulnerability-oriented plan, *and* his character has an appropriate skill (not just Occultism!), *and* the plan has significant flaws or reasons why it might not work, the GM should make an unmodified roll against the hunter's skill; **Common Sense** adds +3 to this roll. For every two points (or fraction thereof) by which the roll succeeds, the GM will inform the player of one flaw. He shouldn't reveal information the champion couldn't possibly know ("These vampires have a tunnel leading out to the sewers"), but he can phrase it as a general possibility ("What if they have a way out you don't know about?"). Follow the same rules if a caster uses divination (*Champions*, p. 34) to assess the outcome of a plan, using the spell's margin of success.

FIGHT!

Of course, the most common form of confrontation is a good, old-fashioned slaughter! If the team was careful in their approach (*Staying Undetected*, pp. 13-14), they may be able to set up an ambush. If they were heard, the enemies may have an ambush set up for them! A **Danger Sense** roll will detect this, as will a Per-based **Tactics** roll if signs of a potential ambush are there and the party simply overlooked them.

For details on fighting, see *Cinematic Combat* (pp. 19-22).

In Media Res

Every once in a while, the GM may want to throw the players a curve ball by *starting* the adventure with a confrontation, skipping investigation and pursuit completely! Perhaps the team stumbles across a group of monsters, or a coven of vengeful rogues sets up an ambush for the champions. This can make for a *far* more challenging fight, for several reasons:

- Even the most paranoid hunter can't carry around full kit at all times. When "off duty," the typical team strips down to small, concealable weapons, and light or no protective clothing. Hunters with **Improvised Weapons** may find it especially useful!
- If the enemies plan this attack, they'll do so when the environment (pp. 30-31) favors them. Being attacked by a swarm of vampires is bad. Being attacked on a moonless night, in an area with no cover, is worse.
- As they're not in the middle of a monster hunt, the heroes may be taken by surprise (p. B393)! A "stumble-across" situation can result in surprise for both sides, while a proper ambush (*Staying Undetected*, pp. 13-14) favors the attackers. In all cases, a champion with **Combat Reflexes** will never suffer *total* surprise.

This attack can stand alone (perhaps as a one-shot adventure) or spur the heroes into figuring out where the bullseye on their backs came from (segueing right back into *Investigation*, pp. 5-11).

AFTERMATH

Once the battle is done, it's time to wrap things up . . .

MEDIC!

In cinematic games, skilled healers can work miracles in little time. *Time Spent* (p. B346) simulates this, down to allowing "instant use" at -10 to skill. If this is attempted in the middle of a fight, the healer must have his medical supplies in one hand, be able to touch the patient, and take a Concentrate maneuver.

Repeated attempts by the same doctor aren't allowed unless stated otherwise, though a *different* healer may try. A critical failure makes *all* further attempts impossible!

All **Surgery** rolls require equipment, and are at -10 with a first-aid kit, -9 with a good-quality first-aid kit, -5 with a crash kit, or +2 with a surgical kit.

First Aid: First aid takes 10 minutes and requires a successful **First Aid**, **Esoteric Medicine**, or **Physician** roll, modified by the quality of the first-aid kit or esoteric kit (or +2 for a crash kit). Success heals 1d HP; critical success heals 6 HP. Failure has no effect; critical failure costs 2 HP.

Crippled Limbs: A limb that takes damage over HP/2, an extremity (e.g., hand, foot) that takes damage over HP/3, or an eye that takes damage over HP/10 is *crippled* and useless. After the fight, roll against HT; add +5 for **Rapid Healing** or **Regeneration**. Success or critical success means it's *temporary* and only lasts until you recover the HP (*Recovery*, p. 18). Failure or

critical failure means it's *lasting*, and will take 1d months to heal unless treated! Two hours and a successful **Esoteric Medicine** or **Physician** roll reduces the healing time from months to weeks. Two hours and a successful **Surgery** roll does the same; if this roll fails, it may be reattempted at a cumulative -2. Doing *both* turns it into a temporary injury.

Beyond Crippling: A *cutting* attack can sever a limb or extremity; an *impaling* or *piercing* attack can rupture an eye. (Other attacks can only cripple, as above, contrary to *Dismemberment* on p. B421.) This requires the attack to do twice the injury necessary to cripple it (e.g., 12 points for a HP 10 man's arm). This is permanent if not treated! A successful **Surgery** roll at -3 can reattach the limb or repair the eye, which then takes 1d weeks to heal.

Mortal Wounds: If a PC fails a HT roll to stay alive by 1 or 2, he doesn't die, but he's close! Stabilizing him requires an hour and a successful **Surgery** roll, at -2 if the patient is at -3×HP or worse or -4 if at -4×HP or worse. If the roll fails, it may be reattempted at a cumulative -2.

Supernatural Afflictions: If a monster or situation has left a lingering effect on a hero (e.g., a vampire's mesmerizing taint after a bite, or a mummy's "curse"), roll a Quick Contest of **Esoteric Medicine** (modified by the quality of the esoteric kit, or -5 for *no* kit) against the higher of the Will or HT of whatever caused it. This takes one hour. Repeated attempts are allowed, at a cumulative -2, but critical failure afflicts the healer as well!

Someone who has *become* a monster or who will inevitably turn into one (e.g., a hero who failed a resistance roll when bitten by an infectious zombie) is beyond this sort of help; see *A Fate Worse Than Death* (p. 31).

Recovery

As long as a monster hunter survives the adventure, he has a chance to heal up. The GM will usually set the next adventure far enough in the future that everyone has time to recover. If this isn't possible for some reason (e.g., the story arc demands that the heroes mobilize in the next five days), assume that the combination of modern medicine and esoteric healing methods allow everyone to recover an *average* of 2 HP per day, 3 HP with **Rapid Healing**, or 5 HP with **Regeneration (Slow)**.

... AND STAY DEAD!

Inhuman foes have a nasty habit of coming back from the dead. To ensure that this doesn't happen, hunters must follow the proper procedure for each type of monster. If a hero neglects to perform an important step, the GM should roll against the PC's **Occultism** at -4 or appropriate **Hidden Lore** skill. A hunter with **Common Sense or Eidetic Memory** has +3 on this roll, while **Photographic Memory** gives +5; use only the single highest bonus. **Absent-Mindedness** gives -2. If successful, the GM will remind the champion of which step is being overlooked.

Disposing of the Bodies

Some enemies are easy to clean up after. The physical undead are all extremely flammable once dead, and some demons vanish when vanquished. Other physical foes will take effort. *If* the team has plenty of time to bury or otherwise dispose of any corpses *and* the bodies won't be missed, the GM should take this step for granted, and move the adventure along. If there's no time, that's usually because someone is coming; see *Unwelcome Attention* (below) for details.

Killing humans (or lycanthropes, which revert to human form when dead) is another matter. With the exception of the homeless, illegal aliens, etc., the authorities *will* eventually go looking for the bodies! The PCs may find themselves on the wrong end of a criminal investigation. Assuming they took the time to clean up after themselves, the GM can make this a Quick Contest of the detectives' Forensics (at -4 if the hunters successfully used industrial cleanser) vs. the team's best **Housekeeping**. If the cops win, they start looking into the champions; if the police win by 5+, they have enough evidence to arrest the hunters!

LOOT

It's rare for enemies to have significant loot, but it never hurts to examine the lair. The GM will make a secret **Search** roll for anyone looking, to see if he finds the really good stuff. Many rare artifacts are valuable, even *after* being cleansed (p. 23) of their evil mystical power, and some classy villains have homes lined with fine tapestries and shelves of rare books. Anyone may make a **Merchant** roll to identify the approximate value of a given object; the GM will roll in secret and *lie* if the roll fails! To cash it in, use the rules for selling used equipment under *Wealth* (**Champions**, p. 53).

In many cases, the only stuff will obviously have been taken from victims. Any champion with **Sense of Duty (Humanity)** *must* attempt to return this to the owner or next-of-kin if possible; one with **Honesty** must make a self-control roll not to do so.

UNWELCOME ATTENTION

The hardest part of fighting The Enemy is doing it *secretly*. There are many ways for champions to attract unwanted attention, though openly carrying weapons (*Concealed Carry*, p. 13) or making too much noise (**Champions**, p. 61) are the easiest.

The GM may wish to think of the following three options as tiers – reckless heroes should attract normal folks first. If they don't start learning subtlety (or if they do something *big*), the police start poking around. If *that* isn't enough to drive the point home, they can expect to start getting attacked by monsters!

Neighbors

Every innocent bystander who curiously wanders into a monster hunt immediately becomes a potential victim or hostage – and the worst thing is, *he doesn't realize it*. You can't explain to the custodian that he needs to leave because a dozen vampires are in the next room. Dealing with nosy neighbors will usually require manipulation (pp. 8-9); using force may be a short-term solution, but sooner or later, someone will contact the authorities (below).

Another danger is that of mob panic. Those citizens who *aren't* curious or foolish enough to become monster chow are likely to stampede away from the scene, catching others up with them. As a general rule, if more than one witness freaks out and flees via an inhabited area, roll 1d; if the result is less than the number of witnesses, enough people realize that something is wrong for a mob to form. This may get the authorities' (below) attention, cause a great deal of unnecessary damage, or both.

Authorities

The authorities will respond quickly to chases, gunshots, fire, or explosions; react seriously to reported harassment, break-ins, property damage, assault, etc.; and eventually notice if the locals frequently describe the champions as engaging in weird behavior. This usually takes the form of police interest, but can also extend to organizations like the FBI, or even shadow organizations within the government or a powerful corporation. The authorities are dogged and can draw on *many* resources; the PCs will be unlikely to sweet-talk or bribe them (and will bring down *all* sorts of misery for killing one!), forcing them to maintain heightened secrecy for quite a while.

The Enemy

Enough flagrant hunting, over a long enough time, can draw the direct attention of whatever passes for a "bad guy" community. As a rule, monsters and rogues don't care much if another of their kind dies – but when there's a conspicuous and concerted effort, this becomes about self-preservation. If the team does enough *obvious* killing, the monsters will learn where they live (see *In Media Res*, p. 17, for more). Every hunter, in effect, gains Enemy (Monster of the week; 9 or less; Unknown); those who already have this worsen it to 12 or less. Getting rid of it will require sending everyone's friends and family out of town, changing bases, and then killing a *lot* of opponents without being tracked back home again.

CHAPTER TWO

BEING AWESOME

Anna slumped against the wall, defeated. Her voice was shot from screaming and her wrists ached from pulling at the chains that bound her to the factory wall. The hideous, winged statues that had kidnapped her sat motionless on the broken catwalk above. She tried to yell at them, "If you're going to kill me, just get it over with!" but it only came out as a hoarse whisper.

The dim lighting made it hard to see just what happened next, but she heard a noise from the side door before it just . . . disappeared? Four people charged in, with the man in front spraying bullets all over the place! Anna closed her eyes and prayed that none hit her. When she opened them, the taller man was already by her side, picking her up. "How . . ." she started, before realizing that two rounds had coincidentally shattered her chains.

The moving statues were flying around the factory now – clearly defying the laws of physics as they dodged gunfire and dive-bombed her rescuers. One flew at the woman, only to lose a wing to her sword. Slinging her into a fireman's carry, her new friend warned her, "Brace yourself," before leaping over the others and racing out the door!

*Anna finally found her voice. "Who **are** you people?" "We're friends, Anna. It looked like you could use some."*

Monster hunters practically *define* "larger than life." A mix of natural prowess, experience, and either superhuman abilities or impossible levels of training sets them apart from humanity. Yet, death is a serious threat, because this is the level of ability necessary *just to survive The Mission*. The heroes must be able to do the impossible, because that's what's being asked of them!

Each type of champion has the advantages and skills needed to face extreme challenges. This is backed up by the mandatory inclusion of **Luck** and *Other Uses for Points (Champions, p. 31)*; with these in play, the heroes are far less likely to die from a bad dice roll. Their fate is

placed in their own hands; those who make foolish decisions or fail to back each other up will end up as monster chow, but those who work as a team while taking advantage of their individual strengths will be absolutely unstoppable.

Add Some Color!

Anything worth doing is worth doing in style. Champions are powerful enough not only to take down unstoppable monsters, but to *look cool doing it*. To encourage this, *any* success roll for a PC's action is at an extra +1 if it's described by the player in lovingly over-the-top detail.

Example: "I rappel off the rooftop, coming in through the side window," would require the usual Climbing-1 roll (p. B349). "I clip the rope to my harness as I swan-dive into the night, swinging through the side window to land in a cat-like crouch," would allow an unmodified Climbing roll.

There is no limit to the number of rolls that can be enhanced this way each session, but there are some restrictions. The player can't reuse color; the description can't obviously ape a previous one, whether his own or a fellow player's! Also, the detail *must* be appropriate to the mood of the campaign – players can't just add nonsensical embellishments to their actions. Finally, this can't be a way to sneak in "free results"; if the player in the example above had said, "... drawing my gun as I swing through the side window . . ." the action would *also* require a Fast-Draw roll (though at the same +1).

At the GM's option, a *truly awe-inspiring* description may give +2. This shouldn't be a common occurrence, however – once or twice per session at the most.

CINEMATIC COMBAT

To keep combat fast and dramatic, stick with the standard (abstract) combat system whenever possible. Reserve *Tactical Combat* (pp. B384-392) for platforms suspended over pits and similar environments, where knowing how many yards you've retreated is *crucial*. The most important thing is to keep the action *flowing!* If a champion wants to try something complicated but cool, the GM shouldn't bog down the game trying to figure out what the penalties are (or if it's even *possible*) – just pick a skill, assign the modifier that feels right, and roll!

OPTIONAL RULES IN EFFECT

Unless the GM decrees otherwise, the following optional rules from the **Basic Set** are assumed to be in effect.

All heroes can use *Extra Effort in Combat* (p. B357). For 1 FP *per attack*, a fighter can use *one* of *Mighty Blows* for +2 damage (or +1/die, if better) or *Flurry of Blows* to halve the penalty for a *Rapid Strike*. (For the latter, round in the champion's favor; e.g., a warrior's -3 becomes -1.) For 1 FP, he can use *Feverish Defense* for +2 to a *single* active defense roll.

A variant of *Cannon Fodder* (p. B417) applies to normal folks. Any human bystanders built on 100 points or less are considered *mooks*. If the champion succeeds in a combat roll against one, don't bother rolling active defense or damage; the champion simply *does whatever he wants* to the mook, within reason. For example, a warrior who succeeded at a **Brawling** roll could knock out a cop automatically . . . for his own good, hopefully!

Flesh Wounds (p. B417) appears as an option in *Other Uses for Points* (**Champions**, p. 31) and a toned-down version of *Infinite Ammunition* is offered in *To Gear or Not to Gear* (**Champions**, p. 58).

Other optional rules – such as those offering extra detail for jumping (p. B352), changing posture (p. B395), malfunctions (p. B407), and injury (p. B420) – add unnecessary detail that doesn't fit the flavor of monster hunting. As well, aside from the three exceptions above, none of the *Cinematic Combat Rules* (p. B417) are in play. Champions leap headfirst into impossible danger because they're *just that good*, not because the situation isn't actually dangerous! See *A Good Day to Die* (below) for more.

When deciding whether to import optional rules from other supplements, the GM should ask, "Will this rule be simple to use in play?" and, "Is this rule conducive to cinematic action, but without taking away the risk of death?" He should only adopt it if the answer to *both* questions is "Yes."

A Good Day to Die

Although monster hunters are built with legendary abilities, and the rules in this book exist to accentuate their cinematic glory, the **GURPS** combat system remains just as gritty and potentially lethal as always! Champions are not normal humans – but neither are they invulnerable. Even a strong warrior can go down swinging if he faces several powerful enemies alone.

Fortunately, death is cheap in monster-hunting fiction – the protagonist routinely comes back, often just in time for the next sequel or season – and so it is in this game. The rules for miraculous recoveries are introduced in *Other Uses for Points* (**Champions**, p. 31) and expanded on in *A Serious Death* (p. 31); players shouldn't hesitate to take advantage of them. The cost (in character points) is not insignificant, but it allows a player to keep his beloved PC in action.

As an intentional side effect, this makes self-sacrifice somewhat easier to swallow. One champion can hold off the oncoming horde to give his team a chance to escape . . . *without* "punishing" the player by forcing him to build a new character. A noble sacrifice remains noble even if the hero returns.

ACROBATIC COMBAT

A mobile hero is a hard-to-hit hero; your *first* dodge after any of the following three stunts counts as your Acrobatic Dodge (p. B375) for this turn, regardless of whether you used **Acrobatics**. This gives +2 to Dodge if you succeeded, but -2 if you failed.

Acrobatic Evade: You may substitute **Acrobatics** for DX when evading (p. B368) on a *Move* maneuver, tumbling between your foe's legs, rolling over his shoulder, etc.

Acrobatic Guard: When fighting a particularly dangerous foe, you can declare that you're acrobatically avoiding *just* him and doing nothing else. Roll a Quick Contest of **Acrobatics** vs. his best melee skill. If you *win*, he'll have a penalty equal to your margin of victory on his roll to hit you on his next turn. If you tie or lose, you waste your turn. Regardless, you still get your usual active defenses.

Acrobatic Stand: If you're lying down, you can jump to your feet using one Change Posture maneuver instead of two by making an **Acrobatics** roll at -6 plus encumbrance penalties. Failure means you end up sitting; critical failure means you fall face-down!

Warrior Moves

Warriors – or anyone else with **Trained by a Master** or **Weapon Master** – may make the following special attacks, either unarmed or with a melee weapon. In each case, the attack is at -6 to skill, but spending 1 FP removes this penalty!

Acrobatic Attack: Combine any of the acrobatic options above with an attack. *Ignore* the usual rules for Change Posture and *Move* and *Attack!* Simply perform your acrobatics as usual, move as far as that allows, and attack.

Flying Attack: Run up to your full *Move* and then roll against **DX** or **Jumping** (this roll is *not* at -6 to skill). Failure means you fall down. Success lets you jump for additional distance – up to half as far as you ran (round up) – and then attack! *Ignore* the usual rules for *Move* and *Attack*.

Spinning Attack: Spin or backflip in place, attacking any one opponent (within reach) in *any* direction, then ending up facing in your original direction. This lets you attack someone to your side or rear without turning your back on the foes in front of you!

Jumping in Combat

Ignore the detailed rules on p. B352 and assume that you can jump *Move*/4 yards in combat without preparation. This becomes *Move*/2 yards with a full-turn running start or when jumping out of combat – or *Move* yards if both apply. Success at a **DX** or **Jumping** roll adds +1 to your effective *Move* for every three *full* points of success. (You may replace *Move* in these calculations with half your **Jumping** skill, if better.)

SIMPLIFIED GUNPLAY

The key to keeping shooting fun in play is to avoid getting bogged down in calculations. It's unfair to *completely* ignore modifiers, though – skill should count, and offsetting penalties is the whole point of high skill. The GM should try to avoid *unnecessary* modifiers while retaining the fun ones.

In general, keep modifiers for cover (-2 in most cases where you can see the target), environment (pp. 30-31), gear (like the targeting lasers and scopes in **Champions**), hit location (pp. B398-400), maneuvers (particularly Aim, All-Out Attack, and *Move* and *Attack*), and size (SM). Remember to add Acc or ignore Bulk for heroes with **Gunslinger**. And use the simplified rules below.

Simplified Range

The *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550) can be clunky in a raging battle, especially when not using a map. Instead, define ranges roughly, using the *Range Band Table* (below). To quickly set an encounter's range, use Close in a *melee*, Short for a *pistol* shootout, Medium for a *shotgun* or *SMG* fight, Long for a *rifle* engagement, and Extreme for *sniping*.

Simplified Rapid Fire

A gunman whose firearm has RoF 2+ can fire multiple shots. If he has several targets, he can opt to divide his shots among them. Decide on the number of bullets allocated to each target, assess standard ranged combat modifiers for each target, and then apply the following in each case:

Number of Shots at Target: 0 for 2-4 shots, +1 for 5-8 shots, +2 for 9-12 shots, +3 for 13-16 shots, +4 for 17-24 shots, +5 for 25-49 shots, or +6 for 50-99 shots.

Total Number of Targets: If the weapon has RoF 2-4, there's -6 on all attacks when shooting two targets, -12 when shooting three, or -18 when shooting four; *halve* these penalties for heroes with **Gunslinger**. If the weapon has RoF 5+ (it's full-automatic), there's no special penalty – and simply ignore realistic concerns like arcs of fire and shots lost between targets!

Shotguns: A RoF 2x9 shotgun can blast 18 pellets at one target (+4 for number of pellets), or 9 at each of two (each attack has +2 for number of pellets but -6 for two targets). A RoF 3x9 shotgun can fire 27 pellets at one target (+5 for number of pellets), 9 at one and 18 at another (+2 and +4 for number of pellets, but -6 for two targets), or 9 at each of three (+2 for number of pellets but -12 for three targets).

Resolving Hits: Next, roll to hit each target. Success means that target is hit by one bullet (or pellet), plus one extra bullet per *full* multiple of weapon Rcl by which the roll was made, to a maximum of the number of bullets fired at that target. *Double* Rcl for a RoF 5+ weapon sprayed across multiple targets.

Example: Success by 4 with a Rcl 2 pistol means three hits: one for success and two for making the roll by twice Rcl. If spraying a RoF 5+ SMG at several targets, Rcl 2 would be treated as Rcl 4, and success by 4 would only be enough for one extra hit (two in all).

Damage: For 1-3 hits, roll damage normally. For 4+ hits, it's quicker not to roll. Use *average* damage for the weapon (3.5 per die, plus any modifier), subtract DR, multiply by number of

hits, and drop fractions. To save time, note average damage for RoF 4+ guns on character sheets!

Example: Shotgun pellets do 1d+1 and average $3.5 + 1 = 4.5$ points, so DR 2 would leave $4.5 - 2 = 2.5$ points, and 9 pellets would inflict $9 \times 2.5 = 22.5$ points, which would round to 22.

Shooting Two Guns

Shooting two one-handed guns uses the same rules as shooting one gun. Treat each hand as attacking separately. While shooting two guns, all attacks have an *extra* -4 unless the shooter has **Dual Shooting** for his **Guns** skill. All shots made with the off hand have a *further* -4, which can be eliminated with either **Ambidexterity** or the **Off-Hand Weapon Training** perk for his **Guns** skill.

Leading the Target

Dodges against gunfire represent the effect of target movement on the shooter's aim. High-skill heroes can mitigate this by shooting at where their mark *will be*. Apply all other ranged combat modifiers to skill first. If effective skill is 12+, the shooter can give his target -1 to Dodge per -2 he accepts on the shot. He cannot reduce effective skill below 10 this way.

Guns as Melee Weapons

Roll against **DX** or **Brawling** to slug someone with a pistol or an SMG. Damage is *thrust-1* crushing, plus the absolute value of Bulk; e.g., a pistol with Bulk -2 does *thr+1* crushing. Striking end-on with the butt of a longer weapon uses **DX-5**, **Spear**, or **Staff** and inflicts *thr+2* crushing. Holding such a long arm by the barrel and swinging it like a baseball bat requires **DX-5** or **Two-Handed Axe/Mace** and does *sw+3* crushing. A pistol bayonet can stab or slice with **DX-4** or **Knife**, while one for a long arm requires **DX-5** or **Spear**. Pistols and SMGs have Reach C; longer weapons, Reach 1.

FIGHTING SMART

There's nothing wrong with relying on your weapons in combat, but there are times when using your *head* is just as handy.

Situational Awareness

These options are especially useful for a wounded hero, or one otherwise unable to join in the combat proper – but *anyone* in the fight may attempt them! Each one requires a Do Nothing maneuver.

Range Band Table

Range Band	Distance	Range Penalty	Description
Close	0-5 yards	0*	Can touch or strike foe
Short	6-20 yards	-3	Can talk to foe; pistol or muscle-powered missile range
Medium	21-100 yards	-7	Can only shout to foe; shotgun or SMG range
Long	101-500 yards	-11	Opponent out of earshot; rifle range
Extreme	501+ yards	-15	Rival difficult to even see; sniper range

* In melee combat, ranged attacks suffer a penalty equal to Bulk; **Gunslinger** negates this.

Battle Plans: Ask the GM to roll against your **Tactics** skill. If successful, he'll reveal the bad guys' tactical plan, in general; if not, he *lies*. This has nothing to do with *Why* (p. 11) or *Foiling the Plan* (p. 16) – it's strictly an assessment of how and why the enemy is *fighting* (e.g., "They're guarding the entrance to the next room" or "They're stalling until the chant is finished"). "They're just trying to kill us" is a valid reason for some foes!

Encouragement: Roll against **Leadership**. Success gives +1 to your entire team's Fright Checks, resistance rolls against mind control or fear, and self-control rolls for disadvantages that would affect combat. Critical success gives +2. This bonus lasts until the start of your *next* turn. Failure (even critical failure) has no effect besides wasting time. Encouragement from multiple people is not cumulative.

Got Your Back: Choose *one* friend to watch out for. On his turn, he must decide whether to listen to your warning shouts or ignore you. If he listens, roll against **Observation** (reroll each turn). Success gives him +1 on *all* defense rolls this turn; critical success gives +2. Failure gives him -1, however, and critical failure gives -2! A fighter may only pay attention to one person's shouts at a time.

Unbalanced Parries

Axes, maces, and other unbalanced weapons are a great way to deliver a lot of damage to your enemies. Unfortunately, if you attack with one, you lose the ability to parry. The following two options let you get around this issue.

1. *Defensive Attack*. You can keep your weapon in a guard position while swinging. Any attack made this way does -2 damage (or -1 per die, if worse), but allows you to parry without penalty afterward.

2. *Rapid Recovery*. At the end of any turn in which you attack, you can pay 1 FP to quickly pull your weapon back into a defensive position, allowing you to parry without penalty.

Posturing

Taunting: Sometimes a champion needs to draw a foe away from his allies, especially if they're wounded. This requires **Animal Handling** for cryptids or animalistic lycanthropes, **Religious Ritual** for spirit beings (including angels and demons) or the undead, and **Psychology** for any other intelligent foe. Take a Concentrate maneuver and roll a Quick Contest of skill against the *higher* of his IQ or Will. If you *win*, that foe decides to attack *you* from now on. A tie means he continues to fight as he was. If you *lose*, he targets a hurt or otherwise vulnerable party member! Win, lose, or tie, if you roll a critical success, your mark *also* makes an All-Out Attack on his next turn.

Blustering: You can try **Intimidation** to drive off an intelligent opponent, but *not* one with IQ 0-5, Indomitable, and/or Unfazeable (which excludes animals, mindless undead, angels, many demons, and more). Roll dice as above. If you *win*, that foe attacks somebody *other* than you next turn, and must move *away* from you to do so (so if you step between him and a friend, you can protect your friend) – and if you rolled a critical success, he must make a Will roll or flee the battle. If you tie or lose, though, he tries to kill *you*!

Playing Dead: This is a free action at any time – just fall down, drop your weapon (no one trusts a "corpse" with a ready weapon!), and stop moving. If an enemy is considering attacking you, roll a Quick Contest of your **Acting** vs. the *higher* of his IQ or Perception. He gets bonuses for special senses (like +4 for Discriminatory Smell); you're at +1 at half HP, +2 at 0 HP, +3 at -HP, +4 at -3xHP, and +5 at -4xHP. If you *win*, you're overlooked.

The Element of Surprise

You often can get the best advantage in a fight by being sneaky.

Death from the Shadows

When combat starts, you may try a **Stealth** roll to duck behind cover or into shadows.

Modifiers: A basic -5; encumbrance penalties; +5 if team is ambushing, no modifier in a stand-up fight, or -5 if squad is ambushed; and -5 if there's *no* cover or shadow.

Success lets you get into a position for *Sniping* (below) next turn; a critical success lets you begin sniping *this* turn. Alternatively, you may slip behind the *nearest* foe (GM chooses) and attack him immediately! (Critical success lets you get at *any* enemy.) For the latter, treat range as Close; you have an extra +4 to hit (as you can afford to make a "telegraphic" attack) and the victim gets no defense. Attacking reveals your presence for the rest of the battle (but see *Disappearing*, below).

A use of **Serendipity** or a character point can find cover anywhere (no -5) or let you choose your victim.

Disappearing

A really stealthy hero can vanish into the shadows *during* combat! Take a Move maneuver to reach concealment – if only briefly. Then you may attempt the **Stealth** roll above, but at a basic -10 (instead of -5) and without ambush modifiers. Failure means you're spotted and still in the fight. Success lets you leave the fight or "vanish" into the shadows for as many turns as you like. When you reappear, you can be up to Move yards away per turn of absence, in any location you could reach.

Sniping: Once in the shadows (see above), you may make stealthy ranged attacks. Your first victim gets no defense. After each turn, roll a Quick Contest of your **Stealth** vs. the bad guys' *best* Perception minus range penalties (p. 21). If you're using a gun, their Perception roll is modified as follows:

Modifiers: A base +8 for silent ammo, +12 for non-silent *pistol* ammo, or +13 for anything else; -8 for a silencer; +1 for every bullet you fire past the first one each turn.

If you *win*, you remain unseen; your *next* shot allows no defense, and so on. If you *lose*, you're spotted, though if you're in an elevated position, your opponents are at -2 to dodge your shots. Another advantage of elevation is that you can ignore most obstacles; only combatants in close combat with your mark get in the way (a flat -2 to hit).

Hidden Weapons

To conceal a weapon for surprise use, roll **Holdout**, modified for the weapon's Bulk or size, along with any Holdout modifier for your holster. Success means the *first* strike with that weapon will be hard to see coming: -2 to target's defense. Ensuing attacks won't surprise anyone.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Many champions have special skills or abilities that merit further discussion.

CONFRONTING CURSES

Not everything that feels like a curse is one. Some monsters can cause lingering effects in those they attack; see *Supernatural Afflictions* (p. 17) to remove these. Some areas may be under the effect of powerful conditional spells (*Champions*, pp. 38-39), which just use the Ritual Path magic rules. A *curse*, meanwhile, is something deep and dark – a blight placed upon a person, place, or thing by a god or great spirit. Curses are generally plot points, and as such, they can vary wildly in specifics.

Example: A soul-drinking amulet fuels its wearer's abilities, but in doing so, dooms him. Every victim he murders provides the equivalent of 50 character points' worth of abilities, but after his 13th victim, he becomes a wraith, forced to do the bidding of the dark spirit who created the amulet.

Detection: Those with **Mysticism** get a Perception (plus **Mysticism Talent**) roll to sense a cursed area, person, or item upon seeing it or coming within 10 yards of it, and a *second* roll just before touching it (or entering the area). Casters can use a Greater Sense Spirit effect to do the same; if cast as an ongoing ritual, use Per-based **Path of Spirit** for detection rolls. Others may realize the danger *if* some sort of clues are visible (e.g., ancient markings, odd and unique behavior); roll **Occultism** or **Theology**, at -4 for Occultism and a further penalty (from 0 to -10) based on how obscure the warnings are.

Analysis: A separate **Occultism** or **Theology** roll, at -4 for Occultism and a further penalty for particularly obscure gods or spirits, may turn up clues about the curse's history and effects. Researched clues (pp. 6-7) can provide a bonus to this roll (and allow for multiple attempts) as if it were a deduction. Critical failure on this roll means the curse has a chance to affect those studying it!

Cleansing: Successful analysis *may* reveal a means by which the curse can be broken. If not, a pious (or foolhardy) champion may attempt to dispel the curse himself! This is a Quick Contest of **Exorcism** (with a bonus for an aged or ancient holy symbol, and at the usual -4 for those without **Mysticism** or similar holy abilities) vs. the Will of whatever force placed the curse in the first place – if the GM is unsure, roll 2d+13. This takes 1d hours and the exorcist must *win* to prevail; if he ties or loses, he cannot try again for a week. On a critical failure, the curse affects him! Likewise, casters may attempt a Greater Destroy Spirit effect to do the same; for a cursed location, the spell must encompass the entire area. Use the same rules, replacing **Exorcism** with **Path of Spirit**.

Treatment: If a person is affected by the curse, use the rules above, but add the higher of the victim's ST or Will to the exorcist's roll.

Assistance: When using **Exorcism** – not magic – for *Cleansing* or *Treatment* (above), others may help with chanting, prayer, etc. The leader of the ceremony must roll against any specialty of **Religious Ritual**; if the exorcist is the leader, *both* this roll and his **Exorcism** roll are at -2. Success allows one

assistant to help, plus further assistants equal to the margin of success. Each active, willing assistant adds +1 to the effective **Exorcism** skill.

Holy Ground

Most churches and similar religious sites mean nothing to supernatural foes; a vampire or demon *can* walk into a typical church without fear. But a few places are holy enough that the boundaries of the area act as a ward (*Champions*, p. 35) against undead and evil spirit beings. The effective skill usually ranges from 12-17 (roll 1d+11 to determine randomly). Even if such a ward is brought down, it will reform within 24 hours unless the area is ritually desanctified (*Champions*, p. 36).

NEUTRALIZING PLAGUES

An disease outbreak is terrifying enough, but it never seems to be just a simple flu in a *Monster Hunters* game – if it isn't a unique virus creating plague zombies, it's microscopic parasites turning bodies into colonies!

Assessment: **Diagnosis** is used to identify that a person is infected; success by 5+ or a critical success also gives a rundown on what the disease can do. Otherwise blood samples and a **Biology** or **Physician** roll will figure it out. Working from paperwork – e.g., notes from the secret lab that created it – allows a **Biology** roll at +2 or a **Bioengineering** roll at +4 to do the same.

Interaction: Any group knowingly dealing with infected victims must make a **Hazardous Materials (Biological)** roll every day, to avoid exposure (below). Use the best skill in the party, at -1 for every teammate who lacks the skill altogether. A successful **Chemistry** roll identifies an appropriate disinfectant; using it gives +2 to these rolls.

Exposure: If the team failed a **Hazardous Materials** roll, one random member (*all* of them on a critical failure) must make a HT roll at the penalty listed for the disease in question. If the champions aren't even aware that there's a problem (e.g., because they failed to identify the threat), everyone must make such a "contagion roll" each day.

Fast-Cycle Germs: Some plagues are extremely aggressive, raising the frequency of interaction or contagion rolls from "once per day" to once per 12 hours, three hours, or even once per hour! Many cinematic diseases require an *immediate* contagion roll upon first exposure, followed by further rolls on a regular basis.

Treatment

Science: After analysis, techies may break out the *Invention* (pp. 24-25) rules – using the *highest* of **Inventor!**, **Medic!**, **Science!** or **Pharmacy**. Treat a *suppressant* (that only controls the symptoms) as a \$10,000 invention; a *vaccine* (that prevents, but doesn't cure, the disease) as a \$1,000,000 invention; and an *antidote* (that cures an infected person) as a \$5,000,000 invention.

Most treatments suffer no additional penalties, though the GM may rule that one is decades away from being released. Magical plagues are a special case; they use the best skill above or **Thaumatology**, whichever is *lower*. Mundane doctors, meanwhile, can use **Pharmacy** to create a suppressant; this *requires* a fully-stocked modern lab, takes 2d days, and is done at -10 to skill. If multiple doctors work together, use the lowest **Pharmacy** skill, but divide the time required by the number of doctors. Anything more complex requires *months* of work; champions are generally better off searching for an existing cure.

Treatment: In all cases, use **Physician** to administer the treatment properly. If the disease has time to mutate, treatments may not work on *future* versions of it. Adapting an existing suppressant, vaccine, or antidote to deal with a mutant strain uses the rules above, but with *half* the time and skill penalty.

Powers: Crusaders and psis have access to **Lay on Hands** and **Psychic Healing**, respectively, both of which allow for the eradication of diseases (*Healing*, p. B59). The GM sets the healing penalty; as a rule of thumb, use *twice* the contagion penalty. (For example, if a disease is resisted by HT-4, the IQ + Talent roll would usually be at -8.)

Magic: Casters can use **Path of Body** to immunize or cure victims. For *most* plagues, the former involves granting Immunity to Disease (+10 energy); but some rare diseases *can* bypass this trait! To *cure* the disease, add energy equal to the absolute value of *all* the disadvantages that the plague can potentially bestow – whether the victim has them yet or not – as for *Altered Traits* (*Champions*, p. 34). If it grants advantages as well, *also* add energy equal to 1/5 their total value (rounded up).

The Results: A plague resists *all* of these measures, from the scientific to the magical, as a Quick Contest against its HT, which ranges anywhere from 6 to 20 (but is usually 8 to 14). It gets such a roll even against powers and spells that are not normally resisted – a psychokinetic healer just isn’t used to the germs fighting back! The treatment must *win* the Quick Contest to be effective. Many supernatural germs have Magic Resistance, and some have Resistant to Psionics; either increases its effective HT when withstanding “attacks” of that type.

I know you’re scared; we’re all scared, but that doesn’t mean we’re cowards. We can take these Deadites – we can take them, with science!

– Ash, in *Army of Darkness*

GADGETEERING

Techies (*Champions*, pp. 18-19) can study, adapt, and create new technology in *far* less time than a realistic inventor could, thanks to **Quick Gadgeteer**. Use the following rules instead of those on pp. B473-479. Note that the *Gadgeteering Table* (below)

already takes the +1 from **Versatile** into account; do not add it again! You may use haste (p. B346) to save time, at a penalty, but must make this decision before the GM rolls for the time required. (You cannot take *more* time to get a bonus, however – for a gadgeteer, these times are already leisurely!)

Gadgeteering Table

Value	Time	Complexity Modifier
Up to \$10	1dx30 seconds	+2
Up to \$100	2d minutes	+1
Up to \$1,000	1dx10 minutes	0
Up to \$10,000	1dx20 minutes	-1
Up to \$100,000	1dx30 minutes	-2
Up to \$1,000,000	1d hours	-3
Up to \$2,000,000	2d hours	-4
Up to \$3,000,000	3d hours	-5
+\$1,000,000	+1d hours	-1

Invention

You can create a new device from scratch. This starts with the GM assessing the value of whatever you are attempting to build – expensive technology tends to be more complex! For off-the-shelf gadgets, this is just the selling price, but for unique creations, the GM needs to decide what the approximate value of the item is. (Feel free to eyeball this – don’t waste valuable play time!) Especially unusual technology, such as psychotronics, commands a *much* higher price than simple electronics!

Spare Parts

For gadgets worth \$1,000 or less, you can gather the needed raw material from anywhere (even your pockets), but more complex devices require spare parts. Make a **Scrounging** roll, applying the complexity modifier, to acquire these. The GM may modify the roll further based on location (e.g., a bonus if you’re in a junkyard or a penalty in a forest), and may have you use a different skill in certain situations (e.g., **Mechanic (Automobile)** when building a car). Success or critical success means you gathered the parts to make your invention; see *Some Assembly Required* (below). On a failure or critical failure, you come up short; this wastes *half* the time shown on the *Gadgeteering Table*, and you have to start over completely. You now must find another area to search, or to *buy* the parts from a store (for 1% of the item’s value).

Some Assembly Required

Once any necessary material is acquired, assembly takes the time shown on the *Gadgeteering Table*. This includes concept, scrounging, and creation time. Roll against **Inventor!**, applying the base modifier from the table and the following modifiers. (For the asterisks, see *Weird Science*, p. 25.)

Modifiers: +2 if you can currently buy the item at any appropriate store, or 0 if you can only get it from a specialty vendor; if no one is selling it yet, -3* for every decade it is away from general consumption (in the GM’s opinion), or -1 for being just a few years away. 0 if it follows the laws of physics; -5* for a psychotronic device that doesn’t; or -10* for a *non-psychotronic* invention that doesn’t. Finally, the GM is *always* free to assess up to -10, or disallow an invention completely, based on how appropriate to the setting (and how potentially game-breaking) he feels it is.

Critical failure destroys the spare parts – for an invention worth over \$1,000, start over with another **Scrounging** roll! Failure means that the time was wasted, but you can try again immediately. Success means the gadget works . . . for now (see below); however, you must roll once on the *Gadget Bugs Table* (p. B476). Critical success means no bug!

On a success (even a critical success), the GM secretly rolls 1d and adds your margin of success to determine the number of uses you’re guaranteed to get out of it. For weapons, every shot is a “use”; for devices that can be left on continually, each minute on (or fraction thereof) counts as a “use.” Once these are expended, the GM rolls 1d each time the device is activated: On a 1-4, it works fine; on a 5, it quietly fails; on a 6, it self-destructs in a shower of sparks – harmless, but attention-getting (the better of Vision+3 or Hearing+3 to notice).

Also see *Gizmos* (below).

Modification

An existing gadget can be modified in any believable way; e.g., a pocket calculator could be turned into a translator, but not a stun grenade. If the technology behind it is especially uncommon or cutting-edge, this requires successful analysis (below) first. This follows all of the rules for *Invention* (pp. 24-25), except as follows:

- Look up the value of the *end* product, not the original item, on the *Gadgeteering Table*.
- If the original device is worth at least 1% of the end product’s value, further spare parts are not required.
- The modification takes half the listed time and is done at +2 to skill.
- If the value of the end product is *equal to or less than* that of the original device, the modification is permanent (infinite guaranteed uses)! If not, once the gadget fails, the device can still be used for its original purpose . . . *unless* its life ended in a shower of sparks.

Weird Science

Sometimes, things are easier when you’re willing to take some *strange* shortcuts! You may make a single **Weird Science** roll as part of any invention or modification.

Critical Success: *Halve* the total of all penalties with an asterisk (*) under *Some Assembly Required* (pp. 24-25), rounding down; e.g., -7 becomes -4. If none of those modifiers apply, add a flat +1.

Success: As for a critical success, but the device also has one side effect for every -3 in penalties removed (or fraction thereof); roll on the *Random Side Effects Table* (p. B479).

Failure: The penalties are unchanged *and* the device has a number of side effects equal to the margin of failure.

Critical Failure: Your **Inventor!** roll is automatically a critical failure!

Analysis

Studying someone else’s technology requires 1d minutes and a roll against **Inventor!**, applying the complexity modifier. You may substitute **Physics (Paraphysics)** for psychotronic devices and **Weird Science** for other strange, past-the-cutting-edge tech. Success or critical success means you can use it without penalty. On a failure, you may try again, but at a cumulative -2; a critical failure means you cannot try again until you raise your skill.

GIZMOS

Champions may use **Gizmos** to pull any of the following things out of their pockets, backpacks, etc. This requires a Ready maneuver.

1. *Any item the hunter owns but didn’t specify he was carrying.* This cannot weigh more than BL/10; also, a melee weapon must be Reach 1 or less and a ranged weapon must have no worse than Bulk -4. Once revealed, this becomes normal equipment – it can be used repeatedly, counts against encumbrance, and so on.

2. *A single, consumable item that suits the user’s profession.* This must be one expendable object worth no more than \$200 (e.g., one custom-ammo reload for a commando, one dose of psi-boost for a psi). Alternatively, it can represent a *single use* of an item worth up to \$1,000; examples include ready-mixed test tubes that act as a belt chemistry lab for *one* analysis, enough sutures and blades to act as a surgical kit for *one* operation, or a one-shot scroll that acts as a +4 grimoire for a single ritual.

3. *A minor consumable item that anybody might have.* As for option 2, but it doesn’t have to suit the user’s profession. However the value cutoff is lower: a single item worth up to \$40 or a single use of a kit worth up to \$200. Common choices are an inexpensive reload (don’t include the cost of the magazine; just assume an existing empty magazine turned out to still be loaded), a bottle of industrial cleanser, a bottle or balloon full of holy water, or a single use of a crash kit to treat a wound.

Techies’ **Quick Gadgeteer** gives them access to a fourth option:

4. *An invention whipped up on the spot.* Instead of pulling a usable item out of his pocket, the techie pulls out all the necessary spare parts and *assembles* one! Use the rules for *Invention* (pp. 24-25), but no spare parts are needed and the attempt only takes 2d seconds! If successful, the device gets *one* guaranteed use (instead of 1d + margin of success uses); if not, it still counts as a Gizmo “used.”

Groups planning to transport these rules into other tech levels should be aware that the values in option 3 are 1.5% and 7.5% of the average monthly income (p. B517) for TL8 (\$2,600), rounded off. The values in option 2 are then 5x those of option 3. For example, a “medieval monster hunters” game at TL3 (\$700) would use \$10 and \$50 for option 3, and thus \$50 and \$250 for option 2.

PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

Every sentient mind contains a certain amount of *psychic energy*. The average person possesses only a trivial amount – far too little to measure or study – which is used to think, dream, and so on. In comparison, a psi’s mind is capable of storing and directing *large* amounts of psychic energy to power psionic abilities (**Champions**, pp. 45-48).

When this energy is *used*, an EWD (**Champions**, p. 57) can detect it; this requires a successful **Electronics Operation (Psychotronics)** roll. If an EWD is not available, **Engineer (Psychotronics)** can be used to improvise a substitute – after all, early parapsychologists made do with chalk dust and a compass! This takes 1d×10 minutes and is at no penalty in a lab or electronics store, -2 in a home or office, -5 in a building without much tech, and -10 in the wilderness.

Sacred Places

Casters are far more potent when they have access to an area of magical significance (*Champions*, p. 36). This is often a place where rituals have been cast for several decades, but it also includes locations with an inherent magical affinity – in other words, the GM is free to introduce curve balls like modern buildings with “auspicious architecture,” whether achieved intentionally or accidentally!

Nonetheless, the vast majority of these sites will be old, unknown, and located away from the public. Finding one for yourself requires access to a library or the Internet, and an **Archaeology** or **Hidden Lore (Sacred Places)** roll. This roll is at -4 if you relied on the Internet, and is further modified by how restricted the search area is:

<i>Area Searched</i>	<i>Modifier</i>
Anywhere on Earth	+2
A particular large nation <i>or</i> equivalent area	0
A particular small nation <i>or</i> large state	-2
A particular large city <i>or</i> town and surrounding area	-4
A particular small town <i>or</i> borough of a large city	-8
A particular neighborhood	-16

If successful, the site's energy-gathering bonus is +1 for every three points of success, or fraction thereof (maximum +5). For its location, figure the maximum distance it could be from your home base while still remaining in the

area searched, then multiply that by $(4d-4) \times 5\%$. Further searches in the same area are at a cumulative -1.

The GM will come up with the details, as well as determine if anyone else is using it! To leave this to chance, multiply the site's bonus by 2, then add 5. Secretly roll 3d; on this target number or less, the site has been claimed, though the caster has no way of knowing this!

Example: Brad wants to find a nearby place of power with **Hidden Lore (Sacred Places)**. He uses a library (no modifier) to search for a likely spot somewhere in his city (-4). He succeeds by 4, which means he finds a location giving +2 to gathering rolls. The farthest city limit is 10 miles away; he rolls $(4d-4) \times 5\%$ and gets 55%, so the site is 5.5 miles away. If the GM rolls $(2 \times 2) + 5 = 9$ or less on 3d, the site is occupied.

Known Sites

Don't use these rules if the champions already know about a particular site and are trying to track it down! For this, the GM will secretly roll against the better of **Archaeology** or **Hidden Lore (Sacred Places)**, as modified below. (*Exception:* Archaeology will not locate a *modern* site.) The margin of success will determine how detailed the information is; on a critical failure, he lies!

Modifiers: -4 for using the Internet or no penalty for a library. A modifier equal to (site's bonus - 3); e.g., -2 to locate a +1 site. Long-distance modifiers (p. B241) based on distance from the champions to the site.

Success produces a mediocre substitute (-5 to skill) while critical success creates a good one (-2 to skill) – but either requires both hands to use and stops working if dropped (DR 0, HP 1), or even shoved in a pocket quickly!

Kirlian film (*Champions*, p. 54) can also capture the effects of psi with a **Photography** roll (at -4 without 15 seconds of preparation), as long as the abilities are being used at the time of the shot *and* either the psi or his target is in the picture. A successful **Expert Skill (Psionics)**, **Physics**, or **Physics (Paraphysics)** roll, at -4 for Expert Skill (Psionics), is required to interpret which psionic abilities the colorful auras represent, and a second roll is needed to distinguish the psi from the subject.

Anyone witnessing the effects *or* the after-effects of psi (e.g., seeing a pyro's burn marks, talking to a victim of mind control) can use **Expert Skill (Psionics)** or **Psychology** to realize this and to understand any *mental* effects (and the full implications of their use), and **Expert Skill (Psionics)**, **Physics**, or **Physics (Paraphysics)** for similar details regarding any *physical* abilities used. **Hypnotism** or **Psychology** can fix mental damage (reprogramming, lost memories, etc.) done by rogue psis; this takes an hour and you must win a Quick Contest against the psi's IQ + Talent.

Ghosts

In certain rare instances, a person experiencing strong emotions as he dies may subconsciously use all of his psychic energy

to anchor himself to the material world, becoming a ghost. Unlike a psi, a ghost is *always* considered to be “actively using” its psychic energy – it can be detected by an EWD, caught on Kirlian film, etc., as above, even when it is not using any psychic abilities. A ghost *actively* using psychic powers (e.g., a poltergeist) gives +2 to all rolls to detect it! Otherwise, a ghost's psychic abilities are handled exactly as a psi's; they are manifestations of the same energy.

PATRONS AND INFLUENCE

Most shadow organizations have managed to acquire a certain amount of influence in the world – even if this isn't an active goal, an agency devoted to The Mission will eventually save the life of *someone* important! Getting in touch with a Patron is generally no harder than a phone call, but whether it can help you out depends on exactly what you need. The most common requests are shown on p. 27, each with the chance (on 3d) of getting assistance. This is a normal success roll; the person making the call can add color (p. 19), use **Luck**, or spend points (*Champions*, p. 31) to improve the results. The target number is modified as follows:

- +3 for a Patron with Heavy Influence.
- +1 for every *two* champions on the team who have the Patron advantage (including the one making the call).

- -1 for every request already made by the team this adventure, whether fulfilled or not.
- From +1 to +5 for an especially appropriate or easy request *or* from -1 to -10 for an especially inappropriate or difficult one (GM's call).

Some types of requests list specific modifiers as well; unless otherwise noted, these are *cumulative*.

Critical failure means the Patron is annoyed; your next request this adventure is at an *extra* -3. On a failure, the Patron cannot help in this situation. Success means the request is granted. With a critical success, the assistance either comes in 1/10 the normal time or is especially helpful (GM's call).

Some assistance may be prearranged! If the champions are told, "Head down to the National Guard depot; we'll arrange to get you in," don't bother rolling. These rules are for requests going *up* the chain of command, not the other way around.

Common Requests

This list covers the most common needs a field team has, but isn't exhaustive. See *Other Requests* at the end of the list for further guidance.

Access: You need to get into the DMV records office? If Security Clearance is usually needed for entrance, roll at -2 for every 5 points required. 1d hours to set up. *9 or less*.

Bailout: You got arrested? Success convinces the cops to drop the charges; failure by 1-4 gets you bailed out but still due in court later – and this is coming out of your budget! Roll at +4 if you're only being held for questioning. 1d hours. *7 or less*.

Cover-Up: The word's gotten out? Time to throw some threats and bribes at the media. Roll at -1 for 12 or more witnesses, -2 for 25, -3 for 50, -4 for 100, etc. Roll at -1 if anyone took pictures *or* -2 for video, *doubled* if they've already hit TV or the Internet. Starts immediately. *9 or less*.

Expert Access: Who can you talk to about Sumerian pottery glazes? Success by 0-2 gets someone who isn't in on the whole "monster" thing; by 3+ finds someone who is. 2d minutes for a phone number; 2d hours to set up a face-to-face meeting. *10 or less*.

Extra Gear: Your budget wasn't enough for something? You *are* expected to bring this back in one piece; if not, you all are at -3 on your next 1d Extra Gear requests (regardless of elapsed time). Roll at -1 for every full 50% of your starting budget (**Champions**, p. 53) that the gear costs. 1d minutes if you're picking it up, 3d hours for delivery. *8 or less*.

Prisoner Storage: You need a holding cell for a demon? Roll at *up to* -5 depending on how much work is needed to prisoner-proof the cell. Also roll at -3 if it'll be longer than a week *or* -6 if longer than a month. 2d hours to set up. *8 or less*.

Research: How many unsolved arsons were there in town last year? Rarely as detailed as when

you do it yourself, but sometimes that's not possible. The margin of success here *is* the Research margin of success. 1d×15 minutes. *10 or less*.

Transportation: You need a lift? The agency can send a van; roll at -2 for something armored *or* fast, or at -5 for a helicopter. *9 or less*.

Other Requests: The GM will adjudicate this. Suggestions are *10 or less* for providing information, *9 or less* for other tasks that don't require a lot of resources, *8 or less* for resource-heavy requests, and *7 or less* if the organization must stick its neck out in a dangerous way (e.g., confronting the law, risking mass exposure).

Player Control

The GM may wish to make copies of this box as a handout, to remind the players how they can spend resources to affect the game.

Fatigue Points

In combat, you may spend 1 FP for any of the following effects. All page references are to *Monster Hunters 2: The Mission*.

Feverish Defense (p. 19): +2 to a single active defense.

*Flurry of Blows** (p. 19): Halve the Rapid Strike penalty for one attack.

*Mighty Blows** (p. 19): +2 damage (or +1/die) to one attack.

Rapid Recovery (p. 22): Parry with an unbalanced weapon after attacking.

Warrior Moves† (p. 20): Make an Acrobatic Attack, Flying Attack, or Spinning Attack without the -6.

* Mighty Blows and Flurry of Blows cannot be applied to the same attack.

† Requires **Trained by a Master** or **Weapon Master**.

Character/Bonus/Destiny Points

See *Other Uses for Points* (*Monster Hunters 1: Champions*, p. 31) for details. In brief, you may spend character points or "destiny points" on any of the following uses; you may *also* spend the bonus points from a high wildcard skill *if* the use is related to the skill in some way.

Buying Successes

All costs are cumulative:

Turn a Critical Failure Into a Failure: 2 points.

Turn a Failure Into a Success (with margin 0): 1 point.

Turn a Success Into a Critical Success: 2 points. Not available for combat or deduction rolls.

Player Guidance

Minor Element or Coincidence: 1 point.

Moderate Element or Coincidence: 2 points.

Major Element or Coincidence: 3 points.

Other Uses

Flesh Wound (reduce injury to 1 HP): 1 point.

Miraculous Recovery (return to life): 25 points.

CHAPTER THREE

CHALLENGING CHAMPIONS

The four hunters lay flat in the bushes, watching the police search the area under flickering red and blue lights. None spoke above a whisper.

“What do we do if they come over here?”

“We split up and run. It’s the only way.”

“Easy for you to say.”

*“I can’t **believe** you killed a city councilman.”*

“First, I killed a cult leader who was about to sacrifice a teenager. Second, he was wearing a mask. Third, the rest of you certainly helped. Fourth, shut up.”

“Calm down, man. I’m sure he didn’t mean it like that.”

“This doesn’t make sense. How are the cops already here? Silenced bullets, no grenades, and no outside fighting. How did they know?”

“Someone knew we were coming, that’s how.”

“And they called the cops but didn’t warn the cult?”

“There’s definitely a lot more to this picture than we realize . . .”

All of the rules and information so far have been equally appropriate for the GM and the players. The former needs these building blocks to set up interesting scenarios and adventures, while the latter need to know how to rise to these challenges in a violent-yet-stylish manner. This chapter is different, as it consists almost entirely of campaign planning advice; players are welcome to keep reading, but the following advice is aimed squarely at the GM.

FEAR

Monster Hunters is a horror game, but it’s a modern version of *pulp* horror. The heroes are square-jawed fighters, confident and able to hold their own against the monsters. The focus is on thrills, not chills – fear is part of the game, but as a tool to build excitement! Even if the GM opens a portal and unleashes Hell on Earth, he can expect the players to start drawing up tactics for a counter-invasion instead of cowering in fright.

Fright Checks

It’s important not to dispense with Fright Checks (pp. B360-361) altogether, since one of the ways a champion can show off is by remaining calm in the face of fear! Still, Fright Checks are not required for any “mundane” scares – encountering dead bodies, the lights suddenly going out, etc. They are also not needed for *expected* encounters with monsters; hunters who know there are four demons in the next room don’t need to make a Fright Check when they see

the four demons. Here are some circumstances that *would* require a Fright Check; this is not an exhaustive list!

- Unexpectedly encountering a monster; e.g., you turn the corner and there it is.
- Encountering over twice as many monsters as you expected.
- Encountering a completely different type of monster than you were expecting.
- Coming across a tableau of absolute horror; e.g., you knew there’d be demons, but didn’t realize they had strung the entrails of their victims around the room.
- Being hit by Terror (p. B93).

Modifiers: A basic +3; this includes the bonus for Combat Reflexes and experience. Any Fearlessness bonus. The listed Fright Check penalty for the monster; if unknown, the GM will assess one from +4 to -10. -1 if you’ve never encountered this type of monster before. +1 per encounter with this monster type in the past 24 hours. +5 for any Fright Check made while in combat. If more than one of the above bullet points applies, -2 for each one past the first. Remember that Unfazeable characters don’t make Fright Checks!

A roll of 14 or higher (15 or higher with **Brave**) fails automatically. Should a hero fail a Fright Check, the GM only rolls on the *Fright Check Table* (p. B360) if the results of the check deserve to occupy the spotlight; e.g., when the hero who succumbs is the only one close enough to destroy the evil lamp. Otherwise, just assume that failing a Fright Check means “stunned for 1d turns; after that, roll unmodified Will to snap out of it,” but make a note of how much the champion failed by.

Time Constraints

A sense of urgency is an important part of every adventure. With no ticking clock, the heroes are free to take weeks gathering clues before taking a single step toward a solution. Even a simple “hunt and kill” mission should have the implied understanding that any delay may mean another victim hurt or killed. More complex adventures demand something more explicit (*When*, p. 10). If this can’t be made a key part of the enemies’ plan (p. 34), use it for a sideline issue; e.g., an innocent woman affected by a curse (p. 23), which can be lifted using the demon leader’s blood, but only within 24 hours.

After the big scene, roll on the *Fright Check Table*, but only to see if there are any permanent effects (e.g., a new quirk or Delusion).

Defining “Monster”: For the rules above, “monster” should be read as “not of your own kind.” That is, humans aren’t normally afraid of other humans, vampires aren’t frightened by other vampires (but they *would* be scared of a group of human psis), and so on.

Atmosphere

It’s the GM’s responsibility to convey a sense of horror using colorful descriptions. No one will shudder at:

“You successfully kick down the door. In the middle of the room, a group of cultists surround an unconscious girl on an altar. You have partial surprise.”

Instead, picture the scene, take a moment to think about *what* is horrific about it, and describe it:

“The hinge on the door splinters – the air that rushes out smells of rotten meat and incense. You assume the stench comes from the body parts and skulls that litter the floor haphazardly, and the maggots feeding on them. The walls of the room are smeared with blood, crudely worked into magical symbols. A girl is on the altar; the blood trickling from her eyes suggests that she was beaten into unconsciousness. A dozen cultists surround an altar, but they’re shocked by your entrance.”

The more the players are horrified by what their hunters face, the more rewarding it will be when their champions put an end to it.

Discovery

Keeping the existence of the supernatural a secret isn’t easy. In this case, the *fear* of the secret getting out is less about actual terror and more about a long-term, constant concern. If the hunters become too blasé about working inconspicuously and avoiding the spotlight, the GM is fully justified in introducing complications, as discussed in *Unwelcome Attention* (p. 18).

The GM should be more than fair about this, though – when in doubt, as long as the champions are making a real effort to be sneaky, assume that most people look the other way. Similarly, it should be *rare* that The Enemy seeks to expose the secret! Mindless monsters are too stupid to, and intelligent foes know that doing so will just make it harder for them to operate. If a bad guy *is* willing to do something overt, it should either involve exposing the hunters specifically, or they should become aware of his plan in time to stop it. In other words, whenever something ends up on the local news, it should always be because of choices the *players* made.

If the secret *does* get out, acting quickly may serve to contain it. Many people (even cops and reporters) can be sworn to secrecy once they realize what’s on the line; this may be possible via roleplaying, or it may require some *Manipulation* (pp. 8-9). If that doesn’t work, a *Patron* (pp. 26-27) can attempt a cover-up. And if worst comes to worst, destroying any evidence will leave most people assuming the witnesses are crazy – but only if you get *every* picture and video, even those taken on a cell phone! Good luck . . .

The Hunter Hunted

“What if The Enemy realizes where I live?” has given sleepless nights to many a hunter. A champion with *Enemy* (Monster of the week) experiences something similar, but only in the form of the occasional bad guy (or small group) tracking him down. The *real* concern is that of the entire supernatural underworld making a concerted effort to eliminate you. This is a big stick, and as such works better as something with which the GM can *threaten* the team than as something he should invoke casually. When using it becomes necessary, see *Unwelcome Attention* (p. 18) and *In Media Res* (p. 17) for more.

High-Powered Horror

Monster hunters don’t quake in fear when The Enemy comes calling – they cowboy up and kick some tail. That doesn’t mean the GM can’t still introduce some apprehension and worry to the game; it just requires some careful consideration. After all, it’s *hard* to threaten a team of 400-point champions!

So don’t threaten them – threaten something they care about. That may be innocent people, family, coreligionists . . . or even a **Contact** or **Patron**. (Try to limit the latter two, though; players will complain if you use their advantages against them *too* frequently.) When the psis’ big plan has the potential to wipe out not only the PCs, but their entire *neighborhood*, it lends some gravity to the plot.

A more extreme approach is to alter the dynamic of the game: Stack the odds against the champions drastically enough that it puts them on the *defensive*, and likely scrambling just to survive! If they can take on a room full of vampires without worry, have a master vamp show up . . . with a dozen of his progeny! Or stage the attack when the heroes aren’t carrying their best weapons (*In Media Res*, p. 17). In such a case, the GM *must* be sure to give the team a way out! Even if he carefully balances the encounter (see *The Fight*, below) to attempt to ensure their survival, a few bad dice rolls could potentially kill off the entire party. After escaping and regrouping, the heroes should always have a chance to come back and confront the bad guys on their own terms – the resulting smack-down should be quite cathartic.

THE FIGHT

A fight isn’t necessarily the most *important* part of the adventure. Unlike other challenges, however, each battle must be carefully balanced by the GM. Too easy, and a final confrontation can feel like a silly anticlimax; too hard, and a casual fight with some minions can result in a total party kill!

Choosing a Monster

There’s no simple formula for deciding what opponents a team should face – it’s an art, not a science. These guidelines may help, but nothing can substitute for experience as a GM. Be willing to adjust power levels on the fly – if the Big Boss is getting smacked down far too easily, have him chant a spell, pull out an artifact, etc., that boosts his skill, damage, and DR enough to make him a challenge. If the heroes are getting creamed horribly, retroactively knock down the enemies’ HP.

Then make a note so that *next* time, you'll be able to balance things more accurately.

Damage: At least one of the bad guys should be able to threaten the PC with the *highest* DR. If basic damage that high would slaughter the hero with the *lowest* DR, consider alternatives – especially armor divisors and attacks that don't interact with DR (e.g., maledictions, including psi or magic). Against a party with huge active defense scores, look at high skill (which permits a Deceptive Attack) or options that bypass defenses (e.g., maledictions, area effects, or Stealth to allow a surprise attack).

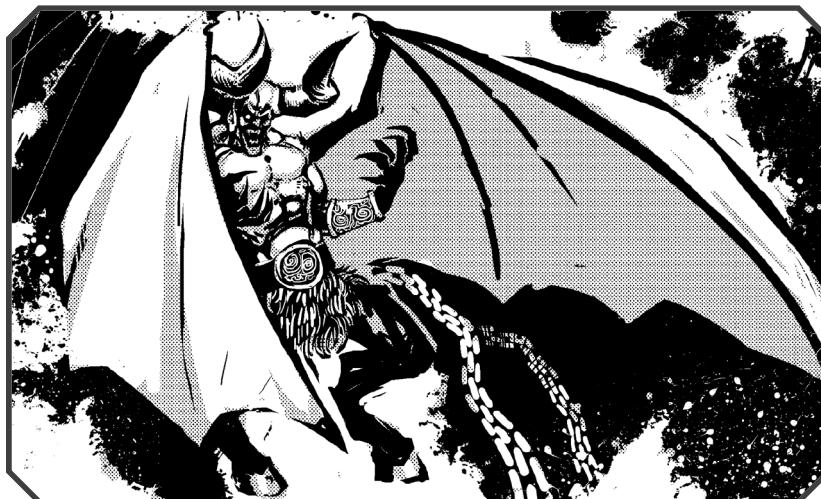
Attacks: Most enemies can attack only once per turn. Those with Extra Attacks are effective against multiple opponents, which means you can use fewer of them. However, a single foe with five attacks is still far weaker than five equivalent foes with a single attack each; a single foe is easier to stun or cripple, and he cannot surround and flank the heroes.

Defense: Some enemies are *fodder* and don't care about defense – they get killed quickly, which means the GM must use them in bulk to let them chip away at the party before being exterminated. Others are *evasive* and difficult to hit. This might be due to high Dodge, or it could be because of some innate spell-like defense that lets them blink aside, turn insubstantial momentarily, etc. These are best used against champions with high skill, as Deceptive Attacks and Rapid Strikes become necessary to land a blow. *Intangible* monsters, such as ghosts, take this a step further – *no* normal attack can harm them! The GM should only pit such foes against teams with crusaders, casters, or psychotronic weapons; otherwise, they make better sources of color and information than enemies. Of course, many bad guys are just *tough*, with enough DR to turn all but the heroes' biggest physical attacks, sufficient HP to soak up several hits from those attacks, Regeneration, and so on. These make good opponents for warriors and similarly strong hunters.

Mobility: Flying monsters or rogues can stay out of melee weapon reach, forcing the party to rely on guns and other ranged attacks. Flying or not, any creature with Move 11-20 can step two yards, one with Move 21-30 can step three yards, and so on, allowing it to approach, strike, and dart out of reach – very annoying!

Monsters come in three broad power levels, which modify the above assumptions:

Fodder monsters, like zombies, appear in hordes that outnumber the party. They should have weak attacks that are



dangerous mainly because the threat of lucky dice (critical hit, maximum damage roll, winning a Quick Contest, etc.) increases when each PC faces *many* enemies per turn. Such creatures should still be able to injure the PC with the lowest DR, though! There's no need for Extra Attacks – a mob of fodder is essentially a distributed monster that has lots of attacks already. As noted above, fodder monsters don't require especially great defenses. Some have good mobility, however, nipping in and out like jackals or piranha, or swarming through the air like hornets.

Worthy monsters can challenge the heroes when the numerical odds are more-or-less equal. Most use the offense, defense, and mobility guidelines as written, but the GM might nudge offense up a bit at the expense of defense, or vice versa. It's still unwise to punch offense up to instant-death levels, even for a critter with *no* defense (ultimately, the monsters' survival doesn't matter, while the PCs' does), or to make defense near-perfect, even for an enemy that can't hurt the party (monster hunters should be able to kill monsters!). Mobility enhances offense *and* defense somewhat – remember that when making other trades.

Bosses – such as master vampires, demon lords, and powerful psis – are meant to challenge the entire party all on their own. They can be superlative in every category! Any attack might be lethal, so the PCs can't just swarm in with a hail of All-Out Attacks. Multiple attacks are likely, especially if the boss won't have fodder for backup. Such creatures are often both evasive *and* tough; the heroes might even have to discover a special vulnerability in order to win! Some serious foes like this lack mobility and sit there trading blows, but this isn't universally true. A boss might be a challenge *because* of mobility, moving all over the place so that only one PC can actually fight it at a time.

Environment

Few fights take place on well-lit, featureless plains! Every battle requires some thought regarding where it's happening, and how that will affect the battle as a whole. At the same time, the modifiers should be kept simple and easy, following the advice for *Cinematic Combat* (pp. 19-22).

Darkness

Nearly *every* fight will have some sort of darkness penalty. This is important for several reasons: It adds atmosphere (p. 29), it makes high skill levels more important, and it justifies the purchase of Vision-related advantages.

An overcast day is no penalty to -1, twilight is -2 to -3, a full moon is -3 to -4, an overcast night with a moon is -5 to -6, a clear night with no moon is -7 to -8, while an overcast night with no moon is -9. Indoors, treat warehouse lighting, emergency stairways, and poorly lit interior spaces as -1 to -2. An area lit by street lamps is also -2. See also *Light* (p. 14).

This penalty applies to *every* attack roll, ranged or otherwise, but not to active defenses. However, many traits mitigate this.

Night Vision reduces the penalty by its level (e.g., someone with **Night Vision 2** treats -5 as -3). **Infravision** removes *all* penalties against all animate, physical targets (but not intangible, dead ones like ghosts). **Hyperspectral Vision** works like **Infravision** and **Night Vision 9**. Treat **Ultravision** as **Night Vision 2**.

Combatants with **Dark Vision** never take darkness penalties. If anyone has these traits, the GM should make a note of the effective darkness penalty for that person.

Cramped Quarters

Since combat will usually be abstract, areas should be defined in terms of the maximum range band (p. 21) fights can achieve. For example, in a twisty tunnel or typical office building, it's impossible to go farther than Short range without leaving the combat. If restricted to Close, remember to apply Bulk penalties to *all* ranged attacks made by those without **Gunslinger**.

Other Situations

If a fight will take place knee-deep in water, on a floor slick with blood, etc., the GM can assess a general penalty for the area (typically from -2 to -4). To keep it simple, just add this to any existing darkness penalty (above). One way to make foes challenging is to assume that they've adapted to the environment, and thus are unpenalized!

Losing

High-powered heroes necessitate high-powered bad guys. Unfortunately, this means that any unbalance is likely to be a *large* one. It's entirely possible for the GM to make the enemies too powerful, and not realize it in time to prevent the entire group being knocked unconscious or worse. When that happens, he has a few options *besides*, "They eat your hearts; make up new characters."

Saved for Later: With all rogues, and most monsters, it's easy to justify tying up the champions for later, nefarious purposes. The reasons can vary, from, "We just ate. Let's save them for dinner!" to, "Perfect sacrifices! We'll base the ritual around them." Anyone wanting to escape will need to *win* a Quick Contest of **Escape** vs. the Knot-Tying (or DX-4 default) of his captors. If the bad guys have an actual *cell*, see *Lockpicking* (p. 12). Either way, the heroes are without their gear – but alive!

A Minor Death: If a champion is being badly beaten, the GM should remind him that he can play dead (p. 22). If his foes don't have a use for dead bodies, they're likely to walk away, giving him time to recover and regroup. This *isn't* a good move against corpse-eating monsters, however!

A Serious Death: Sometimes a hero simply dies (*A Good Day to Die*, p. 20). Fortunately, this is not an insurmountable challenge – for 25 character points, the hero can rejoin the living. If the PC is a bit short, remember that "destiny points" can always be used for resurrection – and the GM can be lenient about allowing wildcard bonus points to contribute. If even that isn't enough, the GM *may* let the player pay for it "the hard way." If the player agrees to this, the GM will choose attributes to reduce, advantages to remove, and disadvantages to add until the character's point total is reduced by enough to make up the difference. Later on, the hero can use earned points to get "back to his old self."

A Fate Worse Than Death: For the average human, the fear of being murdered by a monster is surpassed by the fear of becoming one. If this happens, there are two ways to deal with it. The most thematic approach is a quest; for every type of monster that was formerly a human, there's some tale of a mythical spell or potion or artifact that can undo the change.

Discovering this is an **Occultism** roll at -10, but hunters can use *Research* (pp. 6-7) – and other investigative methods, at the GM's option – to mitigate that penalty with clues. For groups who want a faster, simpler method, simply kill the new monster, then see *A Serious Death*, above. "It's a miracle! When you killed my vampire form, I was reborn as a human!"

Some players may not see the change as a fate worse than death, however – pointing to Chapter 5 of **Champions** and saying, "I want to be one of *these* vampires." But it doesn't work that way. *Those* inhumans are special – the rare few who were born, or became, "good enough" to work against their own kind. That's *not* what a fallen champion turns into. Think of the new inhuman as having acquired a 0-point template, consisting of lots of nifty new powers, but an equivalent amount of "evil" disadvantages. In all cases, as soon as he becomes one of The Enemy, he becomes an NPC.

"You Can Do That!"

In a high-powered game, the PCs can have so many nifty abilities that the GM loses track of them . . . until a player casually uses the one ability that sucks all the challenge right out of a scenario. One of the ways to avoid this is to fill out a *GM Control Sheet* (available at www.sjgames.com/gurps/resources), listing the champions' special abilities, along with other useful information. For convenience, break them down into "information," "movement," "combat," and "other," to best anticipate how each one will be used.

Casters are tricky, since magic is the ultimate "Swiss Army knife." In theory, almost *any* effect can be had with a spell. For non-adepts, the key is *time* – unless a sage is willing to accept huge penalties, he has to spend 1d minutes preparing the area, then at *least* a minute casting the spell. For adepts like witches, the only real limit is *risk* – a high-powered spell risks a critical failure due to multiple accumulation rolls. If the caster focuses on particular paths, expect situations involving those subjects to be solved via magic.

In all cases, however, the GM should avoid negating or overruling the special ability. The player *chose* that ability for a reason – it should work! A telepath *should* be able to read the plan from a snitch's mind. An adept *should* be able to ward off undead. Don't think of it as "getting around" your plans; think of it as yet another chance for the heroes to show off – something *everyone* should enjoy!

INFORMATION

The GM has a great deal of control over how long an investigation (pp. 5-11) will last. To speed this part of the hunt up, make major clues (p. 6) common, and cluster several sources close together; e.g., a Contact wishes to meet at an Internet-enabled library where some inhuman snitches are known to hang out. To put more focus on this aspect of the hunt, spread out the clues. If each location has only one or two relevant clues, the team will end up going everywhere – from the Internet to the underworld – just to get the necessary bonuses. Be aware that spreading out the clues *too* thinly may frustrate the players, however; they may feel that they *have* to spend character points to buy a deductive success.

Cardinal Jinette: We cannot let them slip into Purgatory.

Van Helsing: So you're sending me into Hell.

Cardinal Jinette: In a manner.

– **Van Helsing**

Supernatural Snooping

Blessed, Mind Reading, Precognition, and many magical Sense effects allow hunters to obtain information in unexpected ways . . . but if detected, this can draw some unwanted attention! Any invasive mental ability allows the victim a Per roll, at a penalty equal to the invader's margin of success, to notice. And *any* supernatural ability can be detected if someone nearby has the ability or spell to do so; rolls to do so are at

+4 if the ability is being used *on* the detector. This can lead to a formerly uninvolved caster, psi, or inhuman taking an interest in the party, and possibly even attacking! The GM shouldn't make this a common occurrence, but it can be used as a wake-up call if the team seems to be relying a little *too* heavily on their psi, magic, etc.

Communication

One problem that arises in a modern game is that of the cell phone. Plots that relies on isolating the heroes *fail* when they can summon help and share clues by pushing a button. Fortunately, there are some inherent drawbacks to cell phones (and, to a lesser degree, radios), which a clever GM can exploit.

No communicator works through thick walls; road tunnels and basements block cell phones, and underground tunnels or even thin layers of metal stop *all* radios. Certain electronics and mystical energies can jam phones and radios. A tech-savvy enemy, or one with government contacts, may be able to track a cell phone; carrying one then becomes a serious liability! If that isn't an option, advance preparation (taking out the right towers) can bring down the cell system in an area.

Making Everybody Useful

While no hunter is a *pure* specialist, each template from **Champions** has a particular area of proficiency. This is intentional; it gives everyone a chance to show off, which is a large part of what makes gaming fun!

For this to work, each adventure must offer every hero a moment in the spotlight. If only one hero can hack a computer, then the GM should spend a little extra time describing one or more databases that contain needed information. Conversely, if there are *no* hackers in the party, then the adventure shouldn't require it at all – make the data available via other means. The GM may wish to make a list of what each PC can do that no one else can (or, at least, not nearly as well), and use it to come up with at least *one* spotlight scene per hunter per adventure. Some suggestions:

Commando: The commando lives to shoot things. The hard part is keeping him occupied *out* of fights – but as he's equally good at taking out locks, intimidating thugs, and tactical planning, this is mostly a matter of including plenty of "action scenes."

Crusader: As an expert on certain enemies, a fair hand in a fight, *and* possessor of mystical powers, a crusader should have many chances to shine. Throw in the occasional curse or ghost to be sure, or find a reason to plant information in a religious library.

Experiment: Use *both* his scientific and physical prowess – have a clue hinge on obscure knowledge, then have him take point on a chase. Introduce poisons for him to flush from his system. Note the Bioenhancement abilities he takes; e.g., if he prefers brawny ones, he wants physical challenges.

Inhuman: Each skill package is tailor-made for specific scenes; be sure to include them. While not *every* adventure should focus on similar monsters, have them show up on a regular basis to showcase his knowledge. Check each racial

template for strengths: Demons are versatile, lycanthropes are tough and perceptive, vampires are *fast* and perceptive, and nearly all inhumans are strong.

Psi: He'll shine in *any* hunt involving psis. Otherwise, he wants to use his powers: ESP and Telepathy both excel in investigations, most Psychokinesis abilities support fights, and TK and Teleportation are great for theft and intrusion.

Sage: The sage will rarely be bored. His occult knowledge aids investigations, he can hold his own in a fight, and his support skills back up the others. Insert scenes where his slow-but-versatile magic has time to shine; if there's a witch in the party, this may require separating the two.

Sleuth: The challenge is to keep him from hogging the *entire* spotlight during an investigation! You may need to split the party up, keeping the less-deductive members with the sleuth. In action scenes, emphasize his stealthiness, from sneaking up on sentries to sniping from the shadows of a battle.

Techie: Whenever possible, have the enemies' plan or lair involve *some* sort of technology, even if it just means they're hiding in an old factory. Much like the experiment (above), the techie may have an obscure bit of scientific knowledge that provides a vital clue.

Warrior: The warrior steps into the spotlight during *any* fight. Outside of one, focus on his strength – he can bend bars, lift gates, etc. – and support skills. His range of enemy lore can be impressive, especially with **Luck** to compensate for low skill levels.

Witch: Given the incredible versatility of magic, the challenge is keeping the witch from stealing *every* scene! Make a note of his charms and try to work in situations where they could be useful. In a fight, a smart witch uses rituals for support, not direct artillery – be sure to give credit when a magical bonus makes the difference on a crucial roll.

A DARK REFLECTION

A *Monster Hunters* game takes place on modern-day Earth – our world. (“But monsters don’t exist in our world,” you say? That’s what the average person thinks in *this* setting, too . . .) This has the advantage of accessibility; each player is (presumably) from our world, and will thus be at least somewhat familiar with prices, geography, public figures, etc. With the backdrop as a given, the GM can then focus on the *supernatural* aspect of this campaign, one step at a time.

PICK YOUR INFLUENCES

As a first step, the GM should steal *liberally* from his favorite monster-hunting books, movies, comics, and television shows. Consider the best parts of each setting, and merge them together into a perfect whole. Not only does this save work, it can be a great shorthand for describing the world to the players, assuming they’re familiar with the same works: “So, the town is like Sunnydale, but with *Underworld*-style monster politics and a bunch of evil corporations like Umbrella. The three groups you can be part of are based on MHI, the Night Watch, and the Catholic slayers from *Vampire\$*.” It’s good to file off the serial numbers before starting play, however. If the places and organizations are used verbatim, players will have certain expectations about them, which can prevent the GM from really making the setting his own.

Later on, once the setting is established, the GM can mine these sources for ideas – adapting plots, characters, and more to fit the game. Be wary of plots that will require significant railroading! If an investigation demands a specific, brilliant deduction, the GM can always fudge a roll to make that happen. But if the plot needs the protagonists to do a specific, *stupid* thing, ditch it; PCs do foolish stuff all the time, but it’s *never* what the GM is expecting!

CHOOSE YOUR SECRETS

What exists in the setting? The GM can declare that only one particular kind of monster exists, that every monster *any* society has ever believed in exists, or anything in between! As well, he can decide that certain types of abilities or characters don’t fit the setting; e.g., magic doesn’t exist (no witches, and sages need reworking), guns are pretty much impossible to find (no commandos), or magic and psi are the same thing (psis are now witches, or vice-versa). It’s crucial to inform the players of these decisions, which will affect their choices when building hunters.

Monsters

To play a game about hunting monsters, at least *one* type of monster must exist! There are no other requirements – it’s entirely possible to run a great game of nothing but non-powered humans (e.g., commandos, sleuths, techies, and warriors) hunting vampires. However, having a range of enemies to choose from *will* provide more variety in a long-running game.

When in doubt, the GM should err on the side of fewer monsters. After all, it’s easier to add new monsters to a game (“I didn’t know *yeti* were real!” “*No one* knew!”) than it is to take them away.

The default assumption is that every foe described in a *Monster Hunters* book exists; the GM should clarify if this isn’t the case.

The Underworld

Are there one or more monster underworlds (p. 9)? There are several options to choose from:

No Underworld: Either there aren’t enough monsters or they can’t get along well enough to form a society. Intelligent inhumans of the same type are likely to share information via an informal “grapevine,” but that’s as substantial as it gets.

One Mixed Underworld: Several, perhaps all, of the inhumans get along well enough to form an intermingled society. Vampires, demons, and fae all do business with each other, with only the occasional brawl. This is likely to be a *big* underworld, requiring a pocket dimension, shared ownership of *several* buildings, or an unrealistically sprawling sewer system.

Separate Underworlds: This doesn’t mean *every* inhuman has a society. Perhaps vampires and demons do, but lycanthropes are too independent to bond this way. Regardless of how many exist, they’re likely to be at odds with each other – typically in the form of a “cold war.” Inhumans of a “race” hated by a particular underworld may suffer *extra* social penalties therein, or even be denied entrance!

You’re saying that every movie monster, every nightmare that I’ve ever had, that’s all real.

– Adam,
in *Supernatural* #4.19

DEFINE YOUR BAD GUYS

Now that you know what exists, it’s time to get *specific* by defining The Enemy’s organizations and key figures. This *doesn’t* include simple “packs” of monsters, or most lone-wolf individual foes – only the groups with a plan and a purpose, and the few bad guys powerful enough to be a threat all on their own. This will be an ongoing process; as the game continues, new groups and leaders should emerge to replace, bolster, or compete with the old ones.

Cults and Covens

Organizations involved with the supernatural are usually the most important part of the setting. This includes groups whose members are supernatural beings (e.g., vampire clans), empowered humans (e.g., psionics institutes), normal humans tampering with dark forces (e.g., a zombie-making corporation), or any combination of the above. Each organization needs the following defined:

Size: This can range from a small coven to a multinational business. To a large degree, size also connotes *power*. The group should be powerful enough to threaten the heroes – and may even be powerful enough that the heroes could never hope to take them on *directly* (but can still foil their plans).

Membership: Who's a part of the group? In a large organization, it's important to consider not only demographics (e.g., how many mundane humans, how many psis, how many demons), but how many people are *aware* of what's really going on. For example, a research facility might consist of four demons and 80 humans, but with 76 of the humans unaware of management's true goals.

Leadership: This is often a single, powerful individual. Some large groups are led by committee, but just as often, there's a single CEO or shadow leader. The head may be powerful enough to serve as a big bad (below) in his own right, but it's just as likely that his real power comes from his organization.

Mundanes and Media

Organizations with political power – which goes hand-in-hand with *financial* power – can be just as important to the setting. These should be defined as for *Cults and Covens* (above), but with the possibility that *no one* in the group is aware of the supernatural. If so, this *doesn't* place them on the sidelines! This category often includes the local police and justice departments, most media outlets (and their journalists), and schools and universities – none of which should be taken lightly. Powerful mundane groups can be a part of *any* setting.

Big Bads

Some individuals are powerful enough to be a serious threat in their own right. This can be due to brawn, brains, connections, or special abilities, but it's often a combination of all four.

Strength Versus Scope

One problem that crops up in high-powered games is the perceived need to "go bigger" each time. You killed a vampire? Okay, now you're facing a master. You killed him? Okay, now you're facing a great, ancient master. You killed him? Okay, now you're facing the First Vampire, creator of all bloodsuckers. You killed him? Um . . .

To avoid this, the GM should focus on gradually increasing the *scope* of the game instead of the power level of The Enemy. Most players want to know what's going on in the game world and to have some way to affect it. Thus, it's more important for them to *learn more* and for their heroes to become more *important* with each defeated big bad, regardless of how strong he was. The players should feel like their actions are affecting things on an ever-increasing scale; if the game started off in one location, this can coincide with increasing the physical scope of the setting as well.

To keep the big bads and group leaders interesting, the GM can vary their *means* of power as an alternative to raising it. If the group just fought a physically tough demon lord, what if the next big bad is an aged witch, confined to a bed, but wielding great *magical* power? Or a politician who happens to be thoroughly corrupt, extremely dangerous, and completely untouchable? The variety makes the game interesting, and the scope continues to expand a little bit each time.

A big bad may work alone, have a few minions, or lead a large group (*Cults and Covens*, pp. 33-34); the latter makes him even *more* dangerous, as he can wield his underlings like weapons!

Because it's easier to kill a single enemy than to bring down a large organization, big bads make good targets for champions. For combat purposes, a big bad is usually a "boss" (*Choosing a Monster*, pp. 29-30); if not, he'll be *very* hard to get to.

Motivation

Every organization *or* big bad should have an established motivation, whether as simple as, "Make a profit," or as complex as, "Gradually free mankind from his dependence on technology via a return to old-fashioned methods of living." These motivations will help the GM create interconnected conspiracies and plots (see below), as well as ensure that the enemy's actions stay true to form throughout the game.

ASSEMBLE THE PARTS

Once all of the important components are in place, they need to be linked together. No one plots or acts in a vacuum! For every major move, the GM should ask, "What effect would this have on the *other* movers and shakers?" With well-defined motivations (above), the answers will eventually start to present *themselves*.

Dark Conspiracies

The key to a horrific conspiracy is to view everyone's motivation through a dark and secretive lens. Assume that when there are multiple ways for an antagonist to accomplish a goal, he (or they) will choose the *evil* way, and will thus take action (*evil* action!) to keep it out of the public eye. Then look at the effects of both the main plan and the cover-up, and consider how it would impact the campaign.

Example: Gibson Carter, a master vampire and big bad (above), is looking for a cursed artifact. He does so by tracking down archaeologists and other experts and turning them into vampires. (This is both *evil* and efficient, as it keeps the information out of others' hands.) When police and reporters look into it, he pulls strings to have the case/story back-burnered.

Carter's basic plan itself affects any person or group with an interest in ancient artifacts, as a huge portion of the local "think tank" just turned undead and left. As well, several of those experts were professors, which will spark curiosity through the university system. The cover-up stands a good chance of being noticed by any conspiratorial organization with fingers in the police or media (which is most of them!). Depending on what other active participants the GM has defined for the game, *many* will be reacting to Carter's actions in some way – and those reactions will have an effect on others as well.

As the GM, don't worry too much about building conspiracies at first, since the players will only see a small part of the picture.

Just keep track of every plan that your intelligent bad guys have – when you have a few, consider how they might fit together, and which person or organization might have been behind the important ones. Eventually, a pattern *will* start to emerge, even if you didn't intend one to!

Plot Diagrams

To keep track of all of these participants, consider making a *plot diagram*. Write the names of each key individual or group on a sheet of paper, with plenty of space between them. Then start drawing arrows between each pair, labeling each arrow with how they're related – unless the two factions are completely unaware of each other! This doesn't have to be complex – one arrow might just say "hates" while one says "is secretly monitoring" – and each pair does *not* have to have a reciprocal arrangement!

Optionally, after the major factions are in place, go back and fill in some removes – that is, the minor actors that the *major* ones use to do their dirty work. For example, a corporation might have controlling interest in a hospital, where it does its incriminating lycanthrope gene grafts, or a demon might use a street gang to get things done without exposing himself.

Once the big picture is written down, it's easier to keep track of changes and see how each one might affect others. It also

becomes easy to map interactions; e.g., just add "attacked their secret lab" to one arrow and "suspects the attack, looking to prove it" to the reciprocal one.

In the News

One of the advantages to a modern campaign is the ease of reproducing news articles for handouts. With a word processor and an image-search engine, the GM can turn the adventure's introduction (*Discovery*, p. 4) into a more immersive experience. This has the dual advantages of better grabbing the players' attention and allowing the GM to present potentially dull facts and figures in a way that makes it easy for the group to refer to later.

Hell on Earth

At some point, it's useful to consider *where* everyone is! Plotting the bases of operation on a map will make planning certain adventures much easier. Other locations need defining, including those of any underworlds (p. 9), known sacred places (p. 26), areas notorious for their high concentration of monsters, or any other supernatural focuses.

SAMPLE CAMPAIGNS

These short and simple "campaign sketches" offer jumping-off points for groups using one of the suggested setups from *Campaign Types* (**Champions**, p. 5). They don't assume any special restrictions on character types or monsters (*Choose Your Secrets*, p. 33). Each summary is broken down into the following sections:

Movers and Shakers: The people, organizations, and conspiracies that drive the plots in this campaign.

Dark Places: Key locations in the campaign.

Adventure Seeds: Ideas with a simple twist on the standard formula (p. 4).

Yellow Pages. While most of their jobs are local, some take them out of the state – or even out of the country . . . at the client's expense, of course.

Movers and Shakers

The Brotherhood of Contemplation is a collective comprising a dozen demons and their many mage minions, and led by the intelligent *Jiaxus*, who seek to drag the town into true Bacchanalian hedonism. A rogue angel known only as *Nicole* tries to stop them, often by punishing casual partiers with death. The *District Attorney's Office* is aware of what's happening, but places equal blame on Flexible Solutions.

Dark Places

The *Latin Quarter* has one vampire for every 250 humans, and is the unofficial vampire underworld of the city. Fortunately, they're too fractured to organize – there are no large factions. The main Brotherhood base is in an *abandoned school* in the Projects. On the east side of town, an ancient Native American *burial mound* is a +2 sacred place. The Flexible Solutions storefront is at the north end of *downtown*.

Adventure Seeds

- Vampires discover that the Brotherhood has been keeping them fractured; battle lines begin to form.
- Nicole seeks to tap into the power of the burial mound to cleanse this city once and for all.
- The Brotherhood's mages magically tamper with evidence to discredit the D.A., who blames Flexible Solutions instead.

A rogue angel punishes casual partiers with death.

EXTERMINATION FOR SALE

In a world-famous "vacation destination," the people, the weather, and the scenery are all beautiful – it's a shame the same can't be said about the monsters. When people see something they can't explain as gang violence, sometimes they turn to *Flexible Solutions*, a small strip-mall storefront that is listed under "Extermination Services, Other" in the

LOCAL GUARDIANS

Most of the students, staff, and professors at the University are blissfully ignorant of the creatures and people who prey upon them. Fortunately, a small group is aware of the truth, and its members take it upon themselves to keep the populace safe – between classes, of course.

Movers and Shakers

The *Rightful Masters*, a mixed group of nearly 100 members, is an odd collection of psis and casters. Using telepathic abilities and spells, they have worked their way deep into the system. They regularly capture monsters and normal humans for experimentation, with the goal of creating their own supernatural army. The mummy *Menkheperre* (known locally as August Timms) has made a tentative alliance with the *Khaimov* vampire clan against them. Meanwhile, researchers for the military's *Project 273* are doing their own super-soldier experiments; the Masters are attempting to co-opt this.

Dark Places

The school's small *chapel* is Abrahamic holy ground (p. 23), with an effective ward skill of 14. The extensive *drainage tunnels* under the campus (leading to the nearby river) contain many local vampires and a small group of demons; it could be considered a mixed underworld (p. 33). *Project 273* is run from the top of the *photronics lab*, under heavy security. The Masters live throughout the campus and town, but as one particular *dormitory* houses many of the more powerful members, it has become an unofficial base. Timms resides in a small *townhouse* just southwest of the campus.

Adventure Seeds

- Some of the Masters test out mass-hypnosis at a campus arena event; the next step is to try it at the nearby baseball stadium.
- *Project 273*'s experiments turn psychotic and escape; the *real* threat is that of the military coming in and "cleaning up" if they're not contained quickly.
- One vampire clan decides to move into the river, and begins attacking victims on the shore by dragging them underwater.

RESEARCH GRANT

When a small town has a zombie or gargoyle infestation, but they're willing to cowboy up and deal with it, where do they turn for advice? If they're smart, they call *Hyperforcean Studies Group*, whose research information and over-the-phone consultation are made available for all sponsors. HSG studies The Enemy to determine how best to defeat them – using a combination of discrete observation, direct confrontation, and vivisection (they always attempt live capture when possible). They choose targets based on their own research needs, but must also accommodate their sponsors' occasional requests.

Movers and Shakers

An odd mix of outcast angels and demons, known simply as the *Order*, takes issue with HSG's "casual murder" of monsters.

When not opposing HSG's actions, the Order encourages the creation of new inhumans. The researchers have run across *Maxwell Gulth* on multiple occasions; this vampire spawns packs of destructive progeny in highly religious towns (he has a particular hatred for the faithful). *M-Branch* a military program that seeks to weaponize the supernatural, is HSG's research rival.

Dark Places

HSG's operations are usually in-state, but they visit *many* locations. *M-Branch* is based a few counties to the north. The Order has followers embedded in the nearby *college*, keeping an eye on the researchers. A large *swamp* to the west (bisected by the interstate) has spawned many zombies, apparently through inherent magic.

Adventure Seeds

- After eliminating a parasite infestation, evidence shows that it was manufactured . . . possibly by *M-Branch*.
- A "simple" zombie outbreak in a small, isolated town turns out to be a setup by *Gulth*.
- *M-Branch* loses a team in the swamp, who come back animated and intelligent enough to use their weapons and gear.



ROAD TRIP

Intelligence agencies, who gather a *lot* of information, outsource much of the non-sensitive stuff to small sorting-and-filing businesses. One of these, *DataSifters*, has realized that many of the "impossible" reports are actually true. Since the government won't listen, the employees take it upon themselves to follow up on these incidents.

My pursuit of a regular life was a lie. I could see that now. My place was here. I was a Monster Hunter.

– Larry Correia, **Monster Hunter International**

Movers and Shakers

The Light of Amarja is a cult, with congregations across the nation, who seeks dominion over monsters. Led by a 130-year-old ghost (General Horace Fenway), the Light aggressively recruits casters; most are non-adepts who rely on coreligionists for ritual energy. A foreign spy network known to the government only as *Supreme Empire* has taken an interest in DataSifters, seeking data on both The Enemy and national secrets.

Dark Places

There aren't many places that DataSifters visits more than once; the scope of the campaign takes the employees all around the country. The company itself rents space on the third floor of an office building. The Light and Supreme Empire have an annoying tendency to pop up *anywhere*.

Adventure Seeds

- Vampires are preying on a small town; Supreme Empire is observing and attempting to capture one of the creatures.
- A routine investigation turns weird when the entire town tries to drive away the heroes, thanks to the Light's magic.
- A Light congregation's summoning went wrong, and now a powerful demon has several magic-wielding minions.

SHADOW WARS

All metropolises have a dark and sinister side, but this one is dominated by supernatural factions. The three groups most comfortable in human society – psis, vampires, and witches – maintain a triangular cold war, while the smaller communities of demons, lycanthropes, and *Mayombe* (a coalition of Voodoo *bokors*, necromancers, and in-betweeners) survive by playing the major groups against each other.

Movers and Shakers

Psis here tend toward human supremacy – all humans are better than monsters, and psis are the end goal of evolution – and control much of the legal and political power in the city. The *vampires* fight to maintain the status quo, and have a stranglehold on commerce and import/export. While they lack the broad-ranging power of either group, the *witches* control countless small businesses, and seek esoteric power. (These summaries gloss over complexity; each group has many factions, each with its own motivation and methods.)

Dark Places

The three major groups can be found anywhere in the city, but those looking to do business head *uptown* for the psis,

downtown for the vampires, and into the *art district* for the mages. Despite very few of the local demons originating from the East, the *Asian district* has become their unofficial headquarters. Most lycanthropes live in the *Projects*, and get around via the sewers. The *Mayombe* are secretive, but are believed to have small bases in several *ghettos*.

Adventure Seeds

- Although the lycanthropes swear their innocence, their known enemies are turning up mauled.
- A vampire attack is bolstered by zombies, suggesting they may be working with the *Mayombe*.
- A psi is openly running for mayor – stepping out of the shadows to an unprecedented degree.

STRIKE TEAM

The Mafia isn't blind; they know exactly what's going on, and it's time to fight back. Now a team of the best gangsters and their allies prepare to take the streets back from the creatures who prey on their people. While not exactly "good guys," the Mafia focuses on local protection and theft from their rivals, avoiding drugs and unnecessary murder.

Movers and Shakers

The *Camorra*, a rival mob, dominate the drug scene and want to take over local shipping. Unknown to most, they are allied with *Dalton Andreas*, a powerful werebear who trades his clan's muscle for having their murders covered up. *Xiveta*, a demon who runs a local Satanist cult, wants to escalate the violence between the two groups.

Dark Places

The Mafia runs the *shopping district*, with its fine restaurants, and the *shipping areas* (docks if the city has a river or shore, train yards otherwise). The Camorra stick to the *industrial area*, hiding their distribution in the many factories there. The Andreas clan have taken over a *large park* outside the city; citizens know to avoid it after dark. Xiveta has no permanent base, seeing it as a vulnerability; he moves between followers, staying with each a few days at a time.

Adventure Seeds

- Vampires are forcing their victims to overdose on the Camorra's drugs before feeding, for a "contact high."
- Dead Camorra mobsters are coming back as zombies.
- Xiveta offers to help the PCs frame the Andreas clan for killing a Camorra member.

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Inga: Werewolf!

Dr. Frankenstein: Werewolf?

Igor: There.

Dr. Frankenstein: What?

Igor: There, wolf. There, castle.

– *Young Frankenstein*

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