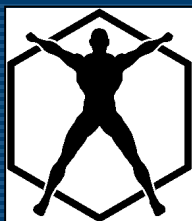


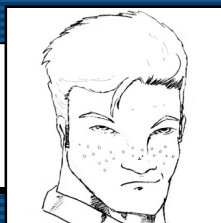
DIGITAL HERO

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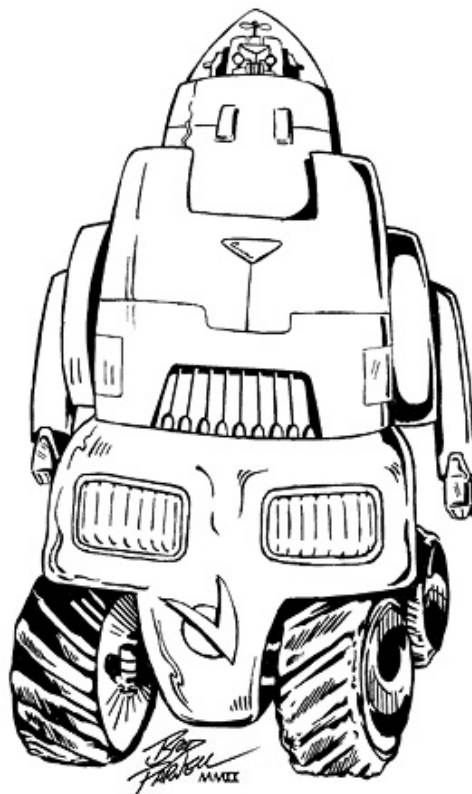
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Publisher

Hero Games

Editor

Dave Mattingly

Authors

W. Jason Allen
Jim Cambias
Chris Farris
Steven S. Long
Shelley Chrystal
Mactyre
Dale Robbins
Mike Surbrook
Jason Walters
Darren Watts
Leah Watts

Artists

Lisa Hartjes
Brad Parnell
Derrick Thomas
Jeff Ward
Chris Watkins

Cover Artist

William Levy

Online

herogames.com

To Subscribe

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

EDITOR'S NOTE

With ten issues per
year, that means that
twice a year, *Digital
Hero* skips a month.
With the holidays
coming up, we won't
be publishing again
until February. In the
meantime, Merry
Christmas!

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Issue #6 (December 2002)



When We Last Left Our Heroes...

by Steven S. Long

Since last issue, I've mostly been drivin' my life away... and flying... and sailing. In other words, I've mostly been working on *The Ultimate Vehicle*.

The Ultimate Vehicle (or TUV, to use its acronym) covers everything you could possibly want to know about vehicles in the *HERO System*. From cars to submarines to jets to starships to mecha, it tells you how to build them, use them, and incorporate them into your games. Written by Bob Greenwade (with the usual helping of reorganization and supplementation by Yours Truly), it applies to all genres, settings, and campaign types, just like all of Hero's other Ultimate series books.

The majority of TUV is devoted to the concept of building Vehicles using the *HERO System* rules. The first chapter contains general Vehicle-building rules and ideas – the sorts of suggestions that could apply to any vehicle, or at least multiple types of vehicles. For example, it's got an Expanded Vehicle Size Table, a discussion of various ways to apply Armor and other defenses to Vehicles, and a review of what Disadvantages are appropriate for Vehicles.

Chapters Two through Six take a more specific look at the major types of vehicles. From first to last, they cover ground vehicles, water vehicles, air vehicles, space vehicles, and mecha. Each chapter begins with a review of the different types of vehicles in that category, typically by dividing them into subcategories based on what powers them and/or how they move. It also reviews the major Movement Powers associated with that type of vehicle, providing suggested Power Modifiers and rules for using them to simulate vehicular movement.

Each chapter closes with several sample vehicles – from six to 16, depending on type. The examples were chosen to represent a variety of genres, time periods, and uses, to maximize their usefulness for gamers. For instance, the sample ground vehicles include a chariot, a typical four-door automobile, a superhero's supercar, a locomotive, an Abrams M1A1 main battle tank, and a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. Originally I hadn't planned to have quite so many examples, but since we moved *The HERO System Vehicle Sourcebook* back to early 2004, I felt it was necessary to provide more examples now.

Chapter Seven focuses on vehicular equipment. Rather than cluttering the previous chapters up with a bunch of sample devices and systems, this chapter incorporates all of them for easy reference, organized by categories (weapons, defenses, sensors, and the like). It's a

simple matter for gamers to “plug-and-play” these write-ups into their own vehicles, making the vehicle design process easier than ever.

Chapter Eight, one of the largest in the book, discusses vehicular combat and adventuring. It runs through all the sections in Chapter Two of the 5th Edition, showing how each interacts with vehicles. Readers who have *Star Hero* will recognize some familiar elements; much of the space combat text from that book forms the basis for the general vehicular combat rules in TUV.

The final chapter in the book, Chapter Nine, helps you design vehicle-oriented characters. Wheelmen and stick-jockeys are common archetypes in many settings and genres, and this chapter offers plenty of suggestions about how to create them.

So, if you feel the need for speed, hold on tight! *The Ultimate Vehicle* will be heading your way in January – unless that traffic jam out on the interstate delays us. :)

– Steven S. Long
HERO System Line Developer



HEROglyphs by Steven S. Long

Where No Man Has Gone Before

REVISING EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL MOVEMENT

Extra-Dimensional Movement (EDM) is a handy power with a wide variety of uses – everything from what the title literally refers to (journeying from one dimension to another) to esoteric powers like creating an “impenetrable barrier” around something. However, it’s not quite as finely-grained or well-explained as it sometimes needs to be, leaving *HERO System* users somewhat confused about exactly what to buy and how much it costs. This column offers a rewrite and expansion of EDM for your consideration.

EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL MOVEMENT

Movement Power

Constant

Self Only

A character with this Movement Power can travel from one dimension to another. Some examples of Extra-Dimensional Movement include wizards who can open gates to other planes, starships capable of breaching dimensional barriers, and time travel machines. Extra-Dimensional Movement costs END to use.

When buying Extra-Dimensional Movement, a character must first pay a base cost of 20 points. That allows him to travel to a single physical location in a single other dimension – for example, only to Odin’s Hall in Valhalla, or only to the Infernal Gates in Hell. If a character wants to travel to more locations in that one dimension, or to more than a single dimension, he has to pay Character Points for additional modifiers to the power (see text below, and the Extra-Dimensional Movement Summary Table).

Using Extra-Dimensional Movement takes a Full Phase. It does not involve acceleration, deceleration, or a Turn Mode.

Normally, a character with Extra-Dimensional Movement can only move himself, his clothing, and his personal equipment (including any Foci). To move more weight, the character must buy an Adder (see below) for his Power.

Number Of Dimensions The Character Can Travel To

To travel to a related group of dimensions (such as the Nine Hells or the Four Elemental Planes) costs +5 Character Points. The GM determines what constitutes “a related group”; there’s no specific numerical limit.

The ability to travel to any dimension costs +10 Character Points.

Regardless of how many dimensions a character can travel to, he can only travel to a single physical location in each one, and he must define the specific location in each dimension when he buys the power.

Physical Locations The Character Can Reach

As noted above, the default with Extra-Dimensional Movement is that a character can only travel to a single physical location in any dimension he can travel to, and he has to define that location when he buys the power. (Once he reaches that single location he can, of course, travel freely under his own power, unless some outside force or circumstance prevents him from doing so.) A character may expand the number of locations he can travel to with additional modifiers.

If the character can only travel to a single dimension, the ability to travel to any location in that dimension costs +5 Character Points.

If the character can travel to a related group of dimensions, the ability to travel to any location in any of those dimensions costs +10 Character Points.

If the character can travel to any dimension, the ability to travel to any location in any of those dimensions costs +15 Character Points.

If a character is limited to only traveling to physical locations in other dimensions corresponding to the physical location he occupies in the dimension he’s currently in, that costs -3 points.

Generally speaking, Extra-Dimensional Movement does not give a character any enhanced movement in his home dimension; a character in New York cannot transport himself to Valhalla and then back to Tokyo. A character either returns to his home dimension in the same location from which he left it, or he only travels as far as he traveled in the alternate dimension. At the GM’s option, if the character has paid the points to be able to travel to any location in any of the dimensions he can travel to, he can likewise return to any location in his home dimension.



AUTHOR’S NOTE

The portions of this material pertaining to time travel also appear in *Star Hero*. However, the rest does not.

SUGGESTED DIMENSIONS

Here's a list of some of the dimensions characters can visit with Extra-Dimensional Movement:

- Astral Plane
- Ethereal Plane
- Hell (or hells, depending upon conception and cosmology)
- Heaven or heavens (ditto)
- The Elemental Planes (air, earth, fire, water, other)
- The Dreamscape (the world of dreams and nightmares)
- Alternate Earths/timelines

EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL MOVEMENT SUMMARY TABLE

Cost	Effect
20	Travel to a single location in a single dimension
Number Of Dimensions Modifiers	
+5	Travel to a single location in a related group of dimensions
+10	Travel to a single location in any dimension
Dimensional Location Modifiers	
+5	Any physical location in a single dimension
+10	Any physical location in a related group of dimensions
+15	Any physical location in any dimension
-3	Character can only travel to the physical location in the other dimension corresponding to his physical location in the dimension he's currently in
Time Travel Modifiers	
+20	Travel through time to a single moment in time
+5	Travel to a related group of discrete moments in time
+1	Travel forward or back in time by up to 1 Turn in either direction; +1 point for each additional increment on the Time Chart; if character can only travel to the past or to the future, halve this cost
Time Travel Location Modifiers	
+0	No change in physical location; character remains in the physical location he occupies when he activates the power
+2	Any single physical location in the same dimension the character occupies when he uses the power, defined when the power is bought, regardless of where the character is when he activates the power
+5	A limited group of physical locations, in the same dimension the character occupies when he uses the power, in the moments in time the character can travel to
+10	Any physical location, in the same dimension the character occupies when he uses the power, in the moments in time the character can travel to

EXAMPLE EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL MOVEMENT POWERS

Cost	Travel To A Single Dimension
20	A single location
25	Any physical location
Travel To A Related Group Of Dimensions	
25	A single location in each dimension
35	Any physical location in each dimension
Travel To Any Dimension	
30	A single location in any dimension
45	Any physical location in any dimension
Travel In Time: Physical Location Same As Starting Location	
40	Travel to a single moment in time
45	Travel to a related group of moments in time
67	Travel to any moment in time within 50 Billion Years, future or past
Travel In Time: Single Physical Location Other Than Starting Location	
42	Travel to a single moment in time
47	Travel to a related group of moments in time
69	Travel to any moment in time within 50 Billion Years, future or past
Travel In Time: Limited Group Of Physical Locations	
45	Travel to a single moment in time
50	Travel to a related group of moments in time
72	Travel to any moment in time within 50 Billion Years, future or past
Travel In Time: Any Physical Location	
50	Travel to a single moment in time
55	Travel to a related group of moments in time
77	Travel to any moment in time within 50 Billion Years, future or past

TIME TRAVEL

“Time” counts as a single dimension for purposes of Extra-Dimensional Movement, but characters must pay +20 Character Points (in addition to the base cost of 20 Character Points for any Extra-Dimensional Movement) to travel in time. For that total base cost of 40 Character Points, the character can travel to a single moment in time, defined when the power is bought. Time travel occurs only in the physical dimension the character is in when he uses the power. For example, a character on Earth cannot time travel to Hell or Valhalla (though he could have two Extra-Dimensional Powers, one physical and one temporal, that in combination allowed him to do that).

If a character wants to travel to more than a single moment in time, he must pay more Character Points. The ability to travel to a related group of moments in time, in the past or the future, no matter how far removed in time from the present moment, costs +5 Character Points. The GM determines what constitutes a “related group”; examples typically include all instances of a particular date (e.g., any July 4 in any year), or any date within a specific, limited span of time (e.g., one specific day, one specific year).

Some characters may want to travel to any moment in time within a particular timeframe, such as “within my lifetime” or “within 500 years, past or future, from the present moment.” To do this, they spend points to buy the range across which they may travel. For +1 Character Point, the character may travel forward or backward in time by up to 1 Turn (12 seconds). Thus, if he were in Segment 6 of Turn 2 of a combat, he could travel to any Segment up to Segment 6 of Turn 3 (but no further into the future), or to any Segment back to Segment 6 of Turn 1 (but no further into the past). For each additional +1 point, he may expand his range of travel by one step down the Time Chart (see the accompanying Expanded Time Chart). Thus, to travel to any point in time within 50 Billion Years in the future or 50 Billion Years in the past costs +27 Character Points (for a total cost of 67 points for the power). If the character can only travel one direction in time (backward to the past, or forward to the future), halve this cost.

Regardless of how many moments in time a character can travel to, he can only time travel to a single physical location in the dimension he’s in when he uses the power. By default, this location is defined as the location he’s in when he activates the Power – if he starts in Chicago in 2002, he can travel back to 1636 or forward to 3312, but he’ll still be in Chicago (or whatever it used to be/will become – which may prove hazardous for him!). For +2 Character Points, he may define his time travel as always taking him to the same location, no matter where he is when

he uses Extra-Dimensional Movement – he always time travels to London, no matter where he is when he activates the Power. For +5 Character Points, he can go to a related group of physical locations in the same dimension (say, any place in England). For +10 Character Points, he can go to any physical location in the same dimension. However, characters cannot use this as a cheap form of worldwide Teleportation (e.g., “I’ll travel to two seconds from now in Tokyo!”) – they must engage in what the GM considers legitimate time travel.

TIME CHART (EXPANDED)**Time Period/Duration**

1 Segment
1 Phase
1 Turn (Post-Segment 12)
1 Minute
5 Minutes
20 Minutes
1 Hour
6 Hours
1 Day
1 Week
1 Month
1 Season (3 months)
1 Year
5 Years
25 Years
1 Century
5 Centuries
2,500 Years
10,000 Years
50,000 Years
250,000 Years
1 Million Years
5 Million Years
25 Million Years
100 Million Years
500 Million Years
2.5 Billion Years
10 Billion Years
50 Billion Years

Extra-Dimensional Movement is a “stop sign” power, and time travel doubly so. The time travel method outlined above is not intended as a combat ability, or a way for a character to go back and “re-do” the actions of the past few Segments or Turns just because they didn’t turn out the way the character wanted. If a character wants to have time-manipulation powers that work in combat, he should buy those as specific Powers with a “time manipulation” effect. (See Captain Chronos in *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks* for some examples of this.) Gamemasters should carefully monitor all uses of EDM in general, and time travel in particular, to prevent abuse or loss of game balance; as always, the GM should forbid any use of a power he considers improper or harmful to the game.

MEETING YOURSELF IN THE PAST

These rules do not offer or suggest any particular theory as to how time travel works, what effects characters traveling to the past can have on their present (or future), or any of the many other thorny issues related to the subject. Each GM must determine for himself how time travel works in his game. There are plenty of books and science fiction stories about the subject for readers interested in doing some research.

POWER EXAMPLES: EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL MOVEMENT**Cyberspace:**

Extra-Dimensional Movement (any location in cyberspace, but limited to the location corresponding to the computer where you jack in), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (33 Active Points); OIF (dataport; -½), Meat Body (character’s body remains in the real world, but cannot move, perceive, or act, and damage to either the virtual form [in cyberspace] or the real body [in the real world] can hurt or kill the character; -1). Total cost: 13 points.

Enter The

Microverse!: Extra-Dimensional Movement (any location in the Microverse, but limited to the location corresponding to the character's location in the normal-sized world). Total cost: 22 points.

Invocation Of The

Gate To Hell: Extra-Dimensional Movement (one location in Hell), Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (60 Active Points); OAF Fragile (obsidian mirror; -¼), Gate (-½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 16 points.

Time Machine:

Extra-Dimensional Movement (any place within 50 Billion Years forward or backward in time) (77 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-½). Total cost: 31 points.

Other Uses Of Extra-Dimensional Movement

Characters can create “gates” to other dimensions by applying the rules for Gates under *Teleportation* (see page 149) to Extra-Dimensional Movement.

You can also use Extra-Dimensional Movement to simulate any situation in which a character is in a different state of being, cannot interact with the “real world,” or is any place that is inaccessible to others. For example, a character with Shrinking could, theoretically, buy enough Shrinking to get inside molecules (the “microverse,” so to speak). However, it's easier to buy this ability as Extra-Dimensional Movement to the microverse “dimension.” Other such uses include stopping time (the character “travels to the dimension” where he is the only thing in the world not frozen in time); granting wishes (the character “travels to the dimension where he has received whatever he wished for”); the “virtual dimension” of cyberspace; creating an “impenetrable ward” to protect some place or object (the place or object is in another dimension, and thus generally cannot be affected by characters in this dimension); and the like. It may be necessary for a character to purchase special Senses or other Powers for use only in the dimension(s) he travels to; if so, he can usually purchase these with a -1 (or greater) Limitation.

This Power is extremely tricky, and can be difficult to use in a campaign setting. The GM should consider regulating Extra-Dimensional Movement in some fashion; otherwise, characters will use it every time they get into trouble. For example, perhaps characters have to buy it in such a way as to make it unreliable – if the character misses a Skill or Activation Roll, he goes off course, to another dimension (or time). This Power is best used by the GM when it fits into his plans; otherwise, it should be strictly controlled.

Adders

Increased Mass: For each +5 Character Points, the character can transport 2x normal human mass (100 kg) when using Extra-Dimensional Movement.

■ **Extra-Dimensional Movement Cost:** See Extra-Dimensional Movement Summary Table.



Leftover *Star Hero* by Jim Cambias

Foreword

As you may already know, *Star Hero* is a big book – 330 pages long, only 44 pages shorter than the 5th Edition itself. Although I didn't cut much (in fact, I added about 100,000 words), one big chunk that I did cut out of the book was a section the main author, Jim Cambias, wrote about creating creatures. I cut it because it didn't really seem science fiction-specific enough, and I needed the space for more important material. In fact, where this "chapter" really belongs is in Chapter One of the *HERO System Bestiary*; if we ever have the chance to revise that book, I'll probably put this material (or parts of it, at least) in it. Rather than make you wait that long to read it, we decided to run it here in *Digital Hero* so you can have some fun rolling up random critters. ;)

– Steven S. Long

Creating Alien Life

Chapter Four of *Star Hero* includes rules for determining whether a planet has native life, and notes on exotic biochemistries. The form the life takes is almost infinitely variable – just consider all the different life forms found on Earth. The two functions any organism must perform to live and evolve successfully are getting energy and reproducing. Getting energy is determined by the creature's diet and metabolism; reproduction depends on a variety of factors. The rest is just a matter of size and physical details.

Ecology

A creature's ecological niche is the role it plays in an environment. This puts certain constraints on a creature, depending on what that niche is. The two halves of an ecological niche are the habitat (the environment) and the creature's diet (its role).

HABITAT

One important influence on the form a creature takes is its habitat – the immediate environment in which it evolved. The universe can produce some very weird environments, but they can be broadly organized into the following types.

Air

On Earth, the air is a relatively sparse environment. Most birds fly from place to place

but are tied to the ground for food and nesting. There are no flying grazers (though some birds do graze on the ground). An alien world might have a richer aerial ecology, with floating plants or dense schools of tiny airborne creatures as food for big flyers. Several science fiction authors have described enormous, dirigible-like alien species, sometimes (but not often) able to interact with Humans on some level.

Arctic

The ice-covered polar regions of Earth are too cold for plant life. Consequently, the creatures there are either ocean organisms, amphibious animals dependent on the ocean for food, or a few land predators or scavengers living on the amphibians. An alien planet entirely covered by ice would have a similar ecology, as would realms on any world where temperatures are generally hostile to life.

Desert

Deserts are deserted because they lack moisture. More generally, they are places where some substance vital to all life on the planet is scarce.

Desert animals have all kinds of adaptations to regulate temperature and conserve moisture. They tend to be tough-skinned, with lithe bodies for better heat radiation. Many desert creatures burrow, either for shelter during the day, or as their primary means of getting around. Desert environments are not really suitable for grazing animals, because if there was enough plant life around for grazing, it wouldn't be a desert. Creatures tend to be gathering herbivores, predators, and scavengers; many are omnivores, eating whatever comes along. In deserts that get occasional rains, some organisms simply go dormant when it's dry, spending months or even years waiting for the next downpour. The struggle to obtain enough food in such a sparse environment might lead to the evolution of intelligent life.

In *HERO System* terms, common abilities for desert animals include tailored forms of Life Support (Diminished Eating [no need to drink water; 1 point], Tolerance Of Temperature Variations; 1 point) and Sight Group Flash Defense. Camouflage is common, and nocturnal animals may have Nightvision. Burrowers have Tunneling. Limitations are few – the harsh conditions virtually require creatures to be adaptable.

Forest And Jungle

Forests and jungles are environments dominated by large long-lived plants, as opposed to the low, fast-growing types common in plains. Forest ecologies are very rich, and can be

RANDOM ORGANISM TABLES

This series of tables allows the GM to randomly generate alien creatures, or to pick the appropriate selections and quickly assemble an alien for use in an adventure. As always, GMs should modify the results to suit themselves and their campaigns.

HABITAT

(2d6) Habitat

2	Desert
3	Mountain
4	Forest Canopy
5	Understory
6	Forest Floor or Swamp/Marsh
7	Plains
8	Coastal
9	Pelagic
10	Abyssal
11	Air
12	Arctic

DIET

(1d6) Diet

1	Filter
2	Grazer
3	Gatherer
4	Pouncer
5	Chaser
6	Roll twice and combine

-1 if oceanic, +1 if desert or air, +2 if arctic

METABOLISM

(1d6) Metabolism

1-3	Cold-Blooded
4-6	Warm-Blooded

+2 if Arctic

REPRODUCTION

(2d6) Reproduction

2	Asexual (budding)
3-7	Eggs
8-12	Live-Bearing



YOUNG

(2d6)	Amt.	Care
2	100+	None
3	5d6	None
4	3d6	1 month
5	2d6	1 month
6	2d6	1 season
7	1d6+3	1 year
8	1d6+1	1 year
9	1d6	½d6 yrs
10	1d6-2	1d6 yrs
11	1d6-3	2d6 yrs
12	1d6-4	3d6 yrs

On a result of 4 or better, roll 1d6: a 5 or 6 indicates a mammal

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

(2d6)	Social Structure
2-5	No Society
6	Family
7	Harem*
8	Herd*
9-10	Hive*
11-12	Pack

*School or Flock if no care
-4 if no care, -1 if less than 1 year of care, +1 if more than 4 years of care, +1 if Grazer or Chaser

LOCOMOTION

(1d6)	Locomotion
0	Sessile
1	Slithering (bottom-crawler if aquatic)
2-3	Walking (swimming if aquatic)
4	Amphibious
5	Arboreal (Flying if not forest; max size 100 kg)
6	Flying (max size 100 kg)

-1 if aquatic, -1 if filter-feeder



subdivided into three zones – the canopy, the understory, and the forest floor.

Forest canopy creatures live in the treetops. To get up there, they must either fly or climb well. Good senses and agility are necessary, and camouflage is common. They tend to be gathering herbivores, predators preying on them, and filter-feeders sieving the air.

Understory creatures live on the trunks of the big trees or in smaller plants growing around them. Again, climbing ability is important. Flyers must be very agile to navigate the understory.

The forest floor is home to big, browsing herbivores eating leaves and shrubs, gatherers eating low-growing fruit and roots, predators stalking the herbivores, and scavengers eating whatever falls to the ground. Forest conditions tend to limit the size of creatures there because of the simple difficulty of getting around.

Intelligence is most likely to evolve in forest/jungle creatures when there's significant competition for important resources – as long as each major species has enough to eat, and appropriate places to live and breed, there's no struggle and no need for sentience. Alternately, intelligence may arise when the forests start to disappear and creatures have to adapt (as may have happened with Humans).

Mountain

Mountain conditions often incorporate other environments – desert for dry mountain regions, forest for tree-clad slopes, arctic for snow-capped peaks, and so on. The main effect of mountain life is tolerance for high altitude and the ability to climb. Mountain creatures have Life Support (Safe Environment: Low Pressure), and the *Climbing Skill*.

Ocean

Life on Earth evolved in the ocean, and there may be alien worlds that are entirely covered by water. Ocean life can be divided into three sub-categories – coastal, pelagic, and abyssal.

Coastal life lives in relatively shallow water, where the bottom gets sunlight and plant life thrives. Coastal creatures may live on the bottom or swim in the waters above. Many coastal species are at least partly amphibious, able to survive being washed ashore long enough to scramble back underwater again. Others simply root themselves to the bottom and filter the water. Shallow-water organisms and bottom-feeders sometimes have sophisticated manipulating limbs (like octopuses or crabs). Living in the shallows limits how big creatures can get, as there is simply no room for really big organisms. Common abilities are Swimming, Life Support (Extended Breathing: Breathe Underwater), Sonar, and camouflage. Sessile

creatures have the Physical Limitation *Immobile* (typically Infrequently, Greatly Impairing; 10 points).

Pelagic creatures swim in the deep water, hunting other creatures or grazing on schools of tiny organisms. Most are optimized for fast swimming, tending to a common streamlined “fish shape,” although squids have long dextrous limbs. Pelagic creatures can attain great size, with equally great strength and damage capacity. Common abilities include high-speed Swimming, Life Support (Safe Environments: High Pressure, Intense Cold), Sonar, and Nightvision. Pelagic life can also serve as a model for creatures swimming in the dense atmospheres of gas giant worlds.

Abyssal life lives on the bottom in very deep water, often around volcanic vents in sea bottom rifts. No light reaches that far down, but the cold water is full of nutrients. Filter-feeders are common, with a few larger creatures feeding on them in turn. Organisms are either blind, or must provide their own light. Possible abilities include Life Support (Safe Environments: High Pressure, Intense Cold), Sonar, and Nightvision. Such creatures may have a Dependence on high pressure (they burst if brought to the surface).

In most SF stories, intelligent oceanic life evolves from coastal or pelagic creatures; abyssal life-forms are too strange and unknown to form a basis for characters (though who knows what monstrous things may lurk down there...). Many of these aliens can also breathe air, at least for short periods; if not, they can interact with air-breathing characters while wearing life support suits.

Plains

Open areas covered with low plants are plains. On modern Earth, they are mostly grasslands, but in the age of the dinosaurs, there were plains covered with ferns, small conifers, and club moss. Other planets are likely to have similar environments. The plains are the natural home of grazing creatures, the predators that hunt them, and scavengers. Plains creatures can get pretty big, and often move pretty fast. Smaller animals burrow for defense or to catch the various insects and worms in the rich soil. Abilities for plains creatures may include keen vision, fast running, and a variety of natural weapons for protection.

Herdfolk aliens (*Star Hero*, page 25) typically evolve from plains-based herbivores driven by competition or similar needs to develop sentience (as Larry Niven's Kzinti have observed, “How much intelligence does it take to sneak up on a leaf?”). Predators who have to adapt to ever-more-clever prey could also become intelligent.

Swamps And Marshes

Swamps are areas of wet, spongy land often completely covered with water, at least in parts. They often contain numerous trees. Marshes are regions of soft, wet land, often with grasses and other low-lying plants but few large trees; they, too, may be partly or wholly covered in water, but if so that water is more shallow than in the typical swamp.

Swamps and marshes usually rival forests and jungles for the amount and diversity of life; they're rich ecological zones. They include creatures living among the trees and plants (birds and insects, for example), amphibians and other creatures that divide their time between the water and the land (such as frogs and turtles), and wholly aquatic creatures like fish. Intelligence, similarly, is most likely to evolve out of a need to compete for limited resources, or in situations where the swamps start to dry up and creatures have to adapt to new circumstances.

DIET

Diet is what the creature does in its environment. Animals on Earth get their food in various different ways. Each diet affects how the organism lives.

Filters

Filter-feeders get food by processing large volumes of air or water while remaining fixed in place. Oysters and sponges are filters, and from their example, one can see that not a lot of intelligence is needed – just sit and filter endlessly. Some spiders have an external filter in the form of a web, gathering bugs from the air; they do have to be bright enough to build it. Since they are often immobile, filters may protect themselves with heavy armor, spikes, poison, or camouflage. Organisms that get their energy direct from the environment, without having to eat, would likely resemble filter-feeders in habits.

Parasites are a special kind of filter-feeder beloved of science fiction because they are so icky. Parasites live on or inside another creature, taking nourishment from its tissues and bloodstream. Over time, parasites can weaken the host and cause it an early death, but until then they've got it made – the host gets food, protects them from harm, and spreads their young. Most Earthly parasites are very simple creatures, but several SF stories have envisioned intelligent parasites controlling the minds of their hosts.

Grazers

Grazers move about in a rich environment, taking in large amounts of relatively low-energy food. Cattle and bison eating grass, whales in the sea consuming krill, caterpillars munching leaves, and elephants eating leaves and branches are all grazers. Grazers span the size range from tiny to immense; usually the biggest and smallest

creatures in any environment are grazers. Size is a good defense for the big ones, but they can also have other natural weapons or armor, or else develop swift movement to get away from predators. Grazers sometimes live in herds (see Reproduction, below) as a means of defense.

Gatherers

Gatherers go for high-energy food, like fruit, nuts, eggs, insects, or carrion. The effort is in finding it, rather than chasing it or killing it. As a result, gatherers are often fairly intelligent creatures, with good senses to detect their food. Humans evolved as part-time gatherers, but fruit bats, many birds, mice, and lobsters are also gatherers. In a rich ecology, gatherers may be highly specialized, eating only a single fruit or one kind of insect. Others are omnivores, eating whatever looks good. Gatherers often have mouthparts or limbs adapted to catching or eating their favorite food. Part-time carnivores may have sharp teeth or claws, but others have only defensive weaponry. Carrion-eaters may have amazing immune systems to protect them from diseases spawned by decay. Since many plants defend themselves with poison chemicals, gatherers often have Life Support (Immunity). Exotic beings living on radioactive minerals or pockets of natural gas would behave much like gatherers.

Pouncers

Pouncers eat the most high-energy food: meat. They catch it by making sudden attacks from concealment. Pouncers tend to have very impressive natural weaponry with which to defeat their prey quickly, but some prevent escape with traps – like an antlion pit. A pouncer usually has good senses to detect approaching prey, excellent stealth abilities or camouflage, and very good reflexes. Pouncers may make several unsuccessful attempts for every successful kill, so they don't invest a whole lot of effort in each one. They tend to have poor endurance, so if the first attack misses the prey has a good chance of escape. Because of the need for stealth, pouncers often work alone, or else in a small group with one or two "beaters" startling prey toward a designated killer waiting in ambush. In SF stories, alien pouncers sometimes come with psionic powers to lure prey into range. Note that predators have to be few in number compared to their prey. Assume one warm-blooded carnivore per 50 herbivores (cold-blooded carnivores need less food, so there can be up to twice as many in a given ecology).

Chasers

Chasers expend the most effort for their food, which means they have to be reasonably certain of getting it in the end. They do this by not giving up. Terran chasers include wolves, Humans, and Komodo dragons. They must have

WEAPONS

(1d6) Biting

- 1-2 No bite
- 3-5 Normal bite
- 6+ Killing bite (HKA)

+2 for predators

(1d6) Swinging

- 1 No swing attack
- 3-4 Normal swing
- 5-6 Claws or Spikes (HKA)

+1 for predators, -1 if under 15 kg

(1d6) Slamming

- 1-2 No slam attack
- 3-4 Normal slam
- 5-6 Horns (HKA)

-1 if under 15 kg, +1 if over 40 kg, +2 if over 100 kg

DEFENSES

(2d6) Armor And Speed

- 2-4 +5" Movement
- 5-6 No added defenses
- 7 Fur or feathers (PD +1)
- 8 Tough skin or heavy fur (PD +2, possibly Damage Resistance)
- 9 Light scales or leathery skin (Damage Resistance, 1-4 PD/1-4 ED)
- 10 Scales or thick hide (Armor, 1-2 PD/1-2 ED, or more)
- 11 Armor plates (Armor, 3-5 PD/3-5 ED, or more)
- 12 Shell (Armor, 6-10 PD/6-10 ED, or more; one-quarter movement rate)

-2 if predator

SIZE**(2d6) Mass**

- 2-6 Small (100 grams or less)
 7 2d6 kg
 8 2d6 x 10 kg
 9 2d6 x 100 kg
 10 2d6 tons
 11 2d6 x 10 tons
 12 1d6 x 100 tons
 +1 if aquatic, +1 if plains, -1 if desert

BODY PLAN**(2d6) Symmetry**

- 2-4 Asymmetrical
 5-9 Bilateral
 10-11 Radial (1d6 sides)
 12 Spherical (like a polyhedral die)
 +2 for aquatic creatures

(1d6) Head

- 1-2 No Head*
 3-6 One Head (front or top)

*automatic if spherical symmetry

(1d6) Limbs

- 1 Limbless
 2-3 2 limbs*
 4-6 1d6 pairs of limbs

-1 if aquatic
 *per side, if radial symmetry

(1d6)*LimbPurpose

*1d6 per pair/set

- 1-4 Locomotion (legs, wings, or flippers)
 5 Feeding
 6 Manipulation

(1d6) Tail

- 1-2 No tail
 3-4 Short tail
 5 Prehensile tail (extra limb with reduced dexterity)
 6 Long massive tail (for swing attacks)



good senses to track and follow prey, excellent stamina, and at least a modicum of intelligence. Dogs and Humans are fast runners, but Komodo dragons chase their prey slowly, making up for lack of speed with persistence. Either way, the result is the same: the prey gets no chance to stop and rest, and eventually, worn down by the hunt, it collapses. This lets chasers bring down fairly large opponents, especially when they work in groups. Chasers can develop complex methods of communication to work together and coordinate a hunt.

Physiology

A creature's physiology is how its body actually works. It includes metabolism, reproduction, and anatomy.

METABOLISM

Animals are either warm-blooded or cold-blooded. Warm-blooded animals maintain a constant internal temperature, regardless of what it's like outside. Cold-blooded creatures let their internal temperature vary with the climate. There are advantages and disadvantages to both.

The advantage of being warm-blooded is that it lets the creature survive and function in cold temperatures; the chief disadvantage is that keeping warm requires a lot more food. Warm-blooded animals on Earth are often covered with an insulating layer of fur or feathers to improve temperature regulation.

The advantage of cold blood is that it takes less energy. Cold-blooded animals eat less than warm-blooded ones, and can go longer between meals. Some snakes may eat only a few times a year! The disadvantage is that cold-blooded creatures get sluggish in cold weather (see page 19 of the *HERO System Bestiary* for information on the Physical Limitation *Cold-Blooded*).

REPRODUCTION

Living things can reproduce either sexually or asexually. Sexual reproduction combines the genetic material of two parents, giving the offspring more variation and adaptability. Asexual reproduction creates a copy of the parent. Many plants use both methods, but most animals are entirely sexual.

Organisms bear their young either in eggs or by live birth. Eggs protect the embryo while it develops, and are the method of choice for most animals. Mammals bear live young, as do certain fish, reptiles, and insects. There doesn't seem to be any real advantage for either method.

Creatures vary depending on the amount of care they give their young. The two basic strategies are to have lots of offspring and hope some of them survive, or have few and make certain they reach adulthood. In general, mammals give their young the most care; birds

nearly as much, ants and other social insects next, while the vast majority of other animals give little or none. (Dinosaurs may have been somewhere around birds on the list.)

Organisms that do care for their young must nourish them and protect them. Nourishment can be by milk (in mammals), regurgitated food (in birds and some other species), or various other means. Some insects implant their eggs in a paralyzed victim to ensure an abundant food supply for the young ones. Other species lay large numbers of eggs, so that the first-hatched can consume their siblings! The most protective parents carry their young around after birth – marsupial mammals and seahorses use a pouch, some amphibians use special spongy tissue on the back to hold young, and a few types of fish keep their young in their mouths.

Especially among aggressive creatures like pouncing predators, mating can be tricky. Some organisms have trouble telling a potential mate from a potential meal. Many species only mate at certain times, and have elaborate ritual displays or dances to attract a mate. Mating behavior is often very “hard-wired,” and even intelligent beings can act irrationally when reproduction is involved.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Reproduction and mating are closely linked to the social structure of a given species. In species with little or no care for the young, adults mate rather impersonally and go their separate ways. If they band together, it is for protection from predators. But among creatures which care for their young, there are numerous interesting social structures, any one of which could be found among sentient alien species. Here are a few:

Harems

Since one male can fertilize numerous females, some species have developed polygamy. A large male keeps a harem of females and drives away rivals until he gets too old and weak, at which point some young, strong male takes his place. The females may have little to do with the male when it isn't mating season, or they may all live together in a herd.

Herds

Herds are usually found among grazing herbivores, since a large number of organisms living together need plenty of food. Sometimes one herd is a single male's harem; other herds are groups of paired males and females. Either way, the adults in the herd protect each other's young and cooperate to watch out for predators. Herds move about en masse, and a really huge herd on the move can be an awesome sight.

Hives

The social insects and mole rats have come up with a solution to raising young, which combines both quantity and care by specializing the roles of the adults. One female in a hive is fertile, and spends all her time reproducing. The rest are sterile and care for the young. Sometimes more detailed specialization evolves: warriors, workers, hunters, nurses, and so forth. This sort of social structure is a favorite of SF authors who want to create societies markedly different from those of Humans (either to illustrate the dangers of conformity, or to make Humans look chaotic and inefficient).

Pack

Among wolves and dogs, a pack is a group which cooperates in hunting, mutual defense, and raising young. The “alpha” males and females pair off, and some lower-status pack members get to mate, but the lowest ones do not. This way the pack concentrates its resources on raising the young of the strongest and healthiest members. This kind of structure requires constant social jockeying and sophisticated communication; it’s entirely possible intelligence might emerge from, yet never wholly eliminate, such competition.

School Or Flock

These are social groups that aren’t based on mating or care for young. Instead, creatures group together for protection from predators. They don’t defend each other, they just play the odds: if a hunter attacks a school, each individual member of the school has a pretty good chance of surviving.

ANATOMY

The exact shape of a creature is the product of millions of years of evolution, the effect of the environment, features inherited from ancestors, and so on.

Size

Size is a product of environment, diet, and gravity. Really big creatures require a rich ecology simply to stay fed – they cannot live in deserts or arctic environments. They must be able to move about easily, making them rare in mountains and forests. Plains and oceans are the prime habitats for giant animals. Small creatures are everywhere, but predominate in deserts where food is scarce. Arctic environments demand a certain minimum size just to keep animals from freezing.

Gravity also limits size. On Earth, the largest land animals were the sauropod dinosaurs, in some cases reaching 100 tons in size. Taking that as the practical limit for 1 G, the maximum size for creatures on other planets is 100 tons divided by local gravity. So on a planet with a gravity of 1.5 G, the maximum size

would be (100/1.5), or 66 tons. While on a low-gravity planet with 0.5 G, the upper limit would be (100/0.5) or 200 tons. Small planets may be home to very big creatures.

Of course, gravity only limits land-dwellers. Sea creatures can ignore gravity, and are limited only by the available food supply. Earth’s biggest animals are the blue whales, which weigh in at 200 tons or more. It’s possible to imagine sea creatures an order of magnitude larger existing on ocean-covered planets with very rich sea life; one of the worlds depicted in Dan Simmons’s *Hyperion* novels features such creatures.

Flyers are limited by gravity more directly. The biggest known flying creature on Earth was the pterosaur *Quetzalcoatlus*, with a mass of about 100 kilograms and a wingspan of 10 meters. Divide that mass by the local gravity and multiply by the atmosphere density from Chapter Four. So a planet with 0.5 G gravity and a Thin atmosphere 60 percent as massive as Earth’s would be able to support a flying creature of (100 kilograms/0.5) times 60 percent, or 120 kilograms.

In a “realistic” *Star Hero* setting, size and strength are related, since larger creatures have bigger muscles. It isn’t a simple linear relationship – strength increases as the 2/3 power of mass, or the square of the cube root. See the accompanying Strength And Size Table for suggested values, or use the creature character sheets from the *HERO System Bestiary*. Note that a given species may be stronger or weaker than the norm, by virtue of specialized anatomy; chimps are stronger than Humans because of their build. Typically, the base Strength for a species should be within 5 of the listed value. Individuals can buy their Strength up or down as always – and of course, weird occurrences or environments in SF stories often allow GMs to ignore these limits if they prefer.

STRENGTH AND SIZE

Species Average Mass	Species Average Strength
5 kg	-5
10 kg	-3
15 kg	0
25 kg	3
40 kg	5
65 kg	8
100 kg	10
200 kg	13
300 kg	15
500 kg	18
800 kg	20
1,500 kg	23
2,000 kg	25

SENSES

(1d6) Tactile

- 1 Poor sense of touch (-2 PER rolls)
- 2-4 Normal sense of touch
- 5 Sensitive touch (+3 PER rolls)
- 6 Sense Vibrations (see *HERO System Bestiary*, page 90)

+1 if burrowing, -1 if creature has Armor

(2d6) Hearing

- 2-4 Poor hearing (-2 PER rolls)
- 5-7 Normal hearing
- 8 Acute hearing (+3 PER rolls)
- 9 Ultrasonic Hearing
- 10 Active Sonar
- 11 Sensitive Sonar (+3 PER rolls)
- 12 Roll 1d6+6 twice on this table, no predator bonus

+2 if predator

(2d6) Vision

- 2-3 Blind
- 4 IR Vision only
- 5 Poor vision (-2 PER rolls)
- 6 Normal vision, but color blind
- 7-8 Normal vision
- 9 Nightvision
- 10 Acute vision (+3 PER rolls)
- 11 Wide-Spectrum vision (includes IR and UV vision)
- 12 Roll 1d6+6 twice on this table, no bonuses

+2 if predator, -2 if burrowing, -2 if sessile

(1d6) Chemical

- 1 No taste or smell
- 2 Taste only
- 3-4 Smell and taste
- 5 Tracking smell and taste
- 6 Detect one substance at a distance
- +1 if predator

(2d6) Exotic Senses

- 2-6 No Exotic Senses
- 7 Bump Of Direction
- 8 Detect Electric Fields
- 9 Radio Perception
- 10 Radar
- 11 Other power (psionic or GM's option)
- 12 Roll 1d6+6 twice on this table

CAMOUFLAGE**(1d6) Camouflage**

- 1-3 No added concealment
- 4-5 Concealment skill (INT-based or 11-, whichever is higher)
- 6 Invisibility (Chameleon)
- 1 if over 100 kg, -3 if over 1000 kg, +1 if pouncing predator, -1 if chaser

Locomotion

Most animals on Earth get around by walking. A few slither or inch along, but legs are by far the dominant method. The walking speed of an organism is based on the length of its legs. Speed is roughly proportional to the square root of leg length, which in turn correlates to the cube root of the mass, so speed increases as the *sixth* root of mass. This explains why there isn't that much difference between the running speed of a rabbit and a horse, even though the horse is a thousand times more massive. Note that very big creatures don't run – they can walk at half-speed and still move as fast as a small animal running.

Variations in the design of different species can increase or decrease running speed considerably. The upper limit for Earth land animals is probably around 80 kilometers per hour. It's unlikely that any alien animal could run much more quickly than that.

Swimming speed (for creatures specifically adapted for swimming) is also proportional to size. It's easier for a big creature to swim fast than for a small one – at very small sizes it's hard to move through liquids at all. Swimming speed, like land speed, is proportional to the square root of length, which means to the sixth root of mass. All animals not specifically adapted for an aquatic lifestyle swim at about 2" base speed, just like Humans.

Body Plan

Most creatures have a body with a recognizable front, back, right and left sides, top and bottom. Some sea creatures are radially symmetrical, like starfish and sea urchins. Science fiction stories have imagined creatures with triangular symmetry or more bizarre plans, but the basic bilateral body is likely to be pretty common even on other worlds.

If you have a brain and sense organs, it's good to have them close together, at the front or top. This usually develops into a head. Heads may or may not include the mouth, breathing orifices, and communication organs.

Skeletons can be internal or external. External skeletons provide armor but get heavy and unwieldy above 40 kilograms or so, especially for land animals. Some creatures may use muscular or hydraulic skeletons without any rigid elements at all.

Limbs vary greatly in number, even among Earthly animals. The vertebrates have four main limbs, but that may simply be an historical accident. It's reasonable to assume species will try to keep down the "overhead" of extra limbs, so that walking legs won't take up more than half a creature's total body mass. This suggests that large creatures with six or more limbs will be slower than those with two or four, because those fewer legs can be longer. Winged flyers may have one or two pairs of wings.

Natural Weapons

Many creatures have natural weaponry. There are four basic ways to attack:

Biting: Biting or clutching uses a sharp body part to attack the foe. A dog's teeth, a lobster's claws, or a hawk's talons are all Biting attacks. It's a good way to grab on to an enemy. Biting is often just a straight Strength attack, although creatures with really big sharp fangs might have an HKA.

Swinging: Swinging a limb or tail is a very effective attack, taking advantage of leverage. Punches, kicks, and tail-whips are all swinging attacks. Any creature with limbs can make a Swinging attack. They do normal Strength damage. Putting claws or spikes on the end of a swinging limb turns it into an effective HKA.

Slamming: Crashing into another creature can usually do some damage. This is normally just a Move Through maneuver, with perhaps some bonuses for increased size and speed. Large, fast-moving animals can have devastating Slam attacks. Put sharp horns on the creature's head, and it becomes a Killing Attack, possibly with the *Armor Piercing* or *Penetrating* Advantages.

Exotic Attacks: This is the "everything else" category, and includes poison, electrical attacks, chemical sprays, and weird stuff like psionic blasts or flame breath. These are left to the GM's creativity.

Refer to the *HERO System Bestiary* for plenty of examples of each of these types of attacks.

Natural Defenses

Of course, with all those weapons around, creatures also have to protect themselves. As with modern military vehicles, animal defenses rely on armor, speed, and stealth.

"Armor" is simply that – a portion of the creature's body, thick enough or hard enough to offer some protection from attack. This ranges from fur up to the massive shells of land tortoises, which can deflect a rifle bullet. Most creatures' defenses are built as Damage Resistance, but Armor may be appropriate in some instances. Thick armor is heavy, so creatures with a lot of armor won't be very fast.

Animals without armor may be quite mobile, as noted above in the section on Locomotion. Note that most creatures are better at sprinting than distance running. They get away from danger (or capture prey) with a quick burst of speed, then go back to whatever they were doing. Alien creatures may have exotic movement abilities like Teleportation to get out of danger.

Finally, most animals are good at hiding and sneaking. Just about any creature has Stealth, and many creatures have Concealment or Invisibility

with the *Chameleon* Limitation. Squids and octopuses spray ink, a Limited version of Sight Group Darkness. Aliens could have even more elaborate methods of concealment, including Shape Shift, Images, or even better forms of Invisibility. Obviously, a creature's concealment methods must affect the senses used by predators or prey – there's no point in being invisible to sight if you're being hunted by something with sonar! Both predators and prey animals have camouflage; large grazers with no real enemies don't have it, and some top predators don't bother either.

Senses And Communication

All living things sense the outside world, even if it's only by chemical gradients or physical contact. The basic sense is touch – everything has it. Hearing is just a more sensitive and complex form of touch sense, so nearly every animal has the ability to hear (though on a planet with a thin or nonexistent atmosphere, hearing would be useless and so the native life would be deaf). Taste is nearly universal, though some creatures are more sensitive than others. Smell is simply “tasting” the air or water, and the two usually go together. Some organisms are extremely well-attuned to one or two specific scents, effectively giving them a Detect power for that substance only.

Vision depends heavily on environment: creatures living in complete darkness (underground or deep water) may not bother. Nocturnal creatures have Nightvision. Predators often have very good vision in order to spot distant prey.

Alien beings can have new and different senses. Heat detection is known on Earth, along with electric field detection, magnetic sense (to determine North), and sonar. One can imagine aliens with radio hearing, radar, psionic senses, radiation detection, or other exotic abilities. X-ray vision is a little unlikely because of the harmful effects of X-rays themselves, but a silicon-based organism feeding on radioactives might have it.

Communication is a method of getting the attention of other beings and conveying information. Naturally, it must make use of the senses of those beings, so communication channels are limited by an organism's senses. Deaf creatures must be mute, and blind ones can't use color changes or gestures. Some methods of communication are intrinsically more precise and flexible than others. Communication by smell (pheromones) works over long distances, but can only convey a few very specific messages (usually related to mating or danger). Alien beings with different senses could communicate using sonar images (as dolphins are thought to do), radio pulses, or telepathy. Usually a species' communication abilities are

related to its social structure: solitary beings seldom need to say more than “go away” or “mate with me.” Social organisms need to be able to say things like “I surrender” or “please give me some food” or “you go chase that antelope and I'll wait here to catch it as it comes by.”

INTELLIGENCE

Finally, there is the question of intelligence. If the GM has already decided a species is sentient, give it an INT in the Human range and leave it at that. For randomly-created species, intelligence depends on a number of factors. Hunters are usually smarter than prey; creatures that care for their young seem to be smarter than those that do not; social animals may need better brains than solitary ones. Size matters – realistically, it's hard to imagine a creature smaller than 10 kg or so being able to devote enough of its body mass to brains for full intelligence (Human babies do, but at that size they are still pretty helpless).

Of course, many of the things Humans define as signs of intelligence may be just the result of their own biases. Humans use language to communicate, so other creatures with complex language seem “smarter” than solitary beings. Humans use tools, and see that as a sign of intelligence. The brainpower involved in something like flight or navigating the sea is invisible to them.

However useful intelligence is, the evidence on Earth is that it's very rare. Life has existed here for billions of years, and complex land animals have been around for 400 million years, yet intelligence did not arise until about 2 million years ago (the exact time is fuzzy because the debate is still raging about which early hominids were truly intelligent).

SPECIAL ABILITIES

The full range of special abilities animals or aliens might have is too large to cover here. Animals on Earth have duplicated many of the *HERO System* Powers, and on other worlds, the whole list could exist. When assigning unusual powers to an alien species, Gamemasters should exercise restraint. Animals tend to specialize in one thing, so it's unlikely that a creature would have more than one power. Power levels will only be high enough to deal with conditions in the creature's home environment. And unless the campaign is high Pulp SF, creatures should be scientifically plausible (at least on paper).

COMMUNICATION METHODS

(1d6) Primary Method

- | | |
|-----|--------------|
| 1 | Touch |
| 3-4 | Sound |
| 5 | Vision |
| 6 | Exotic Sense |

Secondary Methods

(Roll 1d6-3 for number of methods, then roll 1d6 for each; reroll if it duplicates a primary method or the organism doesn't have that sense.)

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 1 | Touch |
| 2 | Taste |
| 3 | Smell |
| 4 | Sound |
| 5 | Vision |
| 6 | Exotic |

INTELLIGENCE

(2d6) Average Intelligence

- | | |
|------|--|
| 0-5 | Instinctive Intelligence |
| 6-8 | Animal Intelligence |
| 9-14 | Near-Human Intelligence |
| 15 | Normal INT (like Humans and other PCs) |

-1 if under 1 kg, -1 if sessile, +1 if Family or Harem social structure, +2 if Pack, -1 if No care of young, +1 if 1 year or more of care. See the *HERO System Bestiary*, page 19, for an explanation of the different classes of animal intelligence.



HERO Universe by Darren Watts

Greetings, fellow Hero-heads, as the dawn breaks on yet another installment of your favorite serial soap opera, Hero Universe, where the forgotten figures of the world of *Champions* finally get their moment to strut and fret upon the stage. Last month, we presented the astonishing Star*Guard, an alien member of an intergalactic band of do-gooders who patrol the spaceways; this month, we fill in the blanks on his pals, the Marshals, his ship, and his base on Jupiter's moon Europa. And as a special bonus, the Star*Guard package deal is included at the end, so you can design your own star-spanning lawmen. Whatta deal! Next month, we'll finish our visit to Odrugar with a write-up of CONTROL, the master computer of the Council, and the treacherous Mordace, the Star*Guard gone bad.

The Star Marshals

Every Star*Guard is aided in his pursuit of justice by a small team of support staff, also under the command of the Ordugarans. In Brin Rei Tarn's case, his entire team was already in place in the service of the Star*Guard Grayne, and so participated in the creation of Europa Base after Grayne's death (while Brin himself was training in the mental and physical disciplines of Guardianship back on Odrugar). This is the support team for most of Brin's career.

Doctor Gallok

Background/History: Doctor Gallok is a Pograckian, a race of canid humanoids from a small planet orbiting St. Hubert's Star. Like his mother and grandfather, he has served the Odrugaran Council as a medical Marshal for decades, and for three different Star*Guards in sector Aleph-3.

Personality/Motivation: Doctor Gallok has been a devoted servant of justice for more than seventy years, and his age is starting to catch up to him. Although he remains a stalwart and heroic figure, he is increasingly grumpy and set in his ways. He is an endless font of advice to Brin, not all of it useful, and feels that if Brin actually listened to him more often, he wouldn't need to keep patching the young man up so often. Gallok has a subtle sense of humor, and despite his general air of impatience, is actually devoted to Brin and his fellow marshals.

Quote: "Ah, here you go again. Why, in my day, we'd never think of rushing into battle without consulting our elders. I remember one time..."

Powers/Tactics: Gallok is a medic, not a warrior, and only enters combat when all other options have truly been exhausted. That said, both his scientific skills and his keen senses have, on occasion, been tremendously valuable to the Marshals.

Appearance: Dr. Gallok, like all Pograckians, looks for all the world like a bipedal bloodhound. He has a canine snout, long droopy ears, a pelt of brown and black fur, and extra skin around his face and neck that give him a sad or depressed look to the humans he encounters. He has a tail that emerges from under his lab coat and wags when he's particularly excited or happy, which is a rare occasion indeed. He does have hands instead of paws, but his fingers are stubby and have short, thick black nails.

DIGITAL HERO #6

Doctor Gallok

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/ DCV: 3
14	CON	8	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 13- (15-)
13	EGO	6	12-	ECV: 4
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
12	COM	1	11-	
4	PD	2		Total: 7 PD (3 rPD)
3	ED	0		Total: 6 ED (3 rED)
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	REC	0		
28	END	0		
22	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 35

Movement: Running: 8"/16"
Leaping: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
4	<i>Swift:</i> Running +2"	2
5	<i>Good Eyes:</i> Nightvision	
3	<i>Pograckian Senses:</i> +1 All PER Rolls	0
4	<i>Pograckian Senses:</i> +2 with Smell/ Taste Rolls	0
5	<i>Pograckian Senses:</i> Tracking Scent	0
5	<i>Lucky:</i> Luck 1d6	0
6	<i>Spacesuit:</i> Armor (3 PD/3 ED); OIF (-½)	0

Perks

- 1 Star Marshal (note: in societies where the Star*Guard have some level of police powers, their Marshals frequently have lesser but still tangible benefits of access and authority.)

Skills

- 3 Animal Handler 12-
- 2 AK: Sector Aleph-3 11-
- 3 Deduction 12-
- 3 Forensic Medicine 12-
- 3 High Society 12-
- 7 Paramedics 14-
- 6 PS: Doctor 15-
- 3 Scientist
- 2 1) SS: Biology 12-
- 2 2) SS: Chemistry 12-
- 5 3) SS: Medicine 15-
- 3 4) SS: Surgery 13-
- 5 5) SS: Xenobiology 15-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 80

Total Cost: 115

50+ Disadvantages

- 15 Distinctive Features: Canid Alien (Not Concealable)
- 15 Hunted: Enemies of Odrugar, 8- (As Pow, NCI)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Hippocratic Oath, Strives to Preserve Life (Common, Total)
- 15 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Odrugaran Council) (Frequent, Major)



Lelidda Madry

Background/History: Lelidda is a humanoid from the planet Cavor, which was conquered by the Hzeel centuries ago. From her early teens, she tried to foment a rebellion against the Hzeel, but the Cavorian race is old and tired of war, and has accepted its lot as servants. Lelidda herself never accepted it, however, and eventually she stole a shuttle and left her own world, traveling from planet to planet and making a living as a freelance computer programmer. Eventually her travels brought her into contact with Grayne, who took her to Odrugar. There she mastered the CONTROL interfaces and eventually joined Grayne's team of Marshals, and stayed on after his death.

Personality/Motivation: Though some of the other Marshals suspected Lelidda was in love with Grayne, she never let on if it was so, even after his death. She certainly did seem to become colder and less friendly, and for a while, she and Brin had difficulty getting along. At one point, the two of them were stranded together on an asteroid, however, and had a long conversation that apparently broke down some of the barriers between them.

Quote: "Sir, I recommend we hit them hard and fast before they know we're here."

Powers/Tactics: Lelidda is Brin's number-one lieutenant, capable with a blaster and connected to the vast databases of CONTROL. Though obviously not in her boss' league from a power perspective, she's perfectly capable of holding her own against ordinary criminals. She spends most of her time, however, as a voice in Brin's ear, providing him with tactical intelligence while he handles the physical labor.

Appearance: Lelidda is a lovely young humanoid, with green skin and darker green hair. She tends to favor outfits in blue or purple. She stands 5'6" and weighs about 120 pounds.

Lelidda Madry

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
9	CON	-2	11-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll: 13-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
16	COM	3	12-	
5	PD	3		Total: 11 PD (6 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 11 ED (6 rED)
3	SPD	5		Phases: 4, 8, 12
4	REC	0		
22	END	2		
20	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 63

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

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Blaster Pistol:</i> EB 9d6, 32 Boostable Charges (+½); OAF (-1), Beam (-¼)	0
12	<i>Spacesuit:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½)	0

Perks

- 7 Computer Link (CONTROL)
- 1 Star Marshal

Talents

- 5 Eidetic Memory

Skills

- 2 AK: Sector Aleph-3 11-
- 3 Bureaucratics 13-
- 3 Computer Programming 13-
- 1 Cryptography 8-
- 3 Electronics 13-
- 3 KS: CONTROL Interfaces 13-
- 3 KS: Star*Guard Rules & Procedures 13-
- 3 System Operations 13-
- 2 WF: Blasters

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 78

Total Cost: 141

50+ Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Features: Green-skinned Alien (Concealable)
- 15 Hunted: Enemies of Odrugar, 8- (As Pow, NCI)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Controls Her Emotions; Tries to be Machine-like in Efficiency (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Hates the Hzeel (Uncommon, Total)
- 15 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Odrugaran Council) (Frequently, Major)
- 21 Experience Points

Lelidda Madry



Anna Mills

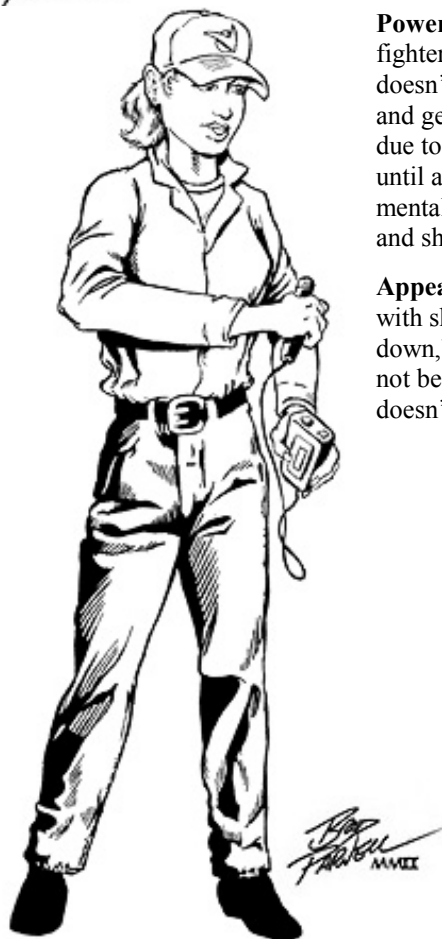
Background/History: Anna Mills was a reporter for *The New York Times* who met Brin Rei Tarn early in his career, shortly after his first visit to Earth. Before meeting him, she'd been a first-class foreign correspondent who'd covered wars and disasters around the globe. They came into close contact during the Gadroon invasion of 1977, and eventually fell in love. The relationship was tested by their circumstances; he spent a lot of time off-planet, and though she tried a couple of times, she was never happy living in the isolation of Europa Base. Her insatiable curiosity about aliens and the political structure of the galaxy drove her to research and write a book, which she didn't complete until after Brin's death in 1990.

Personality/Motivation: Anna is a tough-as-nails reporter, who prides herself on being a tomboy and "one of the guys." The ease with which she fell in love with an alien farmboy astounded even her. Though she knows Brin's Star*Guard duties regularly put him in extreme danger, her own curiosity is just as much a motivation for her insistence on accompanying as her love for him.

Quote: "So you're a Maandarian, huh? Hey, if you've got a minute, I'd like to ask you a couple of questions...."

Powers/Tactics: Anna's a journalist, not a fighter. Though she's brave and tough, she doesn't really stand much of a chance in combat, and generally favors running away. However, due to a genetic quirk she wasn't even aware of until after she'd already met Brin, her personal mental shields are quite formidable for a human, and she's very resistant to mental powers.

Appearance: Anna is a tall, thin young woman with short blonde hair. She frequently "dresses down," in jeans and a baseball cap, for fear of not being taken seriously as a journalist. This doesn't work – she's still gorgeous.



Anna Mills

Anna Mills

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	Lift 80 kg; 1½d6 HTH [1]
12	DEX	6	11-	OCV: 4/ DCV: 4
11	CON	2	11-	
9	BODY	-2	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 12-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
20	COM	5	13-	
2	PD	0		Total: 5 PD (3 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 6 ED (3 rED)
3	SPD	8		Phases: 4, 8, 12
4	REC	0		
22	END	0		
19	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 38

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

Cost	Powers	END
10	<i>Natural Mental Shields:</i> Mental Defense, 10 Points (13 Points Total)	0

Talents		
6	Combat Luck	0

Perks

- 6 Contact: *New York Times*, 8- (Very Useful)
1 Wealth: Well-Off (\$100,000 per year)

Skills

- 3 Bureaucratics 12-
2 CK: New York City 11-
3 Combat Driving 11-
3 Concealment 12-
3 High Society 12-
3 KS: Current World Politics 12-
3 KS: History 12-
3 KS: Known Superhumans 12-
2 Language: French (fluent)
1 Language: Russian (basic)
2 Language: Spanish (fluent)
3 PS: Journalist 14-
2 PS: Writer 11-
3 Stealth 11-
3 Streetwise 12-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 62**Total Cost: 100****50+ Disadvantages**

- 15 Psychological Limitation: Intensely Curious (Common, Strong)
15 Psychological Limitation: Strong Sense of Justice (Common, Strong)
5 Rivalry: Other Reporters (Professional)
15 Experience Points

Tinaru Trelav

Background/History: Tinaru is the engineer of the Marshals, entrusted with the care and maintenance of the systems of Europa Base, as well as the Starjet and other equipment used by Brin and the team. His people, the Zigmarans, left their home world eons ago and have spread across the galaxy; they're a common sight at any spacedock or interstellar bar, generally working with machinery of some sort. Tinaru himself was once rescued from a spacewreck by a Star*Guard, and afterward offered his services directly to the Odrugaran Council as a matter of personal honor. Grayne was the first Star*Guard he served, but Zigmarans are a long-lived species and Tinaru is quite young. (Tinaru will later go on to serve not only Brin, but his replacement, the human Star*Guard Andre Almena.)

Personality/Motivation: Tinaru is a simple creature, who genuinely loves life and freedom, and has a knack for cutting to the core of a problem. He rarely seems to "get" the interpersonal issues of the rest of the team, instead treating each of them as a close personal friend and always having time to listen to their problems while he repairs some device in the vast underlevels of Europa Base.

Quote: "Well, I may be missing something here, but wouldn't it be easier if we just, y'know, asked the All-Devouring Space Bugs what they wanted?"

Powers/Tactics: Like Gallok, Tinaru is a combatant only of last resort. His main job is keeping everything at Europa Base functioning, a job he handles very well. He's also the backup pilot for the Starjet.

Appearance: Like all Zigmarans, Tinaru looks like a centaur, except with a back and legs more like a giraffe than a horse. His upper torso is elongated and thin, with long, spindly and flexible fingers that have rubbery cartilage instead of bone. His skin is mottled blue with black irregular patterns, and his hair is wiry and black and runs down the length of his back. His feet are hoofed, but split into four clumsy manipulators. His eyes are large, round, and pupilless.

Tinaru Trelav

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
18	STR	8	13-	Lift 300kg; 3½d6 HTH [2]
13	DEX	9	12-	OCV: 4/ DCV: 4
12	CON	4	11-	
9	BODY	-2	11-	
12	INT	2	11-	PER Roll: 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
8	PRE	-2	11-	PRE Attack: 1½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
5	PD	2		Total: 11 PD (6 rPD)
4	ED	2		Total: 10 ED (6 rED)
3	SPD	8		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
24	END	0		
24	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 31

Movement: Running: 9"/18"
Leaping: 4"/8"

Cost	Powers	END
10	<i>Zagmaran Horns:</i> HKA ½d6 (1d6+1 with STR)	1
5	<i>Zagmaran Hexapodalism:</i> Extra Limbs (Four Legs)	0
6	<i>Galloping:</i> Running +3" (9" Total)	2
1	<i>Zagmaran Lightworld Adaptation:</i> Life Support (thin atmosphere)	0
4	<i>Zagmaran Lightworld Adaptation:</i> Environmental Movement (Low Gravity)	0
4	<i>Long Body Frame Reach:</i> Stretching 1", Limited Body Parts (Arms, -¼)	1
2	<i>Zagmaran Extended Lifespan:</i> Longevity (One-fourth Normal Aging Rate)	0
12	<i>Spacesuit:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½)	0

Perks

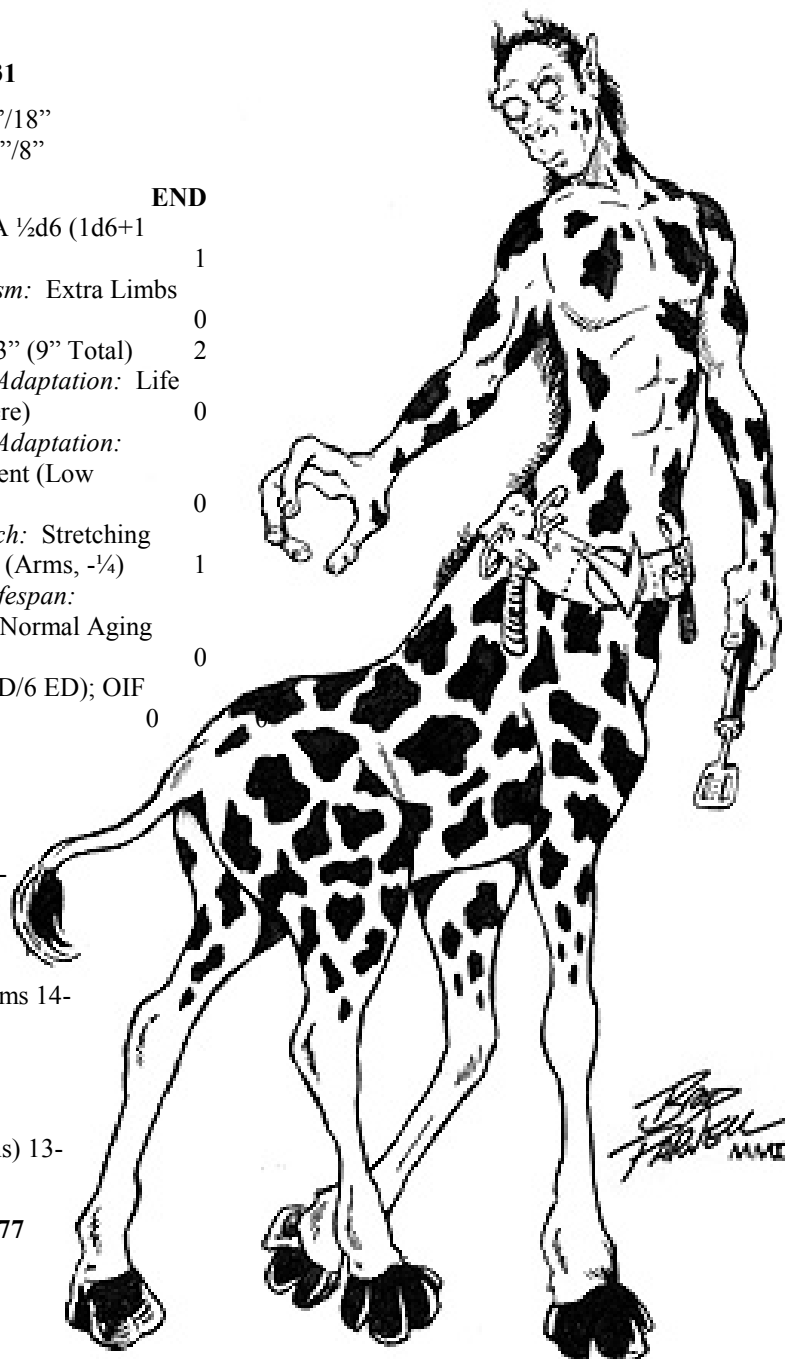
- 1 Star Marshal

Skills

- 2 AK: Sector Aleph-3 11-
3 Climbing 12-
3 Contortionist 12-
5 Electronics 12-
5 KS: Europa Base Systems 14-
3 KS: Starjets 12-
5 Mechanics 12-
2 TF: Small Spacecraft
4 Weaponsmith (Energy Weapons) 13-
2 WF: Small Arms

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 77**Total Cost: 110****50+ Disadvantages**

- 10 Distinctive Features: Tall, Green, Centaur-like Alien (Not Concealable)
15 Hunted: Enemies of Odrugar, 8- (As Pow, NCI)
15 Psychological Limitation: Utterly Loyal to the Odrugarans (Common, Strong)
15 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Odrugaran Council) (Frequently, Major)



The Starjet

Val Char Cost Notes

35 STR	0	Lift 3,200 kg; 7d6 HTH [0]
15 BODY	0	
3.2"x1.6" Size	25	Mass 4t; -5 KB; -3 DCV
10 DEF	24	
15 DEX	15	OCV: 5/ DCV: 2
4 SPD	15	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12

Total Characteristic Cost: 79

Movement: Running: 0"/0"
Flight: 22"/88"
FTL: 2000c

Cost Powers

- 98 *Warpjets*: Multipower, 49-point reserve, 1 Continuing Fuel Charge for entire Multipower (1 month, +1)
10u 1) *Atmospheric Mode*: 22" Flight, x4 non-combat
6u 2) *Warp Mode*: FTL, 2000 Light Years per Year
-12 *No Ground Move*: -6" Run
19 *Sealed Environment*: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing, All Safe Environments)

END

- 19 *Radar Array*: Radar (Radio Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc of Perception (360°), Telescopic (+14 to offset Range Mods) 0
1 *Onboard Computer*: INT 10, DEX 10, SPD 1, Link to Europa Base, Navigation 11-, Combat Pilot 11-

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 141

Total Vehicle Cost: 220

200+ Disadvantages

- 5 Hunted: The Odrugaran Council, 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Area, Watching)
15 Distinctive Features: Star*Guard Starjet (Concealable, Major Reaction)

Notes: The Starjet is a Star*Guard's primary source of transportation around his sector. She's cramped, unarmed, clunky in atmosphere, and her onboard computer is pretty much a dullard, but she's hooked up to the massive CONTROL database, and she's got *legs*. A Starjet is pretty much the fastest ship of her size in the galaxy, and the Star*Guard takes full advantage of that, delivering their agents to hotspots across the galactic arm on short notice.

starjet - side view



starjet - front view



Europa Base

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
20	BODY	18	
8,000"	Size	30	-14 DCV
15	DEF	39	

Total Characteristic Cost: 87

Cost Powers

- 35 *Location*: Distant, In Space
- 7 *Computer Link*: CONTROL
- 24 *Communications Array*: HRRP, Megascale 1"=10 LY (+3¾)
- 19 *Sealed Environment*: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing, All Environments)
- 5 *Artificial Gravity*: Telekinesis 4 STR (0.9 G), 0 END (+½), Persistent (+½); Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1), No Range (-½)
- 27 *Sensors*: Clairsentience (Sight, Hearing and Radio), 32x Range, 0 END (+½); OAF Monitor Station (Immobile, -2)
- 7 *Detention Cells*: +5 BODY, +5 DEF for 50 hexes (-2)
- 5 *Reference Library*: KS: General Knowledge 14-
- 8 *Annals of the Star*Guards*: KS: History of Star*Guards, 17-
- 7 *Medical Lab*: Paramedics 11-

- 7 *Xenobiology Lab*: SS: Xenobiology 11-
- 7 *Physics Lab*: SS: Physics 11-
- 7 *Weapons Lab*: Weaponsmith (Energy Weapons) 11-
- 7 *Engineering Lab*: Mechanics 11-
- 26 *Base Computer*: INT 15, DEX 10, SPD 3; Eidetic Memory, Lightning Calculator; Systems Operation 12-
- 25 *Robot Workers*: 8x 50-point Followers

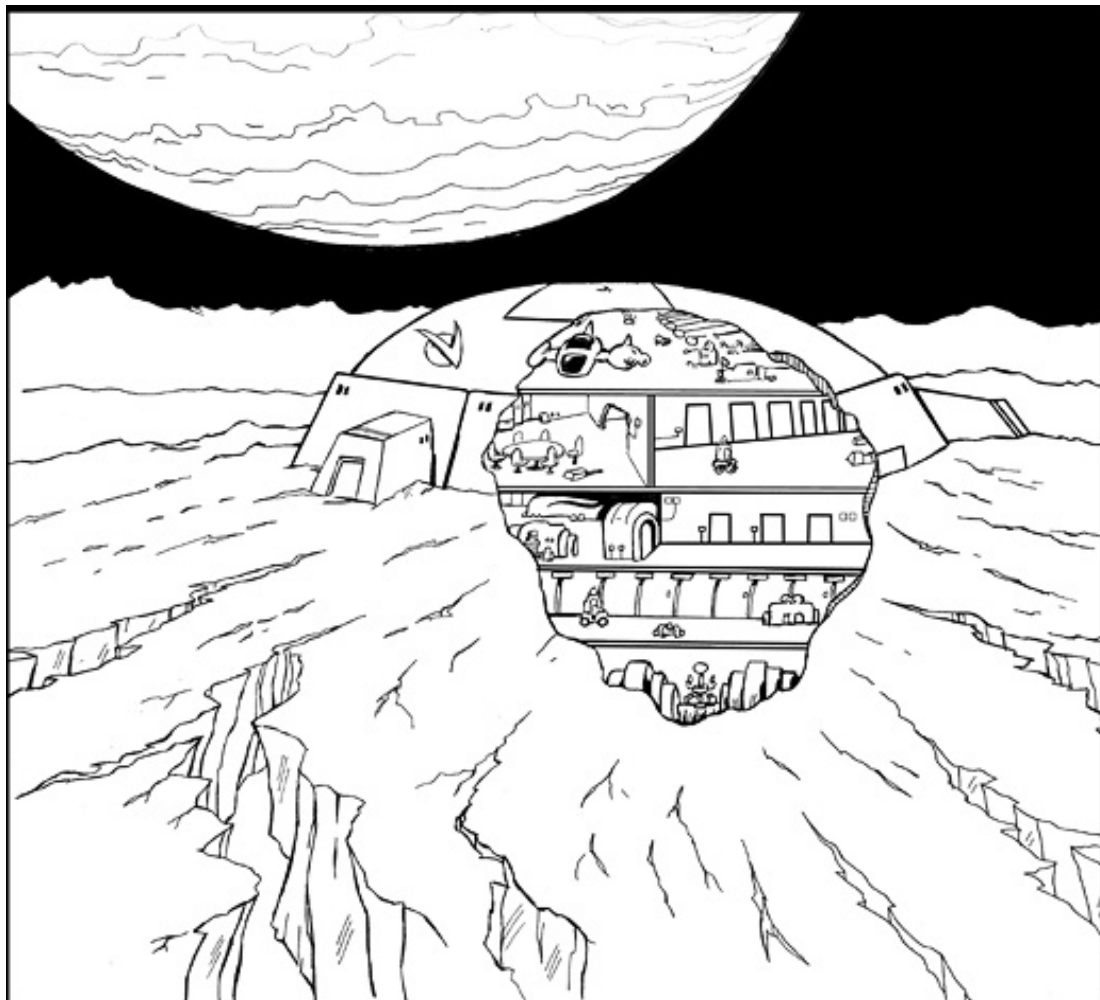
Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 223

Total Base Cost: 310

300+ Disadvantages

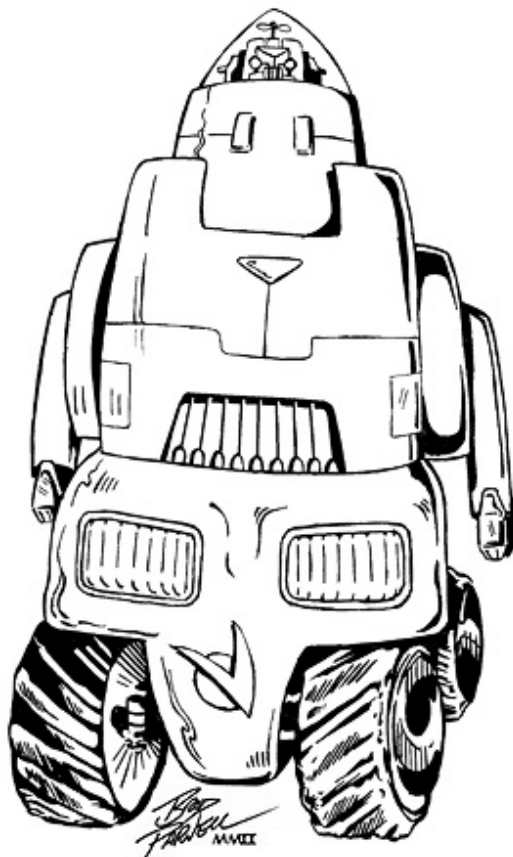
- 10 Hunted: The Odrugaran Council, 14- (Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Area, Watching)

Notes: Europa Base is a sprawling, squat dome resting on the surface of Jupiter's frozen moon. Mounted on a massive ice shelf 100 km thick, the base extends for three levels down below the surface, and two more above. The shelf itself appears like cracked glass, with long valleys carving back and forth. Europa itself is dense but small, and gravity's pull is only approximately 1/8 of Earth's. However, inside the base, artificial generators maintain a gravity more comfortable for the majority of its inhabitants, about 90% of Earth's.



Inside, the base is a massive complex of corridors, lab facilities, garages, and cells. Though there are typically only 4-6 Marshals living here at any one time, the base has been designed so that, in case of military action involving the entire Guard, thousands of troops could be garrisoned here almost indefinitely. This, of course, lends the place an air of almost eerie emptiness most of the time, with deep silences punctuated only by the soft hum of life support systems and the occasional ratchet of a maintenance 'bot's wheels.

The base itself has a controlling computer system only a fraction of the power of CONTROL; just enough to maintain the base and robots and allow for fast connections to the Odrugaran databanks. There are eight drone maintenance bots working here, whose only function is to keep the base working. They do have some limited conversational capability, but Anna in particular finds them off-putting, and Gallok is well-known for verbally abusing them.



Maintenance 'Bots

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	Lift 80 kg; 1½d6 HTH [1]
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
10	CON	0	11-	
9	BODY	-2	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll: 11-
0	EGO	—	—	ECV: —
5	PRE	-5	10-	PRE Attack: 1d6
10	COM	0	11-	
2	PD	0		Total: 2 PD (2 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (2 rED)
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
4	REC	0		
20	END	0		
18	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: -9

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

Cost	Powers	END
15	<i>Robotic Body:</i> Does Not Bleed	0
2	<i>Robotic Body:</i> Damage Resistance 2 PD/ 2 ED	0
20	<i>Visual Sensors:</i> Infrared, Ultraviolet, and Microscopic x100 for Sight Group	0
3	<i>Auditory Sensors:</i> Ultrasonic for Hearing Group	0
12	<i>Radio:</i> HRRP	0

Talents

- 18 *Internal Systems:* Absolute Time Sense, Bump Of Direction, Eidetic Memory, Lightning Calculator, Speed Reading

Skills

- 2 AK: Europa Base 11-
3 Electronics 11-
1 High Society 8-
2 KS: Cleaning and Maintenance 11-
3 Mechanics 11-
3 Paramedics 11-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 84

Total Cost: 75

50+ Disadvantages

- 25 Psychological Limitation: Must Obey Commands of Sentient Staff (Very Common, Total)

Star*Guard Package

Cost	Powers	END
10	+10 Mental Defense	
5	+10 Presence, Defense Only (-1)	
Perks		
7	Computer Link (CONTROL)	
3	Contact: Odrugaran Council, 11-	
3	Fringe Benefit: Star*Guard	
4	Reputation: Star Guard, 11- (+2/+2d6)	
4	Environmental Movement (Zero-G)	
Skills		
3	Breakfall	
3	Combat Piloting	
3	Criminology	
2	KS: Star*Guard History	
2	KS: Alien Races of Your Sector	
2	KS: Star*Guard Enemies	
2	KS: Odrugaran Staff-Fighting	
3	Power: Staff Tricks	
3	System Operations	
3	Tactics	
1	TF: Star*Guard Space Vehicles	

Martial Arts: Odrugaran Staff-Fighting (Staves Weapon Element is free)
Minimum 15 Points from:

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Choke	-2	+0	Grab One Limb, 2½d6 NND (2)
4 Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, +20 STR to roll
3 Legsweep	+2	-1	STR+3d6 Strike; Target Falls
4 Nerve Strike	-1	+1	2½d6 NND (1)
5 Parry	+1	+3	Block, Abort
4 Strike	+0	+2	STR+4d6 Strike
3 Throw	+0	+1	STR+2d6+v/5; Target Falls
4 Weapon Bind	+1	+0	Bind, +20 STR

Disadvantages

- 25 Hunted: Enemies of Odrugar, 11- (Mo Pow, NCI)
20 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Odrugaran Council) (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Cost of Package: 33

Notes: Obviously, the package above represents the minimum package investment for someone to have completed the Odrugaran Star*Guard training program. It does *not*, obviously, include the cost for the Star Staff itself, nor the other standard Star*Guard personal equipment.

Star Staff

Cost	Powers	END
40	<i>Star Staff:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve; all OIF (Star Staff; -½)	
8m	1) <i>Starblast:</i> EB 8d6, Armor Piercing (+½)	6
5m	2) <i>Energy Field:</i> Force Field, 20 PD/20 ED	4
8m	3) <i>Energy Wall:</i> Force Wall, 10 PD/10 ED, +5" of Width or Height	6
5m	4) <i>Flight:</i> Flight 15", 4x Non-Combat	4
2u	5) <i>Staff Strike:</i> Hand Attack +4d6, Hand Attack Only (-½) plus Stretching 1"; Does Not Draw from END Reserve (+0)	2
15	<i>Star Staff Energy Reserves:</i> END Reserve (150 END, 10 REC (Only in Direct Starlight -½)), OIF (Star Staff -½)	0
20	<i>Star*Guard Battle Suit:</i> Armor, 10 PD/10 ED; OIF (Battlesuit, -½)	0
16	<i>Translator Matrix:</i> Universal Translator, 13- Roll; IIF (TM Module behind ear, -¼)	0

Notes: As a general rule, Star*Guards are built for high-end or superheroic campaigns, in which PCs should pay points for their equipment. If you're running a heroic-level *Star Hero* campaign and including the Star*Guard, the GM should either reduce the power levels of the staff and armor down to the level of the equipment available to the rest of the party, or be sure to balance the power levels in some other fashion.



MY DEAREST READERS

I would like to thank all of you for your continued support of the YGHC column, as well as for the constructive criticism many of you take the time out of your busy lives to offer. It is always taken in the creative, interactive spirit that it is given, and I am certainly a better writer for it. I would also like to thank Dan Simon, Steve Long, and Rod Currie for their wonderful Hero Designer software, which has made character creation for this column sooooo much easier. If you don't have a copy of Hero Designer, kids, do whatever it takes to get one. It's worth it!



You Gotta Have Character

by Jason Walters

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

"I was sick – sick unto death with that long agony; and when they at length unbound me, and I was permitted to sit, I felt that my senses were leaving me. The sentence – the dread sentence of death – was the last of distinct accentuation which reached my ears. After that, the sound of the inquisitorial voices seemed merged in one dreamy indeterminate hum. It conveyed to my soul the idea of revolution – perhaps from its association in fancy with the burr of a mill wheel. This only for a brief period; for presently I heard no more. Yet, for a while, I saw; but with how terrible an exaggeration! I saw the lips of the black-robed judges. They appeared to me white – whiter than the sheet upon which I trace these words – and thin even to grotesqueness; thin with the intensity of their expression of firmness— of immovable resolution – of stern contempt – of human torture. I saw that the decrees of what to me was Fate, were still issuing from those lips. I saw them writhe with a deadly locution...."

– Edgar Allan Poe,
The Pit and the Pendulum

Thomas De Torquemada, the first Grand Inquisitor of Spain, is an infamous figure long associated with religious intolerance, torture, and genocide. Yet, the historical truth behind his fabled evil figure does not entirely mesh with the "Black Legend" which has formed around his life. Far from being the notorious one-dimensional, sadistic villain portrayed by classical fiction, Torquemada was a dedicated Spanish patriot whose legacy included the birth of the first long-lasting European Superpower since the Roman Empire fell to barbarian tribesmen in the 7th Century. A true Renaissance politician, Torquemada's singular vision of a unified Spain rising from the ashes of nearly a thousand years of Islamic conquest was to have long-lasting repercussions that would span several continents and hundreds of years. If only he could have gotten his... appetite... for orthodox religion under control, he would today be remembered as one of the great statesmen of his age.

"He [Christ, who is in Spain] looks with compassion, and His lips once more softly pronounce, 'Maiden, arise!' and the maiden arises. The little girl sits up in the coffin and looks round, smiling with wide-open wondering eyes, holding a bunch of white roses they had put in her hand.

There are cries, sobs, confusion among the people, and at that moment the Cardinal himself, the Grand Inquisitor, passes by the cathedral. He is an old man, almost ninety, tall and erect, with a withered face and sunken eyes, in which there is still a gleam of light. He is not dressed in his gorgeous cardinal's robes, as he was the day before, when he was burning the enemies of the Roman Church – at that moment he was wearing his coarse, old, monk's cassock. At a distance behind him come his gloomy assistants and slaves and the 'holy guard.' He stops at the sight of the crowd and watches it from a distance. He sees everything; he sees them set the coffin down at His feet, sees the child rise up, and his face darkens. He knits his thick grey brows and his eyes gleam with a sinister fire. He holds out his finger and bids the guards take Him. And such is his power, so completely are the people cowed into submission and trembling obedience to him, that the crowd immediately makes way for the guards, and in the midst of death-like silence they lay hands on Him and lead Him away. The crowd instantly bows down to the earth, like one man, before the old inquisitor. He blesses the people in silence and passes on. The guards lead their prisoner to the close, gloomy, vaulted prison in the ancient palace of the Holy Inquisition and shut Him in it...."

– Fyodor Dostoevsky,
The Grand Inquisitor

Torquemada

Background/History: Thomas De Torquemada, the first Grand Inquisitor of Spain, was born in the Castilian providence of Valladolid in 1420. A nephew of the celebrated Catholic theologian and cardinal Juan de Torquemada, he entered the Dominican (meaning “Dogs of The Lord” or *Domini Canes* in Latin) monastic order while still little more than a child. From the beginning of his church career, he became known as a very earnest, austere, and humble monk, often pointed to by his superiors as a recognized example of the virtues of the Dominican lifestyle. Valladolid was then the capital of Castile, so in due course eminent dignities were offered to him by the church authorities – but Torquemada remained determined to lead the simple life of a Friar Preacher. In the convent, his modesty was so great that he refused to accept a doctor’s degree in theology, which is the highest prized honor in the Dominican order. His superiors, however, obliged him to take the priorship of the convent of Santa Cruz in Segovia, where he ruled for twenty-two years.

The royal family, especially the Queen and the Infanta (or princess) Isabella, often stayed at Segovia, and Torquemada became the confessor to Isabella, who was then quite young. He trained her to look on her future sovereignty as an opportunity to unite the then divided Iberian Peninsula not only politically, but spiritually and ethnically as well. According to legend, he made her promise in particular to rid the region of Jews, who were at that point both a large and influential minority group. He also began to explain to her the political advantages of religion, paving the way for the creation of that tremendous “spiritual” engine in the hands of the state, the Inquisition. It was under this influence that the later Queen Isabella would utter her now famous (and prophetic) statement, “One Country, One Ruler, One Faith.”

When Isabella succeeded to the throne of Castile upon Henry IV’s death in 1474, Torquemada quickly became one of her most trusted and influential councilors. He urged her to unite Spain by marrying King Ferdinand of Aragon shortly thereafter, putting the capstone upon some seven hundred years of *la reconquista* (the re-conquest) during which Christian Europe slowly forced the descendants of Iberia’s Muslim Moorish conquerors back across the Straits of Gibraltar into North Africa. The vigorous new nations of Spain and Portugal were formed from this brutal grinding conflict, conglomerations of much smaller feudal kingdoms carved over the centuries by noblemen and military adventurers out of Muslim territory. By 1478, the Muslims (or Saracens as they were

then known) were left only a small enclave around the southern port city of Granada.

Because the Peninsula’s previous Islamic rulers were far more tolerant than their Christian counterparts, these new countries were extremely religiously diverse. Jews, Muslims, heretical Gnostic Christians known as Cathars, practitioners of the “old religion” (pagans), “Marranos” (recently converted Jews), and “Moriscos” (recently converted Muslims) mingled freely with “real” Catholic Christians throughout the land. Torquemada was extremely concerned by this multi-cultural population, which he saw as a barrier to the total political unification of Spain. He understood that Spain was well on its way to becoming one of the wealthiest nations of the period (in no small part due to the efforts of her Jewish citizens) and he wanted control of that wealth placed firmly in the hands of the crown. After some consideration, Torquemada hit upon the perfect vehicle to both rid Spain of potentially divisive minorities while transferring material wealth directly into the royal coffers. He seized control of the Inquisition.

In truth, the Inquisition had been more or less a going concern since the Albigensian Crusades of the 13th Century. What is an anathema to us today was considered a reasonable position in Mediaeval and Renaissance Europe: no society could exist without religious uniformity, that – to use a celebrated statement of another era – “a house divided against itself surely cannot stand.” Here was a conviction fully appreciated, incidentally, at a later date by the likes of Protestant Elizabeth I and the Dutch Calvinists, who gave it full rein in their own persecution of Catholics. But the earlier Inquisition was ineffective, decentralized, and answerable more or less directly to various Popes, many of whom had the unfortunate habit of being both pacifistic and tolerant. In 1473, Torquemada and Gonzalez de Mendoza, archbishop of Toledo, approached their sovereigns with a well-thought out plan for reforming, centralizing, and streamlining the Inquisition within Spain. Isabella and Ferdinand saw in this proposal a means for overcoming the independence of their unruly nobility, rebellious clergy, and powerful minority groups – all of whom were busily obstructing the growing power of a centralized Spain. With heavy royal sanction, Torquemada addressed a petition to Pope Sixtus IV for the establishment of this new form of Inquisition and, after some considerable political intrigue, in 1479 a papal bull authorized the appointment by the Spanish sovereigns of two inquisitors at Seville, under whom the Dominican inquisitions already established elsewhere would serve. Commissaries of the Holy Office were sent into different provinces,

BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW IF HE’S A HERETIC?

“If you interrogate them, nothing can be more Christian; as to their conversation, nothing can be less reprehensible, and what they speak they prove by deeds. As for the morals of the heretic, he cheats no one, he oppresses no one, he strikes no one; his cheeks are pale with fasting, he eats not the bread of idleness, his hands labor for his livelihood.”

– St. Bernard,
The Arrogance of Faith

THE INQUISITION – WHAT A SHOW!

“Preachers do not dare preach, and those who preach do not dare touch on contentious matters, for their lives and honor are in the mouths of ignoramuses, and nobody in this life is without his policeman. Bit by bit, many rich people leave the country for foreign realms, in order not to live all their lives in fear and trembling every time an officer of the Inquisition enters their house; for continual fear is a worse death than a sudden demise.”

– An observant
citizen of Toledo,
1538

HOMELAND SECURITY, TORQUEMADA STYLE!

“People were deprived of the liberty to hear and talk freely, since in all cities, towns, and villages, there were persons placed to give information of what went on. This was considered by some the most wretched slavery and equal to death.”

– Juan de Mariana, 1490

SO YOU SAY YOU'RE WILLING TO REPENT?

“On three Sundays the penitent is to be stripped to the waist and scourged by the priest from the entrance of the town... to the church door. His is to abstain forever from meat and eggs and cheese, except on Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas, when he is to eat them as sign of his abnegation of his Manichaeian errors. For twoscore days, twice a year, he is to forgo the use of fish, and for three days in each week that of fish, wine, and oil, fasting, if his health and labors will permit. He is to wear monastic vestments, with a small cross sewed on each breast. If possible, he is to hear mass daily and on feast-days to attend church at vespers. Seven times a day he is to recite



and ministers of the faith were established in the various cities to actively persecute the crimes of heresy, apostasy, sorcery, sodomy, and polygamy (these three last being considered to be implicit heresy). The regular tribunals of the bishops, who much resented the innovation, were reduced in power to a mockery of their former selves. The New Grand Inquisitor (Torquemada), however, had the power of Renaissance Europe's first centralized state at his back.

Thus began a period of Spain's history which has come to be known as the “Black Legend.” During this period, perhaps some two thousand people were burned as heretics by Torquemada's new Inquisition. The burnings were held as a portion of a rather popular public spectacle known as an *auto-de-fe* (or “act of faith”). These were public courts which more or less followed models already established by secular tribunals of the times, which had their good and bad points from our modern prospective. While defendants were considered guilty until proven innocent, and their accuser's identity remained secret, the accused were generally provided with a lawyer and given a thirty-day grace period to prepare a defense. Witnesses who were proven to be false suffered harsh penalties. Although torture short of permanent physical damage was considered appropriate for extracting a confession, examinations of the accused could not be carried out without the presence of two disinterested members of the clergy. Property of the accused, while subject to confiscation by the Spanish government at the beginning of the trial, was generally returned if the accused were happily found innocent. Of course, the wealthier the accused was, the less likely they were to be found innocent....

The two forms of torture that Torquemada personally favored were the *strappado*, or pulley torment, and the *aselli*, or water torment. While quite painful, neither of these tortures was fatal nor disfiguring if performed by an expert; but unfortunately, experts were sometimes a little thin on the ground in Spain. If the condemned recanted his or her heresy after a session of *strappado* or *aselli* and kissed the cross, they were mercifully garroted before their execution pyre was lit. If they recanted only they were burned with seasoned, quick-burning wood. If they refused to do either, they were burned with slow, smoldering green wood. Most victims chose to kiss the cross.

Although many irresponsible or politically motivated historians have set the number of executed heretics as high as two hundred thousand people, actual court records that have survived from the period show this number to be a distortion. For while the Spanish Inquisition was an undeniably cruel institution, its goals

were, in fact, financial and political rather than sadistic. Torquemada was far more interested in gathering wealth, breaking the power of Spain's wealthiest minority, and inspiring a fear of the central government in the population of his new country than he was sadism. Despite what many “new age” witches now claim, almost every person executed during the Spanish Inquisition was a *converso*, or “new” Christian freshly converted from Judaism, who were convicted of practicing his former religion. They formed a powerful, wealthy minority within the Iberian Peninsula's political, economic, and social scenes which Isabella and Torquemada were both deeply interested in destroying. While this persecution contributes another sad chapter to the already sad history of anti-Semitism, it was motivated more by greed and politico-religious expediency than by racial hatred.

With Spain's Christian population effectively terrified into religious orthodoxy, Torquemada set his sights upon the nation's non-Christian citizens. For ironically, the Inquisition, which was after all a church institution, had no jurisdiction over the nation's Jews and Muslims. With Muslims for the most part killed or voluntarily fleeing the peninsula after the collapse of their last stronghold in Granada in 1492, Spain was left with an estimated population of some 200,000 Jews. Torquemada petitioned the crown to compel all the Jews to either convert to Christianity or be expelled. While Isabella was more than willing, the usually compliant Ferdinand balked at the idea of expelling so many of his subjects. His hesitation was compounded by an offer from the Jewish community of some 30,000 ducats (about 40 million dollars in today's currency) if they were left unmolested. Just as he was about to decide in favor of the Jewish population, Torquemada appeared in his chambers bearing a crucifix and exclaimed “Judas Iscariot sold Christ for 30 pieces of silver; Your Highness is about to sell him for 30,000 ducats. Here He is, take Him and sell Him.” He then set the crucifix on a table in front of Ferdinand before leaving the room.

All unconverted Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492. In July of that year, 160,000 Jewish people left Spain; the majority went to Portugal, but about 50,000 went to Levante with the intention of going to Africa or Tierra Santa. In their haste to depart, several even signed onto a seemingly doomed voyage with a mad Italian navigator known as Christopher Columbus. None of them were allowed to take their wealth or worldly possessions with them. Many ended up settling into small communities inside of what was then the Ottoman Empire, either in Palestine or present day Bosnia.

With their newfound wealth, Isabella and Ferdinand sponsored a series of successful

conquests, both in the recently discovered New World as well as in Europe. These conquests, in turn, transformed the newly created nation of Spain into the richest and most powerful country of its day. Yet, Torquemada was to personally enjoy little of the success that he helped to engender. His constant harassment of Spain's minorities and minor nobility had created powerful enemies throughout the land. Threats were consistently made against Torquemada, which caused him to go in fear of his life. After the expulsion, he never went outside without an escort of forty soldiers. Increasingly paranoid with age, Torquemada retired to the monastery of St. Thomas in Avila, which he had designed himself. In his last years, convinced that he would eventually be poisoned, he kept a unicorn's horn by his dinner plate as an antidote. He was not poisoned, however, but died a natural death in 1498.

Personality/Motivation: Torquemada is a surprisingly polite and soft-spoken man with an exceptional education. Like many learned people of his time, he can both read and write over a half-dozen languages, has traveled extensively throughout Southern Europe, and is familiar with many of the political and economic theories of the day. Nevertheless, you can take the boy out of the convent, but you can't take the convent out of the boy. Torquemada was cloistered at a very early age and raised by one of the strictest monastic orders in all of Catholicism, so his worldview is, shall we say, rather *narrow* compared with some of his contemporaries. From his perspective, what's good for the church is good for the state, what's good for the state is good for its people, and what's good for the people is what's good for the church.

Torquemada's primary motivation is actually a fairly simple one; he's a religious patriot. If one looks at his actions, one can discern a repeated pattern of using the Spanish church to further the goals of the Spanish state while using the Spanish state to reinforce the authority of the Spanish church. Of course, to a man of his time this would have been part and parcel, as the concept of separation of church and state hadn't been conceived yet, but Torquemada took this holy – or unholy – matrimony to a new level, using the secular Spanish authorities to actually perform his dirty work (torture and execution), while turning over sizable portions of property seized by the church (with the help of Spanish soldiers) to the Crown. This cozy setup propelled the Spanish people into a world power while making sure that they were all firmly, permanently, and undeniably Catholic. In fact, the marriage of Spanish Inquisition and Spanish royal power proved so successful that it actually remained active until 1803, long after heretic killing had gone out of style in the rest of the world.

Though hardly a comedian, Torquemada possesses an offbeat, spooky sense of humor, which he uses primarily to frighten his victims into speaking truthfully. For, in reality, Torquemada is not so much sadistic or wildly anti-Semitic as he is amoral and insensitive. Although he personally doesn't revel in hatred and cruelty, he's not above using racism and torture to further his nationalistic ends. In his personal life, Torquemada is unassuming, even humble, charitable, and seemingly has few of the vices normally associated with historical villains of his caliber.

Of course, that didn't keep him from sending two thousand innocent people to their deaths.

Quote: "Do you think we should put her to the test of faith, St. Swiven? No? How about we place her upon a slow burning fire of green, green wood until she renounces her apostasy? No? Well, what then, my pretty, pretty beads? Oh, something special. ... Oh, no, surely she doesn't deserve THAT!"

Powers/Tactics: Simply put, Thomas De Torquemada's combat tactic is to have about fifty heavily armored Castilian hidalgos in breast-and-back plate mail with halberds, arquebuses, and longswords surround his opponents before charging them with heresy and subversion, then having them tortured until they agree to their own execution. It has proven to be a remarkably effective strategy.

A man of the cloth, Torquemada has no combat skills or abilities whatsoever. Instead, he manipulates the entire power structure of church and state to accomplish his long reaching, well thought out goals. His "powers" lie in his close association to those institutions, as well as his considerable intellectual, social, and deductive abilities. He's also one hell of a great torturer!

Campaign Use: Though I have discovered through some boring old factual research that Thomas De Torquemada wasn't actually as cool a villain as the Vincent Price character from Roger Corman's *The Pit and The Pendulum* or Dostoevsky's Christ-murdering inquisitor from *Brothers Karamazov*, you don't have to tell your players that. Heck, *they don't even want to know* that he wasn't the mustache twirling, naked virgin torturing, witch burning, Bible thumping arch-villain of film and fiction we have all come to know and hate. This character should be used to surprise the players, as his goals are far more ambitious and long reaching than merely being a sadistic lunatic. Of course, Torquemada has nothing against using violence, torture, and heavy-handed political maneuvering to achieve his ends, so he will probably seem like a sadistic lunatic, regardless. One simply shouldn't confuse the ends with the means.

the canonical hours, and, in addition to the Paternoster ten times each day and twenty times each night. He is to observe the strictest chastity. Every month he is to show this paper to the priest, who is to watch his observances closely, and this mode of life is to be maintained until the legate shall see fit to alter it, while for infraction of the penance he is to be held as a perjurer and a heretic, and to be segregated from the society of the faithful"

– Henry Charles Lea,
*The Inquisition of
the Middle Ages*

B MOVIES ABOUT THE SPANISH INQUISITION

The Pit and the Pendulum (1961).

Set in post-Inquisition Spain, the film stars the ever-earnest B-movie actor John Kerr as a young Englishman who travels to the seaside castle of his brother-in-law (who unfortunately happens to be Vincent Price) to uncover the circumstances behind the death of his beloved sister. Price is tormented by memories of his mother's premature burial by his inquisitor father (also played creepily by Price) and fears that this sadistic legacy has contributed to Steele's demise.

Inquisition (1976). The superstition and religious fanaticism of the 16th Century is brought to shocking, slasher-flick, full-color life as you are subjected to every gruesome detail of unspeakable torture a stoned hippie B-movie director can conceive of. Paul Naschy stars as a witch-hunting judge who falls in love with the daughter of a warlock that he's sentenced to die. This movie was banned in more theaters than it was ever shown in.

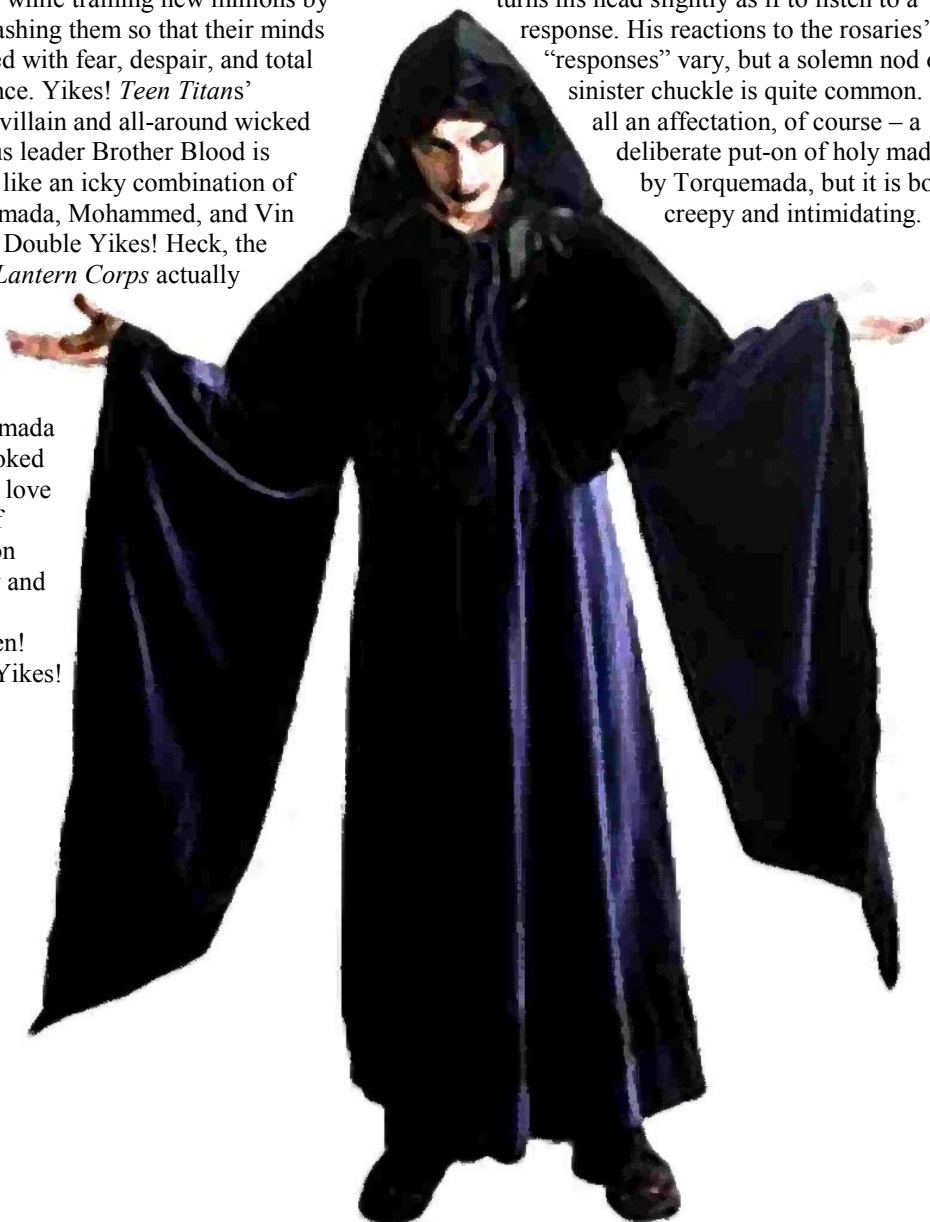
Pit & The Pendulum (1990). In his twisted quest to save souls, Grand Inquisitor Torquemada (played by the great Lance Henriksen of *Millennium* fame) shaves his head, puts on a lot of red silk robes, and kicks off a bloody reign of terror, torture, and killing in the name of baby Jesus. Caught in this insane cruelty is Italian looker Rona De Ricci, whose beauty leads Lance into spasms of creepy temptation.

The list of possibilities for using a Grand Inquisitor in your game is nearly infinite. What good is any fantasy role-playing world without an Inquisition going on some place on behalf of a wacky, self-righteous religion of some kind? What good is a science fiction universe without a spooky fanatical religion, for that matter? Pierce Anthony's *God's Fires*, Dan Simon's epic four-part *Hyperion* series, Eric Flint's *1632*, and Dan Abnet's silly *Warhammer 40,000: Inquisitor* books all have an Inquisition (or at least an inquisitor-like character) in them. No reason that space-going, pointy-hatted torturers couldn't chase your *Star Hero* characters around for years without getting boring!

For you *Champions* players, the world of DC Comics is practically teeming with diabolical pseudo-Torquemada characters. *The New Gods* has a scheming character called Desaad that serves the deity level master-villain Darkseid (who's kind of an evil Jehovah) as his chief torturer while training new minions by brainwashing them so that their minds are filled with fear, despair, and total obedience. Yikes! *Teen Titans'* master-villain and all-around wicked religious leader Brother Blood is kind of like an icky combination of Torquemada, Mohammed, and Vin Diesel! Double Yikes! Heck, the *Green Lantern Corps* actually had a good guy named Torquemada who looked like the love child of Solomon Grundy and David Johansen! Triple Yikes!

Appearance: Torquemada is a thin, rather dapper looking man with an angular mustache and large brown eyes. He is unusually tall for his day, with the disturbing habit of looming over those to whom he is speaking. When in his monastery or advising Queen Isabella, he wears the traditional garb of a Dominican brother, namely a plain brown robe with a white prayer shawl. When he is acting as Grand Inquisitor, however, Torquemada dresses in long robes of red or white silk with exaggerated, pointy "clan" hats which help to make him look even taller and more intimidating. These robes are adorned with various forms of the cross (such as the inaugural cross, cross of St. Peter, and the cross of Christ) sewn into the fabric with golden thread.

Additionally, Torquemada has a selection of fine antique rosaries previously owned by various Catholic saints, which he likes to wear on special occasions (like an *Auto-de-Fe*). He sometimes speaks to them softly in public, then turns his head slightly as if to listen to a response. His reactions to the rosaries' "responses" vary, but a solemn nod or a sinister chuckle is quite common. This is all an affectation, of course – a deliberate put-on of holy madness by Torquemada, but it is both creepy and intimidating.



Thomas De Torquemada

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

Total Characteristics Cost: 77

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

Cost Perks

- 7 Contact: Pope Sixtus IV 11- (access to major institutions, extremely useful Skills or resources, significant Contacts of his own, limited by identity)
- 30 Contact: Roman Catholic Church 13- (access to major institutions, has extremely useful Skills or resources, significant Contacts of its own, good relationship, organization)
- 9 Contact: Queen Isabella 11- (access to major institutions, extremely useful Skills or resources, significant Contacts of her own, limited by identity, very good relationship)
- 30 Contact: The Spanish Empire 13- (access to major institutions, extremely useful Skills or resources, significant Contacts of its own, good relationship, organization)
- 7 Fringe Benefit: Grand Inquisitor of Spain (National Police Powers, Low Justice, Right to Marry)
- 10 Money: Wealthy
- 6 Reputation: Grand Inquisitor of Spain (throughout Spain, 11-) +3/+3d6

Talents

- 5 Eidetic Memory
- 3 Lightsleep
- 5 *Immovable*: +5 Resistance to Persuasion

Skills

- 3 AK: Rome 13-
- 3 AK: Spain 13-
- 5 Bureaucratics 14-
- 3 Conversation 13-
- 3 Deduction 13-
- 3 High Society 13-
- 3 Interrogation 13-
- 3 KS: Religion 13-
- 4 KS: Torture 14-
- 0 Language: Spanish: Native Speaker (Literacy)
- 1 Language: Arabic (basic conversation)
- 1 Language: Basque (basic conversation)
- 3 Language: French (fluent conversation; literate)
- 3 Language: Hebrew (fluent conversation; literate)
- 2 Language: Italian (fluent conversation; literate)
- 3 Language: Latin (fluent conversation; literacy)
- 3 PS: Priest 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 158**Total Cost: 235****150+ Disadvantages**

- 10 Enraged: when confronted with heresy (Common), go 8-, recover 14-
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Hatred of Jews (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Hatred of Muslims (Uncommon, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Insensitive (Very Common, Moderate)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Narrow-Minded (Common, Strong)
- 10 Social Limitation: Famous (Frequently, Major)
- 10 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Frequently, Major)
- 5 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 235**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Ninja Hero in the House by Michael Surbrook

When the original version of *Ninja Hero* was released, it quickly came to be regarded as one of the best supplements ever written for the *HERO System*. *The Ultimate Martial Artist* followed in its footsteps, updating and expanding on the original material, while also presenting new concepts. To boot, the books were written by two of the biggest names in the realm of Hero authors: Aaron Allston and Steve Long. How do you top that?

The answer? You don't.

When I initially conceived of the idea that eventually evolved into the new edition of *Ninja Hero*, I knew exactly what I wanted to discuss. I wanted to create a book that covered the material both *Ninja Hero* and *The Ultimate Martial Artist* missed – the realm of “wild” martial arts. At the time the original *Ninja Hero* was written, there was minimal awareness of the wild world of Hong Kong cinema in America, and the *anime* craze was still in its infancy. Since then, however, both forms of media have become readily accessible to the average viewer (and gamer), leading to an interest in how to adapt the things seen in many Hong Kong action films (and Japanese *anime*) for use in any number of roleplaying games.

My aim was to create a book that delved into the world of Hong Kong *wuxia* films, Japanese *anime* and *manga*, and even video games, and presented the results for *HERO System* gamers to use and adapt for their campaigns. Titling the work *Wuxia Hero*, I set to work.

Initially the book was to be published by Gold Rush Games, but that plan fell through. I thought about submitting it to Hero Games, but they had just been sold (to DOJ, of course), and I wasn't sure DOJ would want such a manuscript. Then all my questions and worries were solved in one fell swoop when *HERO System* Line Developer Steve Long asked if I'd like to adapt *Wuxia Hero* into a revised version of *Ninja Hero*. How could I say no?

The biggest goal for *Ninja Hero* was to present the world of martial arts action. The revised version of *The Ultimate Martial Artist* covered the real world martial arts pretty well, but I wanted to look at the more cinematic side of the genre – everything from the kung fu comedy of Jackie Chan, in which Jackie performs stunts that defy the limits of human ability, to *manga* such as *Dragonball* where characters are known to demolish mountains in the course of a fight.

The first step was to watch lots and lots of martial arts movies (a really tough task, let me tell you). As I watched, I took notes, looking for common elements and effects. Then I asked the readers (such as you, for example) what they wanted to see (most people said “ninja” for some reason). Then came putting it all together.

Assembling *Ninja Hero* meant following Steve's outline, cutting up *Wuxia Hero* as needed, and writing new material to fill in the blanks. The most important part (in my opinion anyway) was the section on character design and construction, and that's the part of the book I think really shines. To truly illustrate what makes the martial arts action genre special, I go through many of the game elements in the *HERO System* sourcebook and discuss how you can adapt them for use in a martial arts action campaign. There are also dozens of sample powers in the chapter, illustrating everything from Aid (“Drunken Boxing”) to the Double Knockback Advantage (“Twin Palm Strike”). In between, GMs and players will find Armor Shredding Strikes, *Ch'i* Fireballs, Grass Running Stances, and Supreme Warrior Auras.

When it came time to discuss the martial arts genre itself, I decided to divide the martial arts genre down into five subgenres: Realistic (the “real world”); Cinematic (e.g., martial arts as depicted by Hollywood); *Wuxia* (e.g., most Hong Kong martial arts cinema); Video Game; and Anime. I use these terms to help define different power levels, styles of play, and even acceptable powers and abilities. To top it off, there is a sample campaign seed given for each campaign type.

I also use the five campaign types as a way to frame the *Sourcebook* chapter. Since many people asked for ninja, I come through with five that are fully fleshed-out (one for each subgenre) and six “generic” ninja write-ups adaptable to many campaigns. The same goes for the rest of the NPCs, of which there are at least two for each campaign type – one hero and one villain. I even go so far as to link various characters together by placing them all in the same general time period. For example, the *Wuxia* hero and villain are opponents of each other, and the *Wuxia* villain hires and uses the *Wuxia* ninja. This provides some internal consistency, and allows me to contrast different characters (and provide some built-in GM hooks and ideas).

Of course, all this talk of martial arts action, Hong Kong cinema, and Japanese *anime* doesn't do much good if the reader doesn't know what to look for, so the book wraps up with an extensive listing of source material. I present long lists of American, Hong Kong, and Japanese martial arts films, *anime* and *manga*, video games, books, and even other roleplaying games.

All in all, I feel that the new *Ninja Hero* will be a worthy successor to the original, and *HERO System* gamers will find it a useful supplement for not just martial arts action, but hopefully for all genres.

The OSS Toybox by Leah Watts

Spy Toys

A standard feature of any James Bond movie is the trip to see “Q” and collect his latest batch of gadgets, all of which will be used before the closing credits run. Spy gadgets go back further than the 1960s, though. During World War II, both the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) provided agents in the field with a wide range of specialized equipment. This article only scratches the surface of what an agent could theoretically requisition before heading into enemy territory.

Point costs have been calculated for GM use or a Golden Age gadgeteer with a VPP. Most characters will not have to spend points to carry these items – government issue items are free to heroic-level characters who are working for that government.

To the best of my knowledge, all of the devices in this article were actually designed for use during WWII. I cannot guarantee that all of them were built, or saw use outside a testing range. However, even if they weren’t used operationally in real life, they could be used operationally in your game.

FIREARMS

Standard military firearms were available to agents and often used by them. The research departments of both the OSS and SOE also developed specialized firearms for their agents.

Silenced guns had obvious advantages for a secret agent, and both organizations issued them. The OSS HiStandard was a .22 caliber pistol with possibly the best silencer of the time. OSS Director William Donovan claimed to have demonstrated a HiStandard by sneaking it into the Oval Office and emptying the clip into a sandbag while President Roosevelt was dictating a letter, without being noticed. (Several HiStandards reported as “lost in combat” turned up in the hands of assassins in the immediate post-war period.)

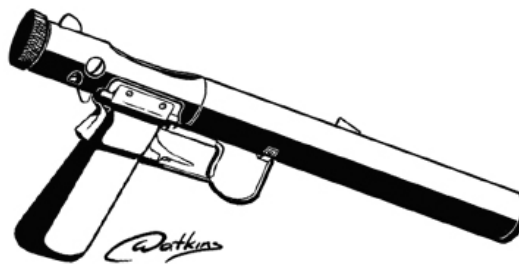
OSS HiStandard: RKA 1d6-1, Invisible to Hearing Group (+1/4) (12 Active Points); 10 Charges (-1/4), OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-1/4), STR Min 6: Does Not Add Damage (-1) (Total cost: 3 points) **plus** +2 OCV (10 Active Points); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-1/4) (Total cost: 4 points). Total cost: 7 points.



HiStandard

The silencer of the SOE Welrod wasn’t quite as effective as the HiStandard’s, but the Welrod’s 9mm ammunition did more damage to the target. Welrod users in Europe or North Africa also had a better chance of stealing fresh ammunition from the Germans, since several of their weapons used the same caliber.

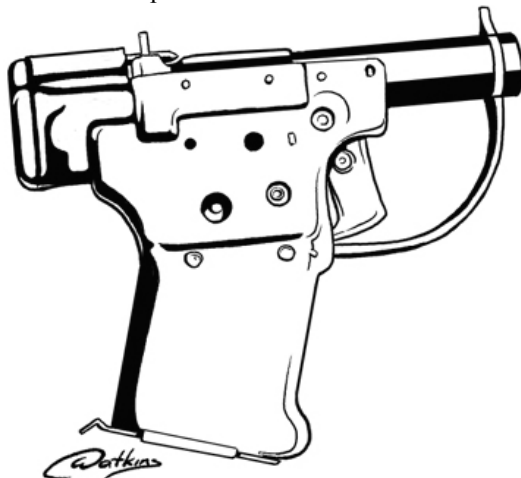
SOE Welrod: RKA 1d6+1, Invisible to Hearing Group with Fringe (+1/4) (25 Active Points); 5 Charges (-3/4), OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-1/4), STR Min 6: Does Not Add Damage (-1). Total cost: 6 points.



Welrod

One firearm intended for Resistance forces was the Woolworth .45, sometimes called the Liberator .45. It was cheaply made from stamped metal, with a stubby barrel that barely went past the trigger guard. The grip could store up to 10 rounds, but for practical use, the Woolworth was a single shot gun. Before reloading, the user had to push the expended cartridge case out of the gun with a stick. It wasn’t very accurate, but may have seen some use at point-blank range by Resistance members (who would then, if smart, have stolen their victim’s gun as a replacement).

Woolworth .45: RKA 2d6, -2 to Range Modifier (24 Active Points); 10 Charges (-¼), Extra Time (Extra Phase to reload, -¾), Limited Range: 5" (-¼), OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼), STR Min 12: Does Not Add Damage (-1). Total cost: 5 points.

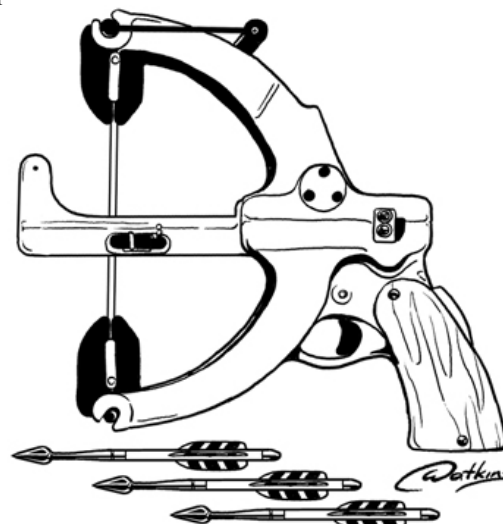


Woolworth



Crossbow

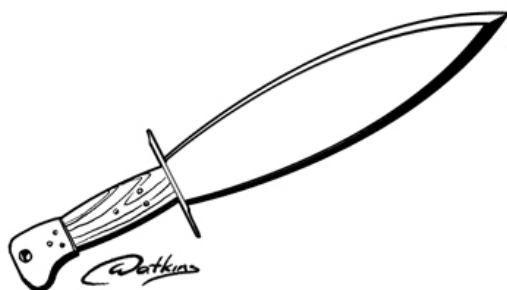
Dart Gun: RKA 1d6 (15 Active Points); 6 Recoverable Charges (-¼), Limited Range: 20" (-¼), OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼), STR Min 5: Does Not Add Damage (-¾). Total cost: 4 points.



Dart Gun

OTHER WEAPONS

A wide range of knives was available to secret agents. Most of them are covered by the weapon charts in H5. The famed Sykes-Fairbairn Commando Knife would be treated in game terms as a stiletto. The Smatchet, a machete-like knife with a heavy pommel, would be treated as a short sword. A Smatchet's pommel was designed for bashing people over the head; either allow a PC with one to use the Club Weapon maneuver or let him use it as a fist-load.

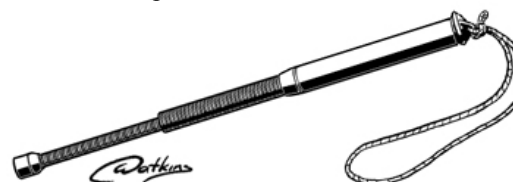


Smatchet

Crossbows were available, though indications are most agents preferred using a silenced gun to playing William Tell. Use the Light Crossbow listing from the weapon charts if a PC decides to requisition one. A dart gun was also available, looking like a pistol with a vertical metal bow mounted on the barrel. Rubber bands inside the bow kept tension on the bowstring.

If you just wanted to slug your target, you could get a spring cosh, or telescoping club. These are still sold for self-defense purposes today. They consist of a handle with three progressively narrower springs coming out of it, and a solid knob on the business end. If not in use, the springs slide into the handle. Springs were used instead of solid tubes in order to get a better "whip" action and increase the force of the blow.

Spring Cosh: HA 3d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½) (22 Active Points); HTH Attack (-½), OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼), STR Min 5 (-¼). Total cost: 7 points.



Spring Cosh

EXPLOSIVES

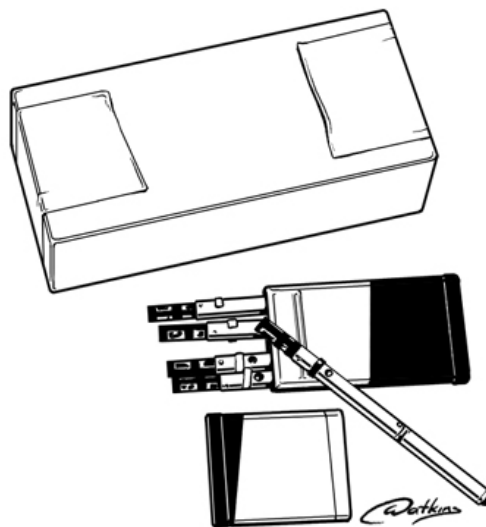
Plastic explosive (PE) was the explosive of choice for Allied agents during WWII. However, the statistics in H5 assume a block 1 kilogram in weight; agents during WWII got their PE in 1½ pound (0.7 kilogram) blocks. In a WWII game, use the following damage figures: 1 block of plastic explosive is a 10d6 Normal Explosion, each additional block adds 3d6. Time-traveling heroes who are helping the Resistance blow up a target should be allowed a touch PER roll to realize the PE blocks are underweight by modern standards, and a Demolition roll (or a scale) to estimate the correct amount of PE for the damage they want to do. Failing the PER roll means they'll use too little plastic explosive in the belief that those blocks they're wiring up are 1 kg. Failing the Demolition roll could mean either too little PE or too much at the GM's option.

Various fusing devices were invented as well. The Time Pencil was a simple device, a hollow tube about the size of a pencil that contained a wire and a vial of acid. Once the bomb was in place, the user would squeeze the tube to break the vial. Once the acid ate away the wire, the firing mechanism would be released. Time pencils were made with different thicknesses of wire for different time delays, and color-coded so agents could keep them straight.

Their main problem was that ambient temperature would either accelerate or delay the chemical reaction. In extreme temperature conditions, GMs should increase the Misfire roll. A PC who has experience with time pencils can make a Demolition roll to minimize the misfire (for instance, using a pencil rated for a longer delay than wanted in hot temperatures that would speed the reaction), but should not be able to completely eliminate misfire. If a bomb absolutely has to go off at a specific time, do what the agents did and use a clockwork trigger instead.

Bomb with Time Pencil: EB 13d6, Explosion (+½), Trigger with Misfire (time pencil, various times available, +¼) (114 Active Points); 1 Charge (-2), No Range (-½), OAF (-1). Total cost: 25 points.

(This bomb was built with two blocks of PE, adjust damage for other quantities.)



Plastic Explosives with Time Pencils

The OSS came up with “Aunt Jemima,” a mixture of PE and wheat flour that looked just like regular flour. The combination (75% explosive and 25% flour) could be baked and was supposedly edible – the OSS even came up with recipes for it. When mixed with water, it was only slightly less effective than pure plastic explosive – use the damage figures given above for PE for Aunt Jemima, but increase the quantity needed to two pounds. Its main advantage was that a bag of flour could be carried through almost any roadblock or checkpoint without problem.

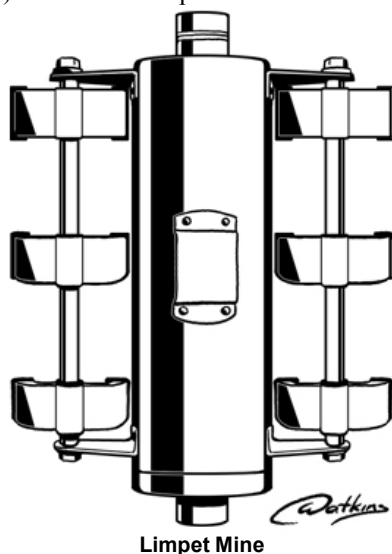


“Aunt Jemima”

Limpet mines were used against ships. They were a combination of high explosives, a delay fuse, and magnets to hold everything against the hull until detonation. Modified limpets were used in the Far East against wooden-hulled ships; a device called a "Pin-Up" fired a spike into the hull to anchor the limpet.

The "Suitable Material" limitation in the write-up is at zero because for the majority of the war, magnetic limpets were automatically sent for missions against metal-hulled ships and pin-ups were automatically sent for missions against wooden-hulled ships. Except for a short period at the beginning of the war, when London needed to be reminded of the different ship types in the Far East, or unless a PC has far too much Unluck to survive as a covert agent, the different holding mechanisms for limpets won't have any impact on the game.

Limpet Mine: EB 15d6, Explosion (+½), Trigger (either a timer or a pressure fuse were used on these, +¼) (131 Active); 1 Charge (-2), No Range (-½), OAF (-1) (Total cost: 29 points) **plus** Telekinesis (4 STR) (6 Active Points); No Range (-½), Only To Grab/Hold (-1), Only On Suitable Material (-0), OAF (-1) (Total cost: 2 points). Total cost: 31 points.



Limpet Mine

Both the OSS and SOE became skilled at camouflaging explosives. From lumps of "coal" to chunks of "firewood" to "candles," almost anything meant to burn could also explode. For game purposes, assume the technician made his Concealment roll by 4 and use the Skill versus Skill rules if someone is trying to find the explosives.

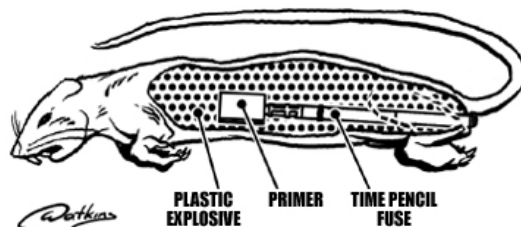
SOE made at least two batches of explosive rats. Dead rats were obtained, their "cover destination" the dissection rooms of London University. The rats were skinned, then stuffed with plastic explosive and a heat-activated detonator, and sewn up. The plan was for

Resistance workers to leave the rats in fuel piles near boilers. The person stoking the boiler would either fail to see the rat and shovel it in with the coal or wood, or would see the rat and toss it into the boiler to clean up. Either way, the rat-ful of PE would explode inside the boiler.

Unfortunately, the first shipment of exploding rats was intercepted by the Germans, so they never saw much use. On the other hand, the resulting paranoia about rats in factories may have caused just as many problems.

Damage for the rats can be scaled up by using larger rats; the Norway rat can get as large as 1½ pounds. It shouldn't be necessary, though; on an average roll, the listed rats should do enough BODY to put a hole in the internal boiler pipes and disable it.

Exploding Rats: EB 6d6, Explosion (+½), Trigger (fire, +¼) (52 Active Points); 1 Charge (-2), IAF (-½), No Range (-½). Total cost: 13 points.



Exploding Rat

MISCELLANEOUS GOODIES

The "Hedy Lamarr" looked like a firecracker with a wire loop in place of the fuse. When the wire was pulled, it sounded like a bomb detonating. It was designed to provide a distraction for agents. (It was named after a 1940's actress who, according to the younger lieutenants in the OSS, "caused a panic wherever she went.")

"Hedy Lamarr": Hearing Group Images, +4 to PER Rolls, 16" Radius (+1) (34 Active Points); 1 Continuing Charge lasting 1 Turn (-1¼), IAF (-½), No Range (-½), Set Effect (bomb falling and exploding, -1). Total cost: 8 points.



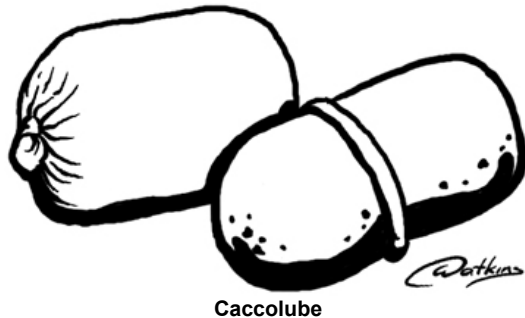
Hedy Lamarr

DIGITAL HERO #6

Later in the war, the German forces used conscript labor to maintain their vehicles. This gave the workers a chance to sabotage the vehicles, but sand in the crankcase was too likely to be detected and sugar was too tightly rationed to dump in gas tanks. Allied researchers came up with a compound nicknamed caccolube for these workers to use instead. The soft rubbery capsule (which gave this compound the alternate nickname of Turtle Eggs) would be dropped into a car or tank crankcase. Once the engine oil reached operating temperatures, the capsule would dissolve and the caccolube would start chewing up the engine. The damage looked like normal wear and tear.

For purposes of this article, assume that doing $\frac{1}{4}$ of a vehicle's BODY will take out the engine. If you prefer to use the Vehicle Damage chart, use common sense – caccolube damage can't affect the machine gun mounted on the back of the truck.

Caccolube: HKA 8d6, Invisible Power Effects (damage doesn't look like sabotage, $+\frac{1}{2}$), Penetrating (x2, +1), Trigger (engine oil reaches normal operating temperature, $+\frac{1}{4}$) (330 Active Points); 1 Charge (-2), Gradual Effect (20 minutes, -1), IAF ($-\frac{1}{2}$), No Knockback ($-\frac{1}{4}$), No STR Bonus ($-\frac{1}{2}$), Only Works on Internal Combustion Engines (-2). Total Cost: 46 points.



For Further Reading:

Dear, Ian. *Sabotage And Subversion: The SOE And OSS At War*.

Seaman, Mark (introduction). *Secret Agent's Handbook*.

Time-Life Books. The Secret War (from the History of World War II series).



EDITOR'S NOTE

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

PRIMUS Update by Shelley Chrystal Mactyre

Introducing PRIMUS Portland

Let's face it – GMs using PRIMUS in their campaigns often fight an uphill battle. Long-time HERO players have all sorts of preconceived notions about what the agency's about, and usually it's not a flattering picture. Incompetent agents with unpredictable weaponry; hordes of agents who are inefficient in combat; Avengers who look like poster children for the Aryan Nation and who run around fighting mutants on their days off – you get the idea. Yet, PRIMUS fills a very necessary niche in *Champions* as a federal agency devoted to fighting paranormal crime.

What's a GM to do, if he wants to use PRIMUS, but also present the agency as it ought to realistically be – an agency made up of dedicated men and women who, while they may, at times, be opposed to the heroes' methods, but who have the same goals: catching bad guys to make the country safe for law-abiding Americans?

In this article, we'll explore the workings of one of PRIMUS' newest, most advanced bases, and meet some of the agents who work there. You'll also find a list of plot hooks for PRIMUS agent PCs and hero teams alike – to add depth to a campaign and to help banish some of those ridiculous stereotypes.

This article uses PRIMUS' Portland base to demonstrate the workings of an average base, but feel free to use any of these characters in other settings, since PRIMUS agents are routinely transferred from one base to another.

The Portland Base

The PRIMUS base in Portland, headed by Base Commander Sloan Ross, does have much to be proud of. Since the base opened last year, agents have had a string of high-profile successes against the local VIPER nests. Last month, PRIMUS Portland made it into the news when agents arrested a hired paranormal strongman employed by logging companies to terrorize environmental protesters.

An average-sized base, it employs twenty-five intelligence agents and fifteen assault agents. Two Iron Guard squads are on call for heavier combat, though they've only been deployed twice, so far. Portland's Silver Avenger, Terry Kestler, is an experienced assault agent who got her start in San Francisco, under the tutelage of Silver Avenger Maria Chow. It shows – though Kestler lives in a much more sedate manner than the flamboyant Chow, she's become active in community activities and has gained allies in high and low places alike.

"You picked a great day to visit," the Avenger's assistant chirps. She sounds unnaturally cheerful, given that it's a typical Portland day – overcast, cold, and dreary. I'm shivering in my Columbia Sportswear parka, but she's wearing short sleeves!

Great day? I ask dubiously.

"We've finally cleaned up from the Avenger Games last weekend and Agent MacGowan's supervisory visit ended yesterday. We got top marks," she adds, almost as an afterthought. "Well, in everything except one."

She shouldn't have worried. By all reports, the Portland PRIMUS base deserves the numerous accolades bestowed upon it. Despite bitter early opposition from environmentalists, the base was built with local materials, many of them recycled. Constructed on what was once a polluted morass on the banks of the Willamette River, PRIMUS has spearheaded a cleanup operation to make even Portland's homegrown environmentalists proud.

And that doesn't even begin to touch the crime statistics. Paranormal crime down forty-five percent. VIPER activity diminished to almost nothing. Assistance rendered to both the Seattle, San Francisco, and Denver bases didn't even put a dent in Portland's efficiency.

With that kind of record, what isn't Portland doing well? I ask my guide.

She mumbles something about dog hair, and then points at a sailboat on the river, changing the subject.

– PRIMUS' Portland Triumph
by Kent Anderson
in *The Washington Post*.

The base itself is a beautiful structure, designed by a local architectural firm and located on the west bank of the Willamette River in southwest Portland. To minimize land use, agents utilize a parking structure beneath the base. PRIMUS, bowing to pressure from environmentalists, also reconstructed wetlands nearby. On clear days, agents have a picture-perfect view of Mount Hood to the east, and in the summer, agents and staffers will go water-skiing during their lunch breaks.

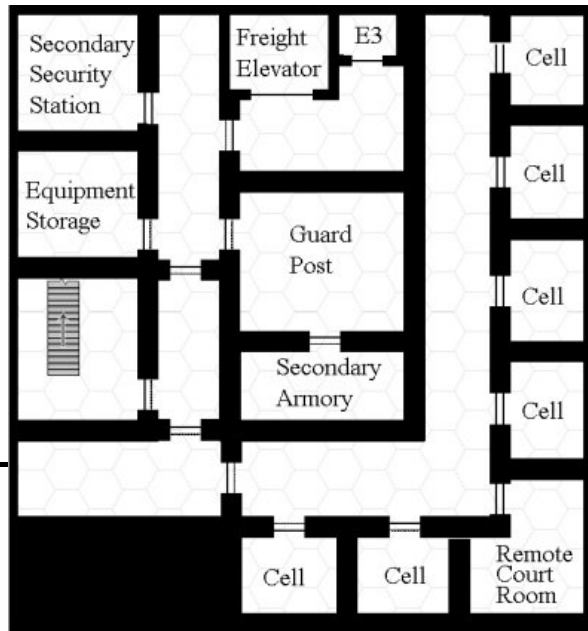
artwork by DT Butchino
maps by Lisa Hartjes

DIGITAL HERO #6

Most locals now approve of PRIMUS' presence – the Portland base faced serious opposition when it was announced, and because of that has worked twice as hard to win over the community. Each PRIMUS agent is given a full week of paid time to spend volunteering, and are encouraged to take advantage of it. Avenger Kestler sits on the board of both the Portland Opera and SOLV, an environmental group, and is an animal rights activist. Base Commander Ross is a vegetarian and proponent of making bicycle travel safer in the Portland community.

PORTLAND BASE LAYOUT

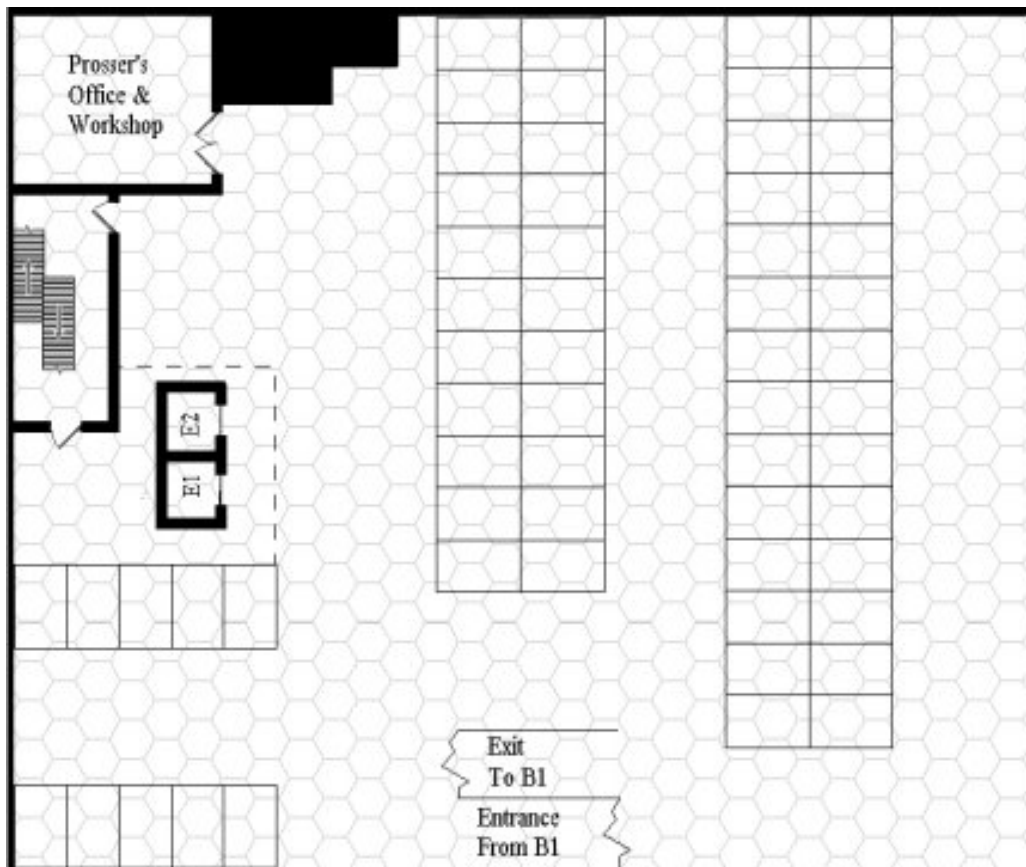
Basement 3: The lowest level of the PRIMUS base is accessible only to those with specific need, and is monitored at all times. Paranormal villains are kept in holding cells on this level, and closed circuit television is available for remote court appearances. Accessible only from inside the building, agents must have card access and be signed in by the agent on duty in order to speak to prisoners.



HOLD IT!

PRIMUS' holding cells, in the lowest basement level of the base, are used by local law enforcement as well as the federal agency. The closed circuit television connections can be used via the federal and county courthouses when the courts have decided that it is in the public's interest to conduct proceedings via remote control.

Basement 2: The lowest level to allow vehicle access, this level provides overflow parking. This level is monitored by video cameras at all time. Parking usually fills up the fastest by the elevator banks, and reserved places are awarded to employees-of-the-month.



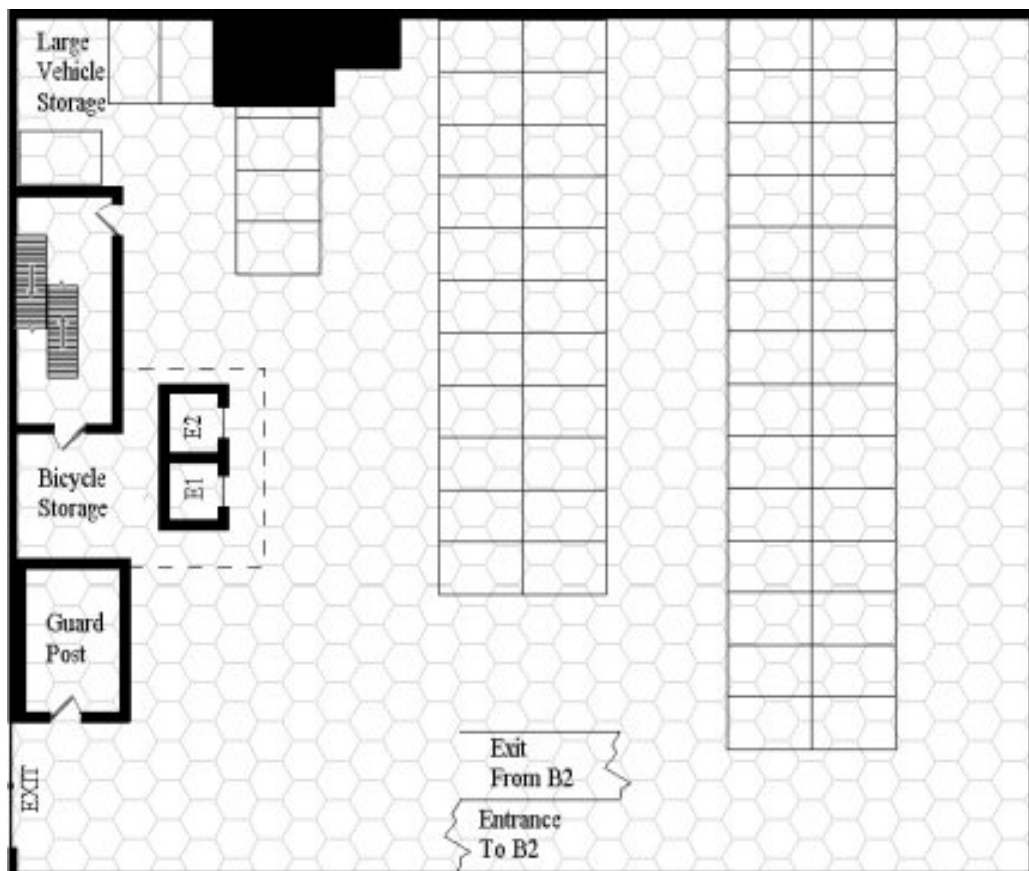
Basement 1:

Access to the basement levels is restricted by guards and gates: only PRIMUS personnel are permitted to drive into the parking areas in Basement Level 1. Bicycle parking is located on this level, and a pool of bikes is available to agents wanting to take advantage of nearby riverside paths during their lunch breaks. Large vehicles, such as the transport vehicle Sherman, are stored here. This level is monitored by video cameras at all times.

Level 1: Visitors enter the PRIMUS base on this level. A large reception station, flanked by two armed assault agents and manned by a

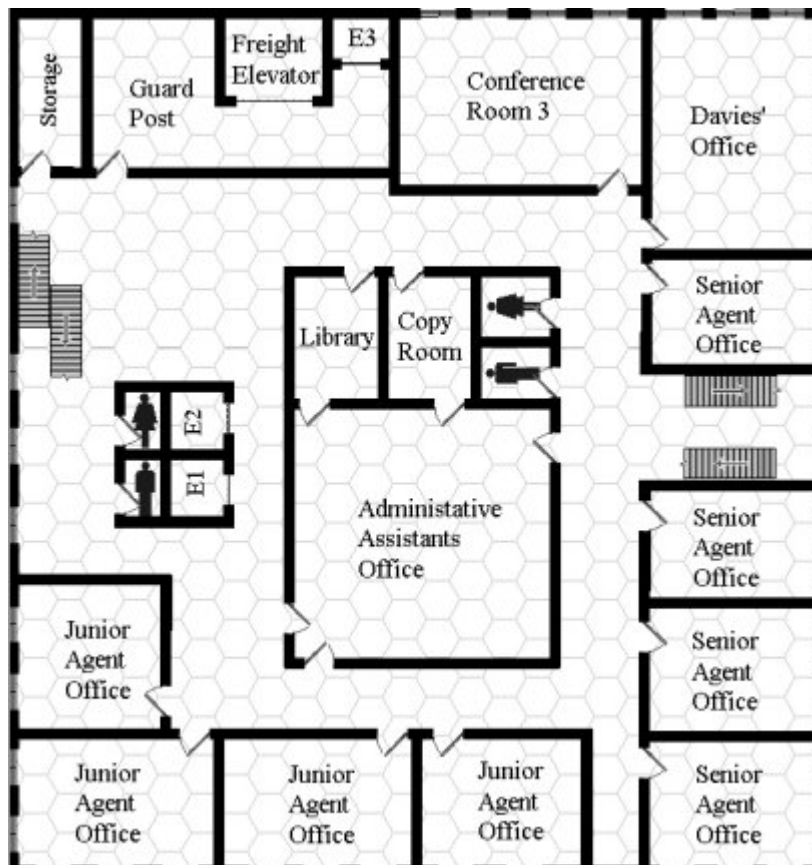
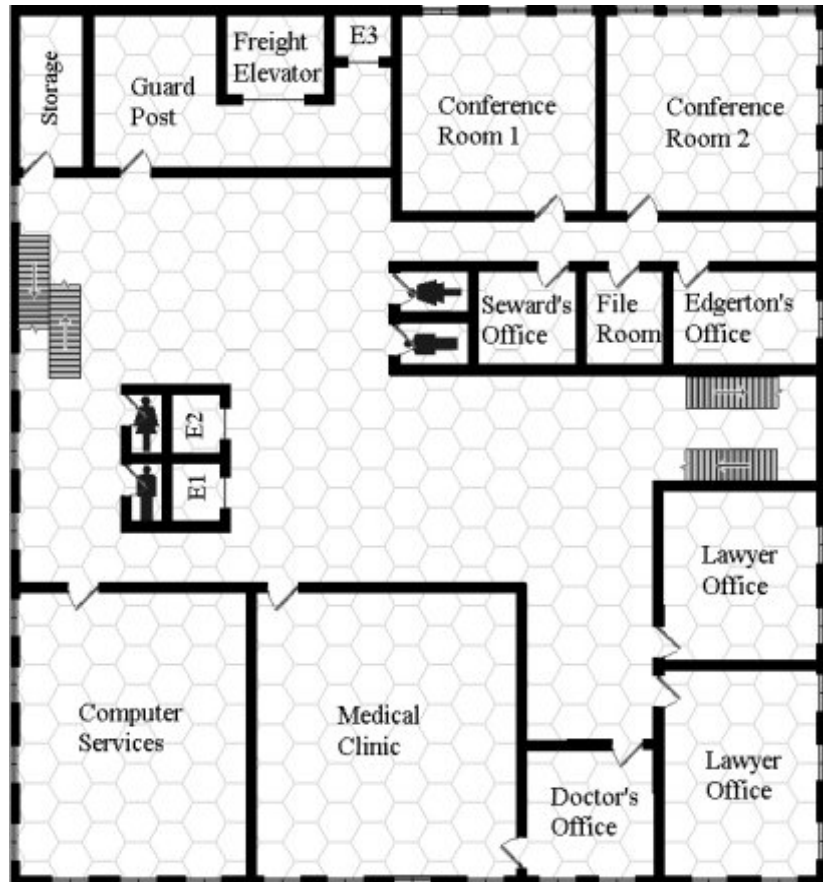
receptionist is the first thing visitors see after passing through the main entrance.

After a visitor is checked in and meets his escort, he'll pass through a door and into the large lobby. This level houses the cafeteria (complete with a small, but fully stocked, Starbucks stand), agent lounge areas, and exercise rooms. The base "Danger Room" complex is accessed from Level 1. Routine deliveries are made at a loading dock on Level 1.

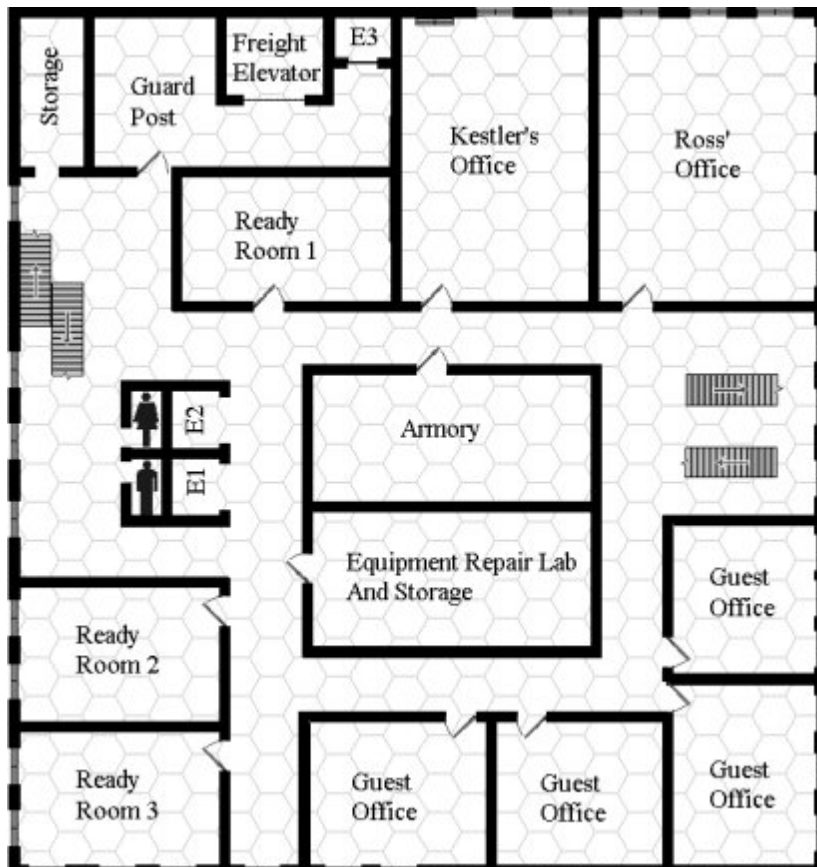


DIGITAL HERO #6

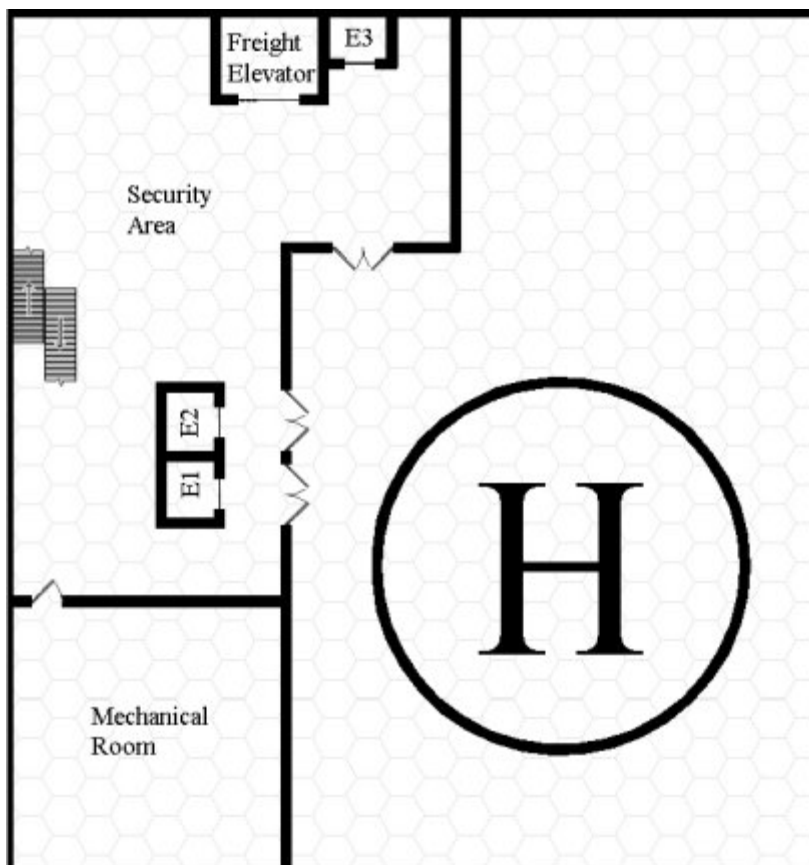
Level 2: Level 2 houses Human Resources, Computing Services, the physician's office, the medical clinic (capable of handling everything from flu shots to severe traumas), and the lawyers (each base has one or two). Access points on this level – the stairs, elevators, and exterior windows – are monitored with video cameras.



Level 3: Senior intelligence agents have windowed offices with river views, while the junior agents share smaller offices that look out on the freeway. In addition to the intelligence agents, a number of administrative assistants work on this level. Access points on this level – the stairs, elevators, and exterior windows – are monitored with video cameras.



Level 4: Assault agents rarely let their intelligence counterparts forget that *they* get the top floor of the base. Intelligence agents usually shoot back that it's only because the assault agents and Iron Guard need to be ready to leave at a moment's notice. Either way, squads of agents are always on call in ready rooms on Level 4, and a fully fueled transport helicopter waits on the landing pad on the building's roof. The Base Commander and Silver Avenger also have their offices on the fourth floor, and several vacant offices are located here for the use of visiting dignitaries. Roof access, stairs, elevators, and exterior windows are monitored with video cameras. Armed guards are also stationed on the roof.



OTHER BASES

Denver

Like the Portland Base, the Denver PRIMUS base faced fierce grassroots opposition. Unfortunately, it's not had quite the same success in winning over the populace – several botched operations resulted in the first Base Commander's retirement after only six months of service. Adding to local woes, the Silver Avenger, Charles Pifke, was severely injured by VIPER not long after his appointment, and was out of commission for the better part of a month while recovering. Still, PRIMUS remains hopeful that the new commander, Zack Kingston, will turn things around.

Avenger Pifke joined PRIMUS in the early 1990s, and served in Los Angeles and Miami before his promotion. After his injury, he began rock climbing as a way to regain his confidence, and it's become a passion. With his encouragement, the base built a practice wall, and Avenger and staffers alike take advantage of it.

Las Vegas

Most PRIMUS bases employ more intelligence agents than assault agents for the simple reason that there's more investigation work than a need for combat-ready agents. But at the Vegas base, there are *five times* more intelligence agents! Many of these participate in VIPER investigations, and others focus on the paranormals who come to town to steal from the casinos.

The Silver Avenger in Las Vegas is Emma Bennett, an African-American woman in her early thirties. Bennett's an accomplished jazz singer, and recorded two CDs of songbook standards while she was assigned to the New York base. She and Avenger Martinez are close friends.

Millennium City

Millennium City is one of the nation's largest bases, with a combined force of nearly a hundred assault and intelligence agents. It's also become a hub for training and the PRIMUS rumor mill has it that the PRIMUS Academy will relocate there within the next few years.

The Silver Avenger in Millennium City is Austen Burney. An assault agent with ten years' experience, Burney was Avenger Richardson's team leader in Hudson City for the five years prior to his appointment. Rumor has it that he is also the only person to have ever beaten that avenger in a chess game. Burney is a handsome man in his late thirties, and was recently divorced.

PORTLAND BASE PERSONNEL

My guide's comment about dog hair makes sense now. Immediately I notice the dogs. A Newfoundland sprawls near the reception desk, where a dour-faced woman hands me a visitor's badge. An armored assault agent nods at us as he leads a black Lab on a leash toward the doors.

I ask my guide, and she laughs, kneeling to pet the Newfie. "Oh, the dogs. It's great, isn't it? Some are drug dogs or search and rescue, but most of them aren't. We have a dog-friendly policy here – a lot of the agents bring them in and take them for runs along the river at lunch."

This certainly wasn't in the packet Kitty Cochrane's office sent me before I flew out to Portland. I ask, Are all bases dog-friendly?

She shakes her head. "It's individualized. San Francisco is dog friendly, but Vegas isn't. I heard that the Golden Avenger brings his dog in with him to work at PRIMUS Main in Washington, but that they don't let anyone else. Oh – um, just make sure you don't laugh at the Base Commander's."

She doesn't explain why, but twenty minutes later, I understand – the base commander, a man of over six feet and as well-built as any Avenger, sits with a teacup poodle sprawled in his lap, asleep while he works on his computer.

– *PRIMUS' Portland Triumph*
by Kent Anderson
in *The Washington Post*

PRIMUS ARMORY

PRIMUS Sample
Equipment: Assault
Armor

Agents draw equipment directly from PRIMUS' equipment lockers (in gaming terms, they don't pay Character Points). Instead, agents utilize a brownie-point system, which allows them to draw equipment depending on their standing in the organization.

PRIMUS assault agents must wear either the standard or reinforced armor into combat situations. The standard suit is lighter and is used most frequently by newer agents. Additionally, intelligence agents who must suit up for combat situations usually wear the assault armor standard option.

Standard Assault
Armor

The armor used by the vast majority of PRIMUS assault agents has been upgraded in recent years. The newer armor uses ceramic plate inserts to protect vital areas and Kevlar throughout. The helmet is composed of composite material and is tough, yet lightweight; it features IR, UV, and encrypted communications.

PRIMUS ARMORY

Agents can pull down key information regarding paranormals from the PRIMUS satellite network using the comm. system.

PRIMUS Armor:

Armor (4 PD/4 ED); OIF (-½)

plus

Reinforced

Titanium-

Ceramic Plating:

Armor (4 PD/4 ED); Activation 11- (-1), OIF (-½)

plus

Helmet Sensory

Suite: UV

Vision; Fragile

OAF (-1¼)

plus

IR Vision; Fragile

OAF (-1¼)

plus

High Range Radio

Hearing, Invisible

Power Effects

(+½); Fragile OAF

(-1¼)

Total Cost: 25

Reinforced Assault Armor

The reinforced armor is used by agents knowing they're going up against heavy hitters. The reinforced armor is worn instead of the standard assault armor (armor cannot be "stacked"), and is preferred by experienced agents. The primary difference between standard and reinforced armor is heavier Kevlar and a titanium alloy coating on the ceramic plates.

**Silver Avenger Terry Kestler**

Background/History: A collegiate gymnast, Terry Kestler was recruited into PRIMUS directly from Stanford, where she earned a degree in accounting. She rapidly rose through the ranks to become Silver Avenger Maria Chow's assistant, and kept her easy going attitude and sense of humor throughout the experience.

Kestler's promotion to Avenger was a shock to her – she didn't even apply (Maria Chow submitted the application in her name), but she was delighted. When she was accepted to the Avenger program, she was only twenty-eight.

Terry completed Avenger training before the base was completed in 2001, and operated out of a temporary office for the better part of a year, conducting investigations on her own. She's only hired two agents so far for her Avenger team, and maintains tight oversight over their investigations in her name. PRIMUS observers believe that in time (and as she gets busier), she'll loosen up.

Personality/Motivation: Terry's not a questioner. (In fact, her personnel file has a confidential note from a staff psychiatrist that says "Kestler is probably the best adjusted Avenger we have.") She's happy to be doing an important job that she likes, and doesn't experience much angst about it. She's secure enough in who she is that she can laugh off unjustified criticisms of herself or PRIMUS, but if she senses an opportunity to educate people about the agency's mission, she'll do so.

She does have triggers. For example, she's loyal to her friends – she may be able to tell Agent Davies (below) that she needs to loosen up, but if someone complains *about* Davies to her, she'll defend her friend. And everyone's learned not to complain about Maria Chow's excesses to her!

The PRIMUS rumor mill has linked her romantically in the past to Avenger Gray (Los Angeles) and Avenger Webster (Fort Worth), but if the rumors are true, she's never let on.

Powers/Tactics: Terry is a thoughtful combatant. Her knowledge of paranormals is impressive, but when she's faced with an unknown opponent, she'll usually try to take them out at range. She's an accomplished, graceful hand-to-hand combatant, however, and will often surprise her opponents with gymnastic moves.

Appearance: Terry is a tall woman with naturally blonde hair. She cut her trademark ponytail when she was promoted to Avenger, and keeps it closely cropped. She retains a youthful appearance, aided by a bright smile.

Campaign Use: For higher-powered games, increase Avenger Kestler's SPD to 6 and increase her PD and ED to 25; add -5 Lack of Weakness and 10 points of Power Defense. For lower powered games, reduce her SPD to 4 and decrease her PD and ED to 10. Don't forget that Avengers, just like agents, utilize PRIMUS equipment.



Silver Avenger Terry Kestler

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	30	13-	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 HTH [2]
21	DEX	36	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
15	CON	10	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
16	COM	3	12-	
15	PD	17		Total: 15 PD (0 rPD)
15	ED	19		Total: 15 ED (0 rPD)
5	SPD	29		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	2		
30	END	0		
32	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 171

Movement: Running: 9"/18"
Swimming: 2"/4"
Leaping: 5"/10"

Cost	Powers	END
6	<i>Athletic:</i> Running +3" (9" Total)	2

Martial Arts: Commando Training

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Boxing Cross	+0	+2	7d6
3 Aikido Throw	+0	+1	5d6+v/5
4 Karate Chop	-2	+0	1d6+1 HKA
5 Choke Hold	-2	+0	Grab, 2d6 NND
4 Judo Disarm	-1	+1	35 STR Disarm
4 Kung Fu Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort

Perks

3 Federal/National Police Powers

Skills

- 10 +2 with Hand-To-Hand Combat
15 +3 with Ranged Combat
- 2 AK: Portland 11-
2 AK: SF Bay Area 11-
3 Breakfall 13-
2 KS: Accounting 11-
3 KS: Criminal Organizations 13-
2 KS: Paranormals & Their Powers 11-
3 KS: PRIMUS 13-
3 Paramedic 13-
2 PS: Accountant 11-
4 PS: Gymnast 14-
5 PS: PRIMUS Agent 15-
3 Tactics 13-
2 WF: Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 94**Total Cost: 265****100+ Disadvantages**

- 5 Hunted: PRIMUS 8- (As Pow, NCI, Watching, Mild)
5 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (As Pow, Watching, Harsh)
15 Hunted: VIPER 8- (As Pow, NCI)
0 Normal Characteristics Maxima
10 Psychological Limitation: Control Freak (Common, Moderate)
15 Psychological Limitation: PRIMUS Code (Common, Strong)
10 Reputation: Protects innocents, 11-
5 Rivalry: Avenger Webster (Professional)
15 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Frequently, Greatly)
15 Vulnerability: 1½× Effect from Poisons and Toxins (Very Common)
70 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 265**PRIMUS ARMORY**

There are limited reinforced suits available, and are distributed on a seniority basis.

PRIMUS Heavy

Armor: Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-½)

plus*Reinforced**Titanium-**Ceramic Plating:*

Armor (4 PD/4

ED); Activation

11- (-1), OIF (-½)

plus*Helmet Sensory**Suite:* UV

Vision; Fragile

OAF (-1¼)

plus

IR Vision; Fragile

OAF (-1¼)

plus

High Range Radio

Hearing, Invisible

Power Effects

(+½); Fragile OAF

(-1¼)

Total Cost: 33

PRIMUS WEAPONRY

PSG-2 Heavy Assault Blaster Pistol

The heavier version of PRIMUS' blaster pistol is less reliable, though it delivers a substantially stronger kick. Clips hold fewer charges, and because of this, agents carry twice as many clips.

Heavy Blaster Pistol: EB 12d6; OAF (-1), Activation 14-(-½), 8 Charges with 4 Clips (-¼) STR Min 15 (-¾)
Total Cost: 17

SP-4 Net Gun

Carried by one member of an assault team, the net gun releases a large, weighted net, which tightens around its target on impact. The net is composed of a tough, treated nylon.

Net Gun: Entangle 5d6, 5 DEF; OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1)
Total Cost: 17

MAIN PORTLAND PERSONALITIES

The Base Commander

Base Commander Sloan Ross is a tall, thin man in his forties, kept in incredible shape by both his vegan diet and daily bike rides. One of the few Base Commanders to rise from the ranks of the assault agents, he's well-respected by the agents stationed at the Portland base. Twice married and once divorced, he lives with his wife and son in Northeast Portland.



Avenger Kestler's Agent Team

Though there are only two members of Avenger Kestler's personal team so far, Martina Rosenblum (the dark-haired guide mentioned in the narrative) and Bill Wadner, they've already made quite a mark for themselves in local operations.

Bill Wadner

Bill Wadner, an intelligence agent who started his career at the New Orleans base, is 5'11", with brown hair and hazel eyes. He's stockier than he ought to be, but it hasn't interfered with his physical evaluations (yet). He plays in a local garage band, and can often be found on the weekends playing at one brewpub or another.



Martina Rosenblum

Martina Rosenblum was selected by Avenger Kestler because she reminded her so much of herself when she first started. Educated at a top-rate school, Martina chose to join PRIMUS because of the potential for investigation. However, like Kestler, she is Cyberline-tolerant and was persuaded to go through the assault agent training. She spent the first four years of her career in Los Angeles. Martina is 5'5", and has black hair and brown eyes.

Hero Liaison Agents

A pretty, dark-haired woman rushes by us in the hallway. She greets my guide with a smile and a nod, but her brown eyes regard me warily. When she is gone, I ask my guide who she is.

“Agent Davies,” she explains. “She’s a hero team liaison – kind of skeptical of new people.” She shrugs. By now, I’ve learned that my guide is an assault agent, fully capable of breaking my arm with little effort. “But I guess when you have to deal with paranormals every day, you need to be on your guard.”

– PRIMUS’ *Portland Triumph*,
by Kent Anderson
in *The Washington Post*

Recently PRIMUS’ new attitude toward paranormals has included a radical departure from years past – introduction of a new type of intelligence agent. After years of frustration in seeing villains let off on technicalities because of “meddling” hero teams, PRIMUS created the hero team liaison division. These agents work closely with hero teams to ensure the teams follow the law in apprehending paranormals. In several cases, the agents are treated as members of the teams.

For the agents, it’s a difficult position to be in. Their ultimate loyalty, of course, is to the agency, but by interacting closely with the hero teams, they become deeply sympathetic to the members and the difficulties they face. Not surprisingly, PRIMUS selects these agents based on their very high degree of loyalty to the agency – and more often than not, this will mean friction between the agent and the team. Still, PRIMUS considers the program a success, and is busy training more liaison agents to work with hero teams.



Agent Commander Jake O’Sheehan

Background/History: O’Sheehans are cops – they have been since the family arrived from Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century, and Jake O’Sheehan’s father, brother, and brother-in-law are all San Francisco police officers.

But Jake did things a little differently – it would be too much to say he rebelled, but he didn’t follow the path his father chose for him. An accomplished amateur photographer as a high school student, Jake attended USC and studied film. One of his projects in his last year was a documentary about Avenger Joseph Gray... and he was bitten by the O’Sheehan bug.

Fascinated by the gadgetry and by the differences between the styles of federal and local law enforcement, Jake decided to apply for a job after he graduated. To his surprise, he was Cyberline-compatible – and he became the first O’Sheehan in PRIMUS.

But he’s not the last. Since joining PRIMUS, Jake’s managed to convince his sister and a cousin to join PRIMUS, too. His sister, also Cyberline-compatible, is an assault agent in St. Louis.

Personality/Motivation: Jake is usually an easy-going guy, but he has a temper. Agents who’ve worked with him for some time know not to push him in certain areas and to never, ever, attempt to sneak up on him. He doesn’t handle surprises well.

Powers/Tactics: Jake loves the latest and greatest in PRIMUS gear, and over the years, he’s managed to persuade The Powers That Be to let him be one of the field agents, testing new equipment. Very often, he’ll put his heavy blaster pistol aside to try a new tangler or stunner.

Appearance: With brown hair, green eyes, and a spray of freckles across his nose, the thirty-seven year old agent commander looks much younger. He’s handsome and well-built, though not very tall at 5’9”. When he’s not wearing his PRIMUS uniform, he wears jeans or khaki pants and Polo shirts.

PRIMUS WEAPONRY

HW-S1 Stun Baton

An impressive looking weapon, the stun baton is two feet long, and glows a brilliant blue-white. Popularized by Silver Avenger Chow, who uses the baton with fencing moves, it is actually a recent addition to the PRIMUS standard arsenal.

STUN Baton:

Drain STUN 6d6,
Recover 5 points
per minute (+1/4);
OAF (-1), 8
Charges (-1/2),
STR Min 10 (-3/4)

Total Cost: 25

SP-2 Flash Bombs

A commonly carried device, flash bombs release an intense magnesium flare, which temporarily blinds the enemy. The flash created here is about 20 feet in diameter.

Flash Bombs:

Sight Group
Flash 5d6,
Explosion (-1
DC/2") (+3/4),
Armor Piercing
(+1/2); OAF (-1),
2 Charges (-1/2),
Range Based on
STR (-1/4)

Total Cost: 15

Agent Commander Jake O'Sheehan

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH [2]
21	DEX	36	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
15	CON	10	12-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
14	COM	2	12-	
5	PD	1		Total: 5 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	0		Total: 3 ED (0 rPD)
4	SPD	9		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
7	REC	0		
30	END	0		
33	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 93

Movement: Running: 8"/16"
Swimming: 2"/4"
Leaping: 4"/8"

Cost Powers **END**
4 *Athletic:* Running +2" (8" Total) 2

Martial Arts: Commando Training

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Boxing Cross	+0	+2	6d6
3 Aikido Throw	+0	+1	4d6+v/5
4 Karate Chop	-2	+0	1d6+1 HKA
5 Choke Hold	-2	+0	Grab, 2d6 NND
4 Judo Disarm	-1	+1	30 STR Disarm
4 Kung Fu Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort

Perks

3 Federal/National Police Powers

Skills

5 +1 with Hand-To-Hand Combat
5 +1 with Ranged Combat

2 AK: Portland 11-
3 Breakfall 13-
3 KS: Criminal Organizations 12-
2 KS: Filmmaking 11-
2 KS: Paranormals & Their Powers 11-
3 KS: PRIMUS 12-
3 Paramedic 13-
2 PS: Filmmaker 11-
3 PS: PRIMUS Agent 12-
3 Tactics 13-
2 WF: Small Arms

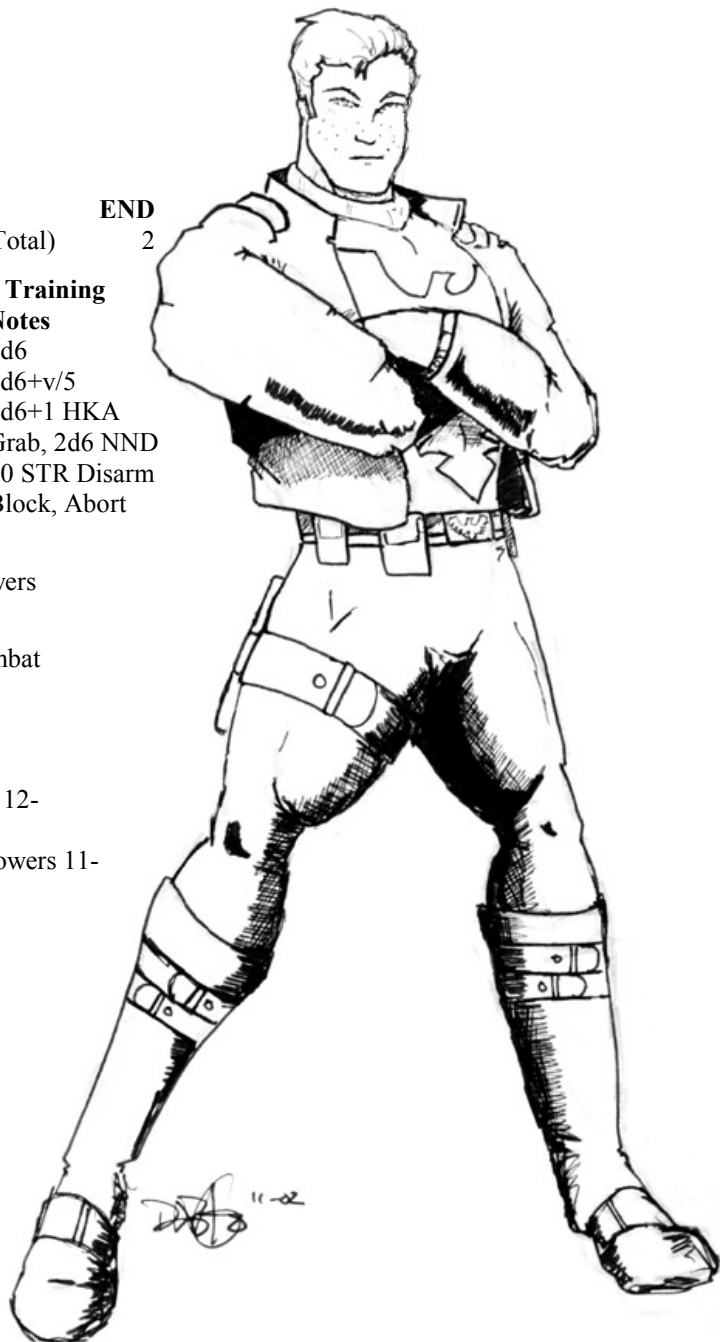
Total Powers & Skills Cost: 69

Total Cost: 162

75+ Disadvantages

5 Hunted: PRIMUS 8- (As Pow, NCI, Watching, Mild)
10 DNPC: Rotating Visiting Family Member 8- (Normal)
0 Normal Characteristics Maxima
15 Psychological Limitation: PRIMUS Code (Common, Strong)
10 Reputation: Protects innocents, 11-
15 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Frequently, Greatly)
15 Vulnerability: 1½× Effect from Poisons and Toxins (Very Common)
17 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 162



Other Portland Personalities

Keith Seward, Health Administrator

A tall, bearded man in his early forties, Seward isn't a doctor – he's a nurse, and handles the usual confusion with humor. When PRIMUS employees have extended absences for health reasons, Seward's office supervises returning them to duty. He also contracts with local physicians, both general practitioners and specialists, to treat PRIMUS employees.



Marcia Edgerton, Human Resources

Despite an office plastered with Dilbert cartoons featuring Catbert, Marcia Edgerton is as kind a person as anyone could hope for in an HR office. She's efficient but overworked, and usually eats her lunches at her desk.



Matt Prosser, Vehicle Specialist

No one knows PRIMUS vehicles like Matt Prosser – just ask him! Of course, you'd better make sure you have time to spare if you stop to chat, because with his office located in Basement Level 2, he's often starved for human companionship. Still, he's a nice guy – if a little needy – and is willing to help out any member of the PRIMUS team in getting their car started.



Agent Beth Davies



PRIMUS GADGETRY

Undercover Armor PRIMUS

intelligence agents are required to wear this armor when they're in the field. Lighter and more flexible than Kevlar, this lightweight, gray mesh, fits under loose clothing (it cannot be easily worn underneath assault armor). The armor can be customized to fit under dresses, and in extreme cases, clothing can be lined with the mesh.

Undercover Armor: Armor (5 PD/5 ED); IIF (-1/4)

Total Cost: 12

Shock Ring

One of the best kept secrets in the PRIMUS arsenal, the shock ring looks like a college ring, with a deep blue stone that looks like a sapphire, but is instead an energy crystal. The ring delivers a powerful shock, but can only be used four times. The user must land the ring's crystal squarely on an exposed surface, hence the activation.

Shock Ring: EB 6d6, NND (versus insulated/hardened defenses or not being grounded; +1); OIF (-1/2), No Range (-1/2), 4 Expendable Charges (-1 1/2), Activation 14- (-1/2)

Total Cost: 16

PRIMUS GADGETRY

Spider

The spider is a small robot about 3” long, equipped with sensors and a one-shot electrical retribution charge. It is controlled through a wrist console. Use of the Spider constitutes the use of a wiretap, and requires a court order. Otherwise, information obtained through its use is not admissible in court.

Characteristics

-5 STR 18 DEX
3 CON 1 BODY
1 INT 0 EGO
0 PRE 0 COM
1 PD 1 ED
4 SPD 0 REC
0 END 0 STUN

Notes: *Electrical Charge:* RKA 2d6, Area Of Effect One Hex; No Range, 1 Charge, Jammed on 14-; Automaton: Takes Only BODY; *Minute Size:* + 10 DCV; Radio Listen & Transmit; Eidetic Memory; Bump of Direction; 7” Running at 0 END; Clinging; Concealment 23-, Self Only (-½); Stealth 23-

Disadvantages:

Distinctive Features: Mechanical Spider (Not Concealable); Physical Limitation: Minute Size (1/32 human size); Vulnerability: 2x BODY from Electrical Attacks.

Character Cost: 16



Agent Beth Davies

Background/History:

Elizabeth (“Beth”) Davies has PRIMUS in her blood. Her father was one of the very first assault agents, and her mother still is a PRIMUS attorney. Beth’s earliest memories, of her father in his armor and walking the cool, air-conditioned hallways of the St. Louis PRIMUS base with her mother on a rare visit, are her most cherished.

In 1985, when Beth was ten, DEMON attacked the St. Louis PRIMUS base, and Beth’s father was among those killed. Though her mother transferred to Seattle, hoping the change would be good for Beth’s emotional recovery, it was not long afterwards that Beth decided that when she was old enough, she would pick up her father’s mantle and defend America from the dangerous legions of power-mad paranormals.

Always an athletic child, Beth pushed herself in soccer and in martial arts. By the time she entered college at seventeen, her trophies covered every available shelf in her mother’s home.

Beth attended the University of Washington and graduated magna cum laude with a degree in engineering, just as her father had. But, to her mother’s shock, Beth didn’t look for an ordinary job – instead, she joined PRIMUS. The background check was a mere formality; Beth’s credentials were perfect. PRIMUS recruiting agents knew what Beth did – the child of a Cyberline-tolerant person is 99% guaranteed to be Cyberline tolerant, too.

Beth was among the one percent who wasn’t compatible with the process.

She was crushed. She hadn’t wanted to become an intelligence agent, to rest on her laurels while others did the fighting for her. She wanted to avenge her father. How could she do that as an intelligence agent?

Still, she wasn’t going to back out now – she knew PRIMUS was her calling. She breezed through intelligence training; paranormal law was something she’d grown up hearing about over the dinner table. When she graduated from the Academy, she was given her first choice of assignment, and she went back to Seattle.

Quickly she achieved a reputation as a gutsy risk-taker among the Intelligence Agents. A less talented woman would have gotten herself killed, but Beth continued to push herself, earning commendations and awards. In 2000, she was named Agent of the Year.

It wasn’t what she’d wanted, but she made her peace with it. But when PRIMUS told Beth she was to be assigned as liaison to a newly formed Portland hero team, Beth was shocked – and horrified. She thought of it as a demotion, that the Base Commander didn’t think she was doing her job. Only after being persuaded that it

was an honor – and not an insult – did Beth accept.

Personality/Motivation: Though she will modestly call herself an “ordinary” intelligence agent, Beth is anything but. She pushes herself physically and takes unnecessary risks. She’s not in it for glory, though she relishes the attention her exploits have brought her, but for the satisfaction she gets in knowing she’s saved the day.

She’s also a naïve young woman. She never rebelled, not even as a teenager, and she believes completely in the mission of PRIMUS. She thinks all paranormals, even heroes, will eventually show their true, selfish colors. Not surprisingly, she can be a difficult person to get to know – but if the heroes are persistent, she’ll become a formidable ally.

Beth has little experience with men, and doesn’t socialize much with other agents. However, Avenger Terry Kestler is one of Beth’s closest friends – the women went through the PRIMUS Academy together – though the two couldn’t be more opposite. Kestler gives people the benefit of the doubt, while Beth waits for people to prove themselves to her.

Powers/Tactics: What Beth doesn’t know is that she *is* Cyberline tolerant. But when her mother learned of her intention – to join PRIMUS as an assault agent – she pulled strings in the organization. It’s a mark of how powerful Rose Davies is that she succeeded in convincing the agent-hungry agency to lie to Beth. (She’d thought her daughter would give up on the PRIMUS dream and live a normal life, but she ought to have known better.) The secret is only known by Rose Davies and one or two members of the medical team at the PRIMUS Academy.

If Beth learned the truth, she wouldn’t rest until she went through the Cyberline process – and it would also likely destroy her relationship with her mother.

In combat, Beth is brave, but she’s not stupid. She will try to disable opponents at range before closing with them in a hand-to-hand setting.

Appearance: Beth is a pretty young woman, 5’8” and willowy, with long, curly brown hair and eyes. Her ordinary “blank” expression is a very intense, and sometimes troubled, look.

DIGITAL HERO #6

Agent Beth Davies

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
15	CON	10	12-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
13	EGO	6	12-	ECV: 5
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
18	COM	4	13-	
5	PD	2		Total: 5 (0 rPD)
5	ED	2		Total: 5 (0 rED)
4	SPD	10		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	0		
30	END	0		
29	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 91

Movement: Running: 7"/14"
Swimming: 2"/4"
Leaping: 3"/6"

Cost Powers **END**
2 *Athletic:* Running +1" (7" Total) 1

Perks

3 Federal/National Police Powers

Skills

8 +4 with PRIMUS Blaster

- 3 Acrobatics 13-
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 Bugging 13-
- 1 CK: Portland 8-
- 2 CK: Seattle 11-
- 3 Combat Piloting 13-
- 3 Combat Driving 13-
- 3 Computer Programming 13-
- 3 Criminology 13-
- 3 Fast Draw 13-
- 7 Interrogation 15-
- 3 KS: Supervillains 13-
- 3 KS: Paranormals & The Law 13-
- 3 KS: PRIMUS 13-
- 2 Language: Spanish (Fluent Conversation)
- 3 Paramedic 13-
- 3 PS: PRIMUS Agent 13-
- 2 PS: PRIMUS Gadgeteer 11-
- 3 Security Systems 13-
- 2 SS: Engineer 11-
- 1 SS: Physics 8-
- 3 Tactics 13-
- 3 Teamwork 13-
- 2 TF: PRIMUS Vehicles
- 2 WF: Common Melee Weapons
- 2 WF: Small Arms

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 84

Total Cost: 175

75+ Disadvantages

- 15 Hunted: DEMON 8- (As Powerful, NCI)
- 10 Hunted: PRIMUS Powers-that-Be 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching, Harsh)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Obeys Orders of Superiors (Very Common, Moderate)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Code Against Killing (Common, Strong)
- 5 Rivalry: Assault Agent (Professional)
- 15 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Frequently, Greatly)
- 25 Experience Points

Total Cost: 175

PRIMUS GADGETRY

PSG-4 Holdout Pistol

This is a small, short-range pistol designed for agents who have lost their primary blaster or are engaged in undercover work. It is hidden inside the belt.

Holdout Pistol:

RKA 1d6+1; 4

Charges (-1),

OAF (-1), STR

Min 7 (-¾)

Total Cost: 5



Fantasy Hero Character Building by Chris Farris

“Whaddya mean, my character isn’t balanced?” or “Man, am I tired of killing everything I see!” How often are these phrases used in the beginning of your campaigns? If your answer was “a lot,” you may find this article useful. Limiting how many Character Points that a player can spend on Characteristics can help fix campaigns that overemphasize combat. Simply limiting Characteristics will not completely solve a hack-and-slash campaign’s problems, though. More steps will have to be taken. Listed here are some GM tips, sample campaign limits, and alternate rules. Hopefully, these suggestions will help balance characters, and “flesh out” their backgrounds and history, to ultimately make your campaigns more enjoyable. Remember that fun is the name of the game. If hack-and-slash works for your group, leave your campaign as it is.

Characteristics are one of the main factors for combat in a heroic campaign. For this article, heroic characters are considered to be around the 150-point level. Without guidance, many players will spend most of their starting Character Points on Characteristics. Players may pump a lot of points into Characteristics like SPD, PD, ED, END, and STUN, and max out (20s) on all the other stats. This is unrealistic, and leads to PCs being too combat-heavy. The only scenarios a PC of this type will fit into are bloodbaths. Encounters that require skill and thought will elude a combat-heavy PC. Every player wants their PC to do well in combat, to the extent that some players focus on combat exclusively. Players may think that if they spend too many points on Skills, their fighting ability will be weak. Players and GMs must remember that combat isn’t the only element of an exciting and well-balanced campaign. A GM who sheds more light on a PC’s skills (especially at a critical moment or during melee) will let the players know that Characteristics are not the only factor in a combat encounter. A truly exciting and fun campaign will be balanced between combat, problem solving, and PC/NPC interaction.

Ultimately, the GM must decide if a balanced campaign is what he and his players want. If so, most of the responsibility lies with him, but not all. The GM will have to make skills more important, and set up new rules on how players can “roll up” new characters. The players can assist the GM by developing their PCs according to new guidelines that will balance them out more. Players and the GM should try new tactics during combat. Players should use combat tactics that involve their PCs’ Skills, and even Disadvantages, as often as possible. The GM is not excluded from this, and should use

different combat tactics for the NPCs, as well. The players must also get involved with the GM at the start of the campaign to let the GM know what kind of characters they wish to play. Together, the players and GM should decide if the PC concepts fit the campaign designs. The GM needs to use great effort to mold a PC into his campaign, and not dismiss the PC outright. The GM should give a player the chance to revise his PC to fit into the campaign. Allowing a player to revise his PC after the campaign begins (up to four playing sessions) will help the PC to better fit into the GM’s grand design. As GM, you should not be too controlling of the players, though. The ability to create whatever you can imagine (as long as it is within the rules) is the backbone of the *HERO System*. Campaigns that are already underway, and not going to use these alternate rules, could benefit from these suggestions as well.

GAMEMASTERING TIPS

Game Masters who wish to haul in the reins on an out-of-control hack-and-slash party should focus on the party’s skills and Disadvantages more in their campaigns. Players place a high value on the Character Points they spend on their PCs, so naturally a player places a high value on every Characteristic, skill, and Power that is bought. Players covet Experience Points and attempt to gain as many as possible. Every Experience Point is hard-earned, and spent with great care. After the initial character creation, the GM should not allow a PC to buy more Characteristics unless good reasons or actions are given. And no, bribes are not what I am getting at. Preferably, GMs should limit this type of buying to actions taken by the PC during roleplay – actions like receiving training from a guild, for Combat Skill Levels; lifting heavy objects on a regular basis, for STR; running while others ride animals. You get the picture. Experience Points spent in this manner will be more realistic and fun to play. Because GMs have an infinite amount of points to spend on the NPCs, not to mention the rest of the world, he might not place the same value on the points that his players do.

GMs can become “burned out” in their NPC creation, as well. Most of the time, the players kill the bad guys. If the GM put a lot of effort into the NPCs’ creation, the GM could get to a point where only an NPC’s combat abilities are important to him. This is another drawback to a hack-and-slash campaign. The GM will ultimately stop fleshing out the NPCs and pay

artwork by Jeff Ward

little to no attention to an NPC's Skills and Disadvantages. This could lead to the GM not paying as much attention to the PCs' Skills and Disadvantages as he should. It is important for the GM to focus not only on the PCs' Skills and Disadvantages, but the NPCs' as well. NPCs should be written up using the same methods, mainly trying to find the balance between Characteristics and Skills – even if they are killed off soon. Try creating combat encounters with NPCs who can be best defeated if the PCs use their skills rather than brute force. Tactics like these should be used against the PCs as well.

For example, John writes up a fighter. He details his fighter, Garixson, as a demon hunter, and goes through the normal character creation process. To help flesh out his character's background and make the PC more realistic, John buys a Knowledge Skill: "Demonic True Names." With this KS, John's PC, Garixson, could possibly gain an edge in an encounter with Vilkator the Demon Lord. On the other hand, Vilkator has purchased a contact in the demon hunter guild, and could place false information for Garixson to find. The possibilities are endless.

Giving NPCs special powers, like 100% Physical Damage Reduction (See page 95 *HERO System 5th Edition*) with the $-\frac{1}{2}$ Limitation "Only Versus Non-Magical Weapons," will motivate the PCs to think harder and longer before drawing steel, or the kind of steel they draw. Please note that this power is illegal, but can be made easily enough. Just double the base Resistant cost of 60 for 75% Reduction, to 120 base for 100%, then add any Limitations. Magical weapons and spells have normal effect, but non-magical weapons would be powerless. This power could be the motive of the campaign goal – for instance, a quest to find the enchanted blade that can kill Vilkator. NPCs with 100% Physical Damage Reduction should be given a Disadvantage that PCs might learn, by buying the necessary skills, and exploit, such as the Disadvantage Vulnerability 2x Effect from Holy Weapons (See Page 222 *HERO System 5th Edition*). Many Powers and Skills could also be used in this fashion. An example of this would be the power Absorption (See Page 88 *HERO System 5th Edition*). All the GM needs is a little imagination, and a copy of the *HERO System 5th Edition*.

CAMPAIGN GUIDELINES

Down to the nuts and bolts. To begin character creation the GM must set the campaign guidelines. In deciding what the guidelines will be, the GM needs to watch out not only for Characteristics but also for Skills that affect combat, namely Combat Skill Levels. Combat Skill Levels can have a tremendous impact on

encounters that go south, and using these alternate rules without giving thought to Combat Skill Levels could wreck your campaign. Special attention must also be paid to a PC's Disadvantages as well. In many cases, players take Disadvantages that complement their PC's background. For instance, a player might give his PC hideous facial scars he received while saving a damsel in distress. Some players like a little tragedy. All a GM has to do in a case like this is have an NPC comment or react to the PC's disfigurement in some way. By playing a PC's Disadvantages, the GM brings the PC's background into the campaign. Players who are on the receiving end of this will see that there is more to the campaign than fighting. The GM must keep in mind that even if some of the ideas that his players have are not important or exciting to him, they matter to the player who came up with them. If a GM does not play on a PC's Disadvantages, the player will feel that his or her ideas are unimportant. The player then has nowhere to turn other than combat. The GM may find that after playing the PC's ideas, he had more fun than he would have thought.

To further motivate players to create a well-balanced PC, the GM should set a limit for every character type, allowing PCs with good history/background to gain more points that can be spent on Characteristics. Limits on Combat Skill Levels should be based on character type. Also, fighter types should have a higher limit than a spell wielder for Combat Skill Levels and physical Characteristics.

For this example, we will use no more than 75 points of Disadvantages, and between 50 and 100 Base Points. The GM should set a maximum of 3 Combat Skill Levels for a fighter. Use the 2-point Combat Skill Level, because they give the PCs more options than the larger Combat Skill Levels. Two-point Combat Skill Levels do not make the PC as powerful with one weapon as the next. Fighters can buy up to three Combat Skill Levels in any number of different weapons.

For example, Dalan the forest elf wants to purchase 3 Levels with the longbow, and two Levels with bastard sword. To be able to buy additional levels for different weapons, 2 points are spent per Combat Skill Level, for a total of 6 points for 3 longbow Levels, and 4 points for 2 bastard sword Levels (See Page 36 *HERO System 5th Edition*). The next step in the process of balancing a character is to determine the starting Base Point level.

VARYING BASE POINT BEGINNING LEVEL

If all characters start at the same point level they can seem too alike, especially if players write up character types that are similar, i.e. two fighters in an adventuring party is likely to be

very closely matched. Fantasy novels are a good source for campaign ideas and character creation. The varying Base Point beginning level is based on the fact that most fantasy novel adventuring parties are of highly varying power levels. For example, *The Heroes of the Lance*, of the *Chronicles Trilogy* by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman and *The Companions of the Hall*, of the *Ice Wind Dale Trilogy*, by R. A. Salvatore. Drizzt, an amazing swordsman, was much more skilled and powerful than Regis was. Regis was a good thief, but could not compare to Drizzt. For you guys who have been with fantasy gaming since the Stone Age, just compare Gandalf and Bilbo. To help create a little more realism and uniqueness to your PCs and campaigns, use these alternate character generation rules and suggestions.

CHARACTER GENERATION RULES

The alternate character generation rules consist of a two-step process. Finding a Base Point level and the amount of Character Points that can be spent on Characteristics. This process should only begin after a player has decided on what he wants to play, “fleshes out,” and gets GM approval of their character. To best demonstrate this method, we will walk through character creation step-by-step until we have a fully completed character.

Example:

Darwin wants to play a dwarven

fighter.

He begins with background and history. Darwin names his dwarf Morak Forkbeard, the only surviving member of his family after an attack of a Cave Troll. Morak leaves his home and his people to become a caravan guard

because he feels responsible for the loss of his family and cannot bear the shame he feels in the presence of fellow dwarves. Darwin, with this basic but good beginning history, moves on to Morak's Disadvantages (See Page 211 of the *HERO System 5th Edition*). Darwin buys the following Disadvantages for Morak:

A Dwarven Package Deal should be created for Morak (See page 16 of the *HERO System 5th Edition*). The GM will have to help create any Package Deal, or at least set the guidelines for one, and give approval so the Package Deal will comply with the alternate rules. For this article, no Package Deal will be used, for simplicity's sake.

Distinctive Features: Dwarf (Concealable, Noticed). 10 points.
Psychological Limitation: Hatred of Trolls (Common, Strong). 15 points.
Psychological Limitation: Loves to Fight (Death Wish) (Common, Moderate). 10 points.
Psychological Limitation: Agoraphobia (Fear of Open Spaces) (Uncommon, Moderate). 5 points.
Psychological Limitation: Hypnophobia (Fear of Sleeping) (Uncommon, Moderate). 5 points.
Psychological Limitation: Survivor's Guilt (Plagued by Dreams) (Common, Moderate). 10 points.
Rivalry: Human Caravan Guards (Professional). 5 points.

Morak's total Disadvantages are 60 points. Now Darwin is ready to find out how many Base Points Morak starts at.

THE BASE POINT METHOD

The Base Point Method should be used for all character types, but the Characteristics spending limits will vary according to PC type, i.e. the limits are different for fighters and spell wielders. To begin, Darwin must determine his character's Base Point level using the Base Point Method. The alternate rules are designed for lower-powered heroes, ranging from 50-100 Base Points.



DIGITAL HERO #6

(Remember, up to 75 points can be added from Disadvantages, to bring the total Character Points to 125-175). For Darwin to find the exact beginning Base Points for Morak, he must roll a d100. The resulting percentage of 50 will then be added to the 50-point base.

Example: Darwin rolled 59 on his dice. He then multiplies 50 (the difference between 50 and 100 Base Points) by 0.59. $50 * 0.59 = 29.5$. Round 29.5 up to 30, in favor of the player. Now add this total to the 50-point Base. $30 + 50 = 80$. Morak has a Base of 80 points.

Darwin now adds Morak's Disadvantage total to his Base to find Morak's Character Point total. $80 + 60 = 140$. Darwin is now ready for step two – determining how many Character Points he can spend on Morak's Characteristics. Because Morak is a fighter type, he can spend from 50-75 points on Characteristics. To find the exact number of points he can spend, Darwin must again roll a d100. The resulting percentage will then be added to the 50-point base.

Example: Darwin rolls 95 on his dice. He then multiplies 25 (the difference between 50 and 75 Character Points) by 0.95. $25 * 0.95 = 23.75$. Round 23.75 up to 24, in favor of the player. Now add this total to the 50-point Base. $24 + 50 = 74$. Morak can spend up to 74 points on Characteristics.

Darwin spends the following points on Morak's Characteristics:

20 STR for 10 points (under common Dwarven Package Deals, a dwarf can have up to a maximum STR of 23). This is a perfect example of how a player wants to make his PC as combat worthy as possible. GMs must not let spending like this scare them; although Morak is very strong, he only has 64 more points to spend. Darwin cannot continue to purchase Characteristics at this rate, or soon he will run out of points, and be weak in other areas.

14 DEX for 12 points
16 CON for 12 points
15 BODY for 10 points
10 INT for 0 points
11 EGO for 2 points
10 PRE for 0 points
10 COM for 0 points
6 PD for 2 points
4 ED for 1 point
4 SPD for 16 points
8 REC for 2 points
34 END for 1 point
39 STUN for 6 points
Total 74

Darwin has maxed out Morak, and spent the total amount of points he can on Characteristics. As you can see, Morak is still very tough. These rules are not designed to totally kill combat, but to enhance the overall PC. Still, a common orc will be of much more concern. Again, this method will not solve all the problems of a combat-heavy game, but it will do a great deal to help. The varying point level also adds the element of chance back into character generation.

Now to finish up, Darwin buys the following Skills, Perks, and Talents.

Infrared Vision: for 5 points
Bump of Direction: (underground only) for 2 points
Contact: Caravan Boss for 3 points
KS: Dwarven History for 2 points
KS: Trolls for 2 points (part of history)
KS: Common Minerals for 2 points
KS: Stone Building Construction for 2 points
KS: Famous Dwarven Warriors for 2 points
Language: Common for 2 points
Language: Troll for 1 point
AK: Caverns Around Home for 2 points
AK: Trade Routes for 2 points
PS: Miner for 2 points
PS: Artisan for 2 points
PS: Armorer for 2 points
PS: Weaponsmith for 2 points
PS: Teamster for 2 points
PS: Caravan Guard for 2 points (part of history)
TF: Horses for 1 point
TF: Wagons for 1 point
WF: Common Melee Weapons for 2 points
WF: Common Missile Weapons for 2 points
Streetwise for 3 points
Survival: Mountains and Caves for 4 points
Combat Skill Levels: +3 with Great Axe for 6 points
Combat Skill Levels: +2 with Broadsword for 4 points
Combat Skill Levels: +2 with Heavy Crossbow for 4 points

Morak is now completed, at a total of 160 Character Points. Hopefully, using these alternate rules, guidelines, and examples will make your campaigns more fun and realistic for everyone around your gaming table.



A NEW HERO?

Backdraft stepped out of the MegaGeneTech building, unceremoniously dragging the unconscious body of the villain Nexus along with him. Backdraft's sandy brown hair wafted in the breeze as he stopped at the sidewalk and glanced both directions. Small sparks of flames danced playfully down his letterman-style jacket and Backdraft breathed heavily, as if from heavy exertion. Not surprisingly, since Nexus' portal-jumping abilities made him a tough cookie to crack indeed.

"Nice catch there, stud-puppy," came a pleasant, feminine voice from out of nowhere. Backdraft, startled, spun and looked everywhere before noticing a young girl crouched atop a nearby newspaper machine. She appeared in her early- to mid-teens and her red hair, spackled with platinum highlights, made her seem exotically beautiful for a young girl.

"Vixen," Backdraft growled, subconsciously sparking a flame around his now clenching fist.



Meriquai Falls: Against the Iconics

by Dale Robbins

Zen And the Art of Coping with Iconics

Welcome to the fourth installment in a series that details the city of Meriquai Falls. In this issue, we will look not at the city or setting in and of itself, but at an important aspect of the setting that can be potentially useful and damaging at the same time... iconic characters. Amethyst, Crimson-Hawk, Jade Phoenix, Masquerade, Reverb, and Vixen were briefly detailed in "Meriquai Falls" (*Digital Hero* #2). Crimson-Hawk and various other iconic characters have been used extensively in flavor text in the other *Meriquai Falls* articles. And they are not the only iconic characters ever created for a campaign setting. Is there *Meriquai Falls* beyond Crimson-Hawk?

You bet there is! Read on, Hero-philos, for this article benefits any campaign setting, not just *Meriquai Falls*.

What are Iconic Characters?

Crimson-Hawk gazed across the room. It was filled with reporters who were wide-eyed with wonder. Not even two months before, the city of Meriquai Falls had never seen a superhero more powerful than the utility-belt-toting Bloodshadow or the truck-driving, gun-wielding Shotgun Rider. Now, standing before the gathered reporters were six young superheroes who could give the Champions in Millennium City a run for their money.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the press," Crimson-Hawk began. "You see gathered before you a team of heroes whose intentions are pure and just. The mentalist Amethyst, the metamorph Masquerade, the mecha pilot Reverb, the martial artist Jade Phoenix, and the acrobat Vixen all join me in forming what will assuredly be the last line of defense for Meriquai Falls. I now present to you Meriquai Falls' new champions... The Omega Legion!"

Iconic characters, simply put, are the heroic characters pregenerated for a campaign setting. In the roleplaying industry today, every campaign setting seems to have them. In the *Champions Universe* setting, there are The Champions themselves. In the *Western Shores* setting for *Fantasy Hero*, there are the Flashing Blades. In the *Meriquai Falls* setting, there is The Omega Legion. Even a certain very popular fantasy roleplaying setting cannot be mentioned without conjuring images of a dual-sword-

wielding dark elf, a grizzled old sage, and seven beautiful eldritch sisters.

Iconic characters have their pros and cons. On the plus side, they serve as examples of what heroes can be in the campaign setting. Defender, Ironclad, and Witchcraft, for instance, all set good examples of the power levels and motivations that are acceptable in the *Champions Universe*. If built properly, iconic characters can also provide new players with a character to play without much fuss. If you've got a new player joining your *Meriquai Falls* campaign, you can simply toss her Amethyst's or Masquerade's character sheet for a session, to give the player a feel of what the HERO System is like.

However, iconic characters can have a downside. They can steal the spotlight. In the most annoying, irritating, player-wrath-invoking way possible. If iconic characters are really popular (such as Defender or Sapphire in the *Champions Universe* setting) or really powerful (such as Vengeance in the *Meriquai Falls* setting), GMs might be tempted to have them appear in as many game sessions as possible. In doing so, the iconic character may inadvertently steal the spotlight from the Player Characters. And this is never a good thing.

To help cope with the use of iconic characters, this article offers a few suggestions.

The Player Characters are Central

Zack smiled as his players shuffled through their character sheets. The battle against Count Dredmaus had begun. Ren was scooping together his six-sided dice for his martial artist First Strike's "Cut The Grass" attack while Nash was considering the options his mentalist hero Mindstab had for combat. Lorelei pondered what her energy blaster Feedback could do, while Erik flexed as if he were his brick hero, Landwalk.

As the combat got under way, Zack grinned. This was going to be so cool! "Guys, as Count Dredmaus starts pummeling you all within an inch of your lives, you hear a voice call from above you. 'Don't worry, my friends! I'm here to save you!' As you look up, you see the heroic figure of Crimson-Hawk!"

"What?" Lorelei asked, exasperated.

"Not again," Erik groaned, burying his face in his arms.

This may seem like common sense to many, but it may also surprise quite a few people to find how many people don't seem to understand this concept.

Many GMs, especially beginning GMs excited to be in the controlling seat for the first time, will often lose sight on the fact that the players are playing the game for themselves, not for the GM. The GM, lost in the throes of having fun, will bring out "cool character" after "cool character" to impress the other players. This leads to players feeling as if their characters cannot do anything on their own. Their characters aren't the focus, and the players aren't getting the attention, so the game isn't as much fun.

It is important in a roleplaying game to engineer events to make the player characters the most important characters in the story.

Ditch the Iconic Characters Altogether

Backdraft scanned the city of Meriquai Falls. It was peaceful this evening. A rarity, considering that Freezing Snake apparently had a burr wedged sideways as of late. The VIPER Nest leader had taken great pains to terrorize the citizens of Meriquai Falls during the last week. Something about a "Regenesis Converter" or some such like that.

The high school senior glanced over at the Kellerman/Davenport Memorial, which honored the college students who died during the REVERB suit explosion of mid-2000. There were six young lives down the drain, just because the military wanted to rush a mecha suit test during a lightning storm. Backdraft nodded to the Memorial, and the souls it represented.

Backdraft would protect the city in their honor.

Just then, an explosion occurred at the nearby Sullivan Building.

"Well, time for the Champion of Grandmother Spider to go back to action," Backdraft said grimly. "Wish me luck, guys!"

With that, Backdraft manifested his fiery, phoenix-like wings, and flew off, leaving the Memorial behind.

One way to make the PCs central to the story is to get rid of the iconic characters altogether. This may seem a bit drastic and, in some cases, will require a bit of work rewriting the campaign history. But, in the end, this method offers the safest bet that the PCs will remain central to the story.

An excellent example of this tactic is in the *Meriquai Falls* campaign setting. As the setting is written, everything seems to focus on Crimson-Hawk. He is the one who Grandmother Spider chose to become her champion. He lies at the enviable spot of being a hero both to the citizens of Meriquai Falls and to the citizens of the Meriquai nation. He leads The Omega Legion. And much of the campaign's history (including the ousting of VIPER from Meriquai Falls and the rise of the Imperions as the major crime syndicate in Meriquai Falls) depends on his presence in the timeline.

But what if Darren Davenport did *not* become Crimson-Hawk? What if one (or more) of the PCs became the champion(s) of Grandmother Spider instead? If this is the case, why did events transpire like that? What effects does this have on the timeline of the *Meriquai Falls* setting? Once the PCs become the champions of Grandmother Spider, how do they react to the Great Meriquai Falls Massacre of 2000? Is Freezing Snake still alive in this new timeline? Does VIPER still have a foothold in the city? How do the Imperions fit within this new power framework?

From another viewpoint, what if The Omega Legion is forced to retire, due to political influence levied against them? Crimson-Hawk wants to see the city protected, but can't protect it himself, due to the poor public opinion he suffers from. Thus, he may covertly bring the PCs together and sponsor them financially, so that *they* could protect the city in his stead. The PCs become central to the story, and Crimson-Hawk becomes nothing more than a mentor who helps guide them.

As you can see, using this tactic opens up a great many doors through which the Player Characters can truly make the campaign setting their own. Carving a new, alternate timeline in place of the timeline presented in published materials, the PCs can truly become the iconic characters of their own setting!

"Let me guess. You're here to steal the glory for capturing Nexus, aren't you?"

Vixen giggled and shook her head. "Not really. And 'sides... Even if I wanted to do that, it's a bit late for me to do it and make them think it's for real..."

As if on cue, several lights flared up from various places on the street. Backdraft, after recovering from momentary blindness, looked carefully around. Reporters from several of the major network TV affiliate stations were setting up and getting ready to broadcast the story. Somehow, they knew to be here.

"What the..." Backdraft said, stunned. "How... how did they...?"

Vixen giggled and smiled knowingly. "Crimmy, Jade Phoenix, and I just got done battling Cougar, Cyber-Dreamer, and Incandentus at the Stadium," she explained. "We didn't find out until after the battle that it was just a decoy. What they were really after was here."

"And... and I stopped Nexus from getting their actual goal..." Backdraft finished, not really believing what he was saying...

As Backdraft spoke, several reporters came rushing up, mikes in hand. “Backdraft! Backdraft! Tell us! How were you able to capture Nexus without obvious property damage? How did you know he was even here?”

Backdraft looked around at the reporters, incredulous of what was going on. The Omega Legion were Meriquai Falls’ beloved heroes. They were the darlings of the media limelight. But tonight... tonight belonged to Backdraft. Somehow, Backdraft had stolen the limelight.

Backdraft looked up at Vixen, who still sat perched on the newspaper machine. She smiled encouragingly at the high school senior and gave him a thumbs-up. Backdraft couldn’t help but smile back. He gave Vixen a thumbs-up in return, then turned to answer the reporters’ questions.

Put the Iconic Characters Somewhere Else

Backdraft, First Strike, Feedback, Landwalk, and Mindstab all met outside of the First National Bank of Meriquai Falls, feeling uneasy. Inside, an Imperion squad led by Cougar himself was helping themselves to the security boxes. And Cougar had apparently brought big-gun agents with him on this trip.

“Were you able to get a hold of The Omega Legion, Mindstab?” Backdraft asked.

Mindstab nodded nervously. “Yeah. Well, I got a hold of their computer, TRANS-II, anyway. They’re in Millennium City right now, trying to investigate a link between Sworddance and Talisman....”

“Damn!” Backdraft swore. The one time he actually needed them... “Okay, we can do this, guys! If we can beat the Eagleview North Bulldogs in state semi-finals, we can take on Cougar and a couple of no-namers, right?”

The others nodded firmly, raising Backdraft’s confidence.

“Then let’s go!” Backdraft cried, running up the bank steps with the others close behind.

Another solution to making the PCs central to the story is to put the iconic characters somewhere other than where the PCs are. This tactic can take a couple of forms.

One way to handle the situation is to simply have the iconic heroes busy or at a different location to where the PCs are at any given moment. If the PCs are at the Sullivan Building investigating a recent rash of beast-like attacks, have The Omega Legion at the Meriquai Falls University headlining a charity event. If the PCs are in a pitched battle against Sworddance and Refractor at the First National Bank of Meriquai Falls, have The Omega Legion busy in the Blue Hills tracking down the Equalizers. Whatever the case is, the PCs are busy with the main plot of the story, and the iconic characters are busy doing something irrelevant to the story.

A more extreme version of this tactic would be to relocate the iconic character completely if you want to use the campaign setting without the iconic characters. In one possible version of *Meriquai Falls*, for example, Crimson-Hawk and The Omega Legion may decide to leave Meriquai Falls in the capable hands of the PC heroes, and move their operations to San Francisco, New York, or even Millennium City or Vibora Bay. This works really well if the PCs are especially new and need a firm foundation from which to work. It also leaves the published

timeline relatively intact, and keeps the iconic heroes on hand in case they ever are needed. But, more importantly, it thrusts the PCs into the limelight and guarantees that they stay there.

Let the Players Play the Iconics

“We’re doing what?” Erik asked, rather confused. “What’s the HERO System?”

“It’s a huge roleplaying system,” Lorelei replied. “I’ve seen the rulebook. I figure we’ll spend this session learning the character creation rules and the next two sessions actually creating the characters.”

“Very funny,” Zack said, glaring at Lorelei sternly. “I will let you guys know that I have characters already prepared.”

“Cool!” Nash exclaimed. “We’ll get a feel for the system during this adventure, and then create our own characters for the next one.”

“Precisely!” Zack replied, smiling.

“I’ll play Reverb, then,” Ren grinned, taking a piece of paper. “I like mecha pilots!”

“And I’ll play Amethyst,” Nash added. “I have this thing for mentalists.”

“Hey, I want to play Vixen!” Lorelei snapped, snatching a piece of paper Erik just picked up.

“I saw her first!” Erik whined back.

“Hey, you two, there’re others!” Zack said, holding up other pieces of paper. “Which one of you wants to play Crimson-Hawk?”

Erik and Lorelei looked at Zack momentarily, then went back to fighting over Vixen. Zack could only sigh and shake his head.

This is often seen as the least desirable tactic, as the iconic characters are known to every player who owns the supplement in which they appear. In fact, most experienced GMs prefer to have a stable of personally pregenerated characters handy so that players aren’t stuck playing “The Champions” all of the time. However, iconic characters are still there, and can still be used as pregenerated characters if need be. And a few players won’t mind playing the iconic characters, often having a personal favorite they want to play and/or tweak.

Rodney Ruff’s article, “The Care and Feeding of Pregens” (*Digital Hero #1*), offers an excellent treatise on pregenerated characters. The reader is encouraged to reference that article.

Sample Iconic Character: Crimson-Hawk

15+15§* STR 14+7§* DEX 13 CON
10 BODY 23 INT 11 EGO
15+10* PRE 16 COM
5 PD 5 ED 3+2* SPD
6+6* REC 30+20* END 26 STUN

*: OIHID (See below, -¼)
§: No Figured Characteristics (-½)

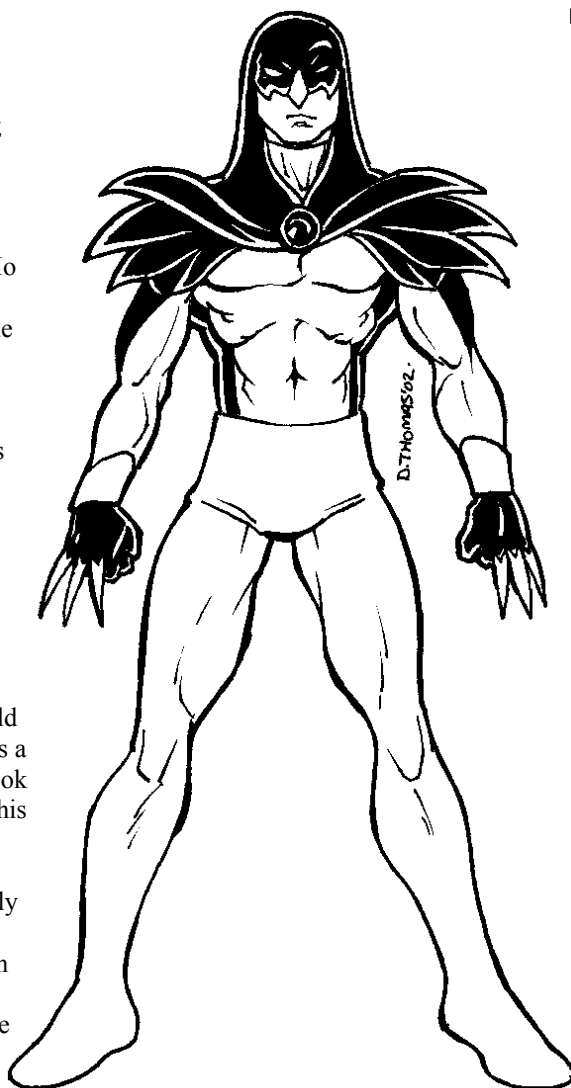
Abilities: *Spirit Magic:* Elemental Control (15-point reserve, OIHID, Activation 15-); 1) *Talons of the Red Hawk:* Entangle 6d6; 2) *Cry of the Red Hawk:* EB 12d6, STUN Only; 3) *Strike of the Red Hawk:* RKA 4d6, x3 Increased END Cost; 4) *Spirit of the Red Hawk:* Desolidification, Affected by Magic; 5) *Feathers of the Red Hawk:* Force Field (15 PD/15 ED); 6) *Glory of the Red Hawk:* Force Wall (6 PD/6 ED); 7) *Wings of the Red Hawk:* Flight 10", x8 Non-combat; 8) *Flight of the Red Hawk:* Flight 12", MegaScale (1" = 1 km); 9) *Eyes of the Red Hawk:* Clairsentience (Sight & Hearing Groups); 10) *Blessing of the Red Hawk:* Healing 4d6; Bureaucratics 12-; Fringe Benefit: Corporate CEO; Eidetic Memory; Electronics 14-; High Society 12-; Inventor 14-; KS: Meriquai Falls 14-; KS: Meriquai Magic 14-; KS: Meriquai Mythology 14-; Money: Wealthy; Oratory 12-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Corporate Executive 14-; Security Systems 14-; SS: General Physics 11-; System Operations 14-.

200+ Disadvantages: Hunted by VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Kill); Hunted by the Imperions 11- (Mo Pow, Kill); Psychological Limitation: Code of the Hero (Very Common, Strong); Psychological Limitation: Patriot for the Meriquai People (Common, Strong); Psychological Limitation: Unsure of Himself as a Hero (Common, Strong); Social Limitation: Half-Meriquai (Infrequently, Minor); Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frequently, Minor) (Darren Davenport); Vulnerability: 2x STUN and 2x BODY from Magic (Common).

Notes: Darren Davenport grew up on the Meriquai reservation constantly berated for his mixed blood. His father was a Caucasian (Ronald "Shotgun Rider" Davenport) and his mother was a Meriquai shaman (Jasmine Prairie-Maid). He took the abuse passively, finding acceptance only in his parents, his brother (Brian Davenport, later "Reverb"), and his foster-sister (Moon Ok-hwa, later "Jade Phoenix"). He grew up and eventually went to Meriquai Falls University for Business Management. After his father's friend, Sebastian Robinson, died in the Great Meriquai Falls Massacre, Darren found himself in control of the Impulses Unlimited security corporation.

The night Brian invited his friends to help field-test the REVERB mecha suit, Darren was knocked over the Meriquai Falls by a sudden electrical storm. He awoke underground and, with the help of the mysterious teen Vixen, found the Heart of the Grandmother Spider. Grandmother Spider declared Darren her champion, and bestowed him with the powers of the Red Hawk totem spirit. After Crimson-Hawk and Vixen defeated Freezing Snake and ousted VIPER from Meriquai Falls, Crimmy (as his friends call him) formed The Omega Legion with Vixen and some college friends.

As Darren Davenport, he is tall and athletic-looking, with ruddy skin and long raven-black hair tied in a tail. He prefers business casual wear. As Crimson-Hawk, he is even taller and more muscular, with a red and white body suit and a Red Hawk totem half-mask. Darren must openly and loudly call upon the powers of the Red Hawk to become Crimson-Hawk (thus, the OIHID). Crimmy's powers have colorful names and manifest as reddish, ghostly auras (the Flight manifests as red, ghostly hawk wings sprouting from Crimson-Hawk's back, for example).



AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author would like to thank his wife Amy, who provided the original concept for this character and brought her to life in unliving color.

WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

The author would also like to give credit and thanks to the game system Angelina and the Vampire Template were inspired by, *Vampire: the Masquerade*, by White Wolf Publishing, Inc.

Angelina by W. Jason Allen

Background/History: Angelina Vertinelli never knew her mother, who died giving birth to her in 1910. Perhaps if she had, things would have turned out differently. As it was, she was raised by her father, Don Vincent Vertinelli, well known amongst his peers as “The Deadly Don.” Don Vincent was an accomplished hit man, performing many executions for the Mafia when they began their operations in the early 1930s. He tried to shield Angelina from the work he did, but she soon knew all about his chosen profession. And what her papa could do, Angelina could do better. After completing some assignments without her father’s knowledge, a few Dons thought she might be able to do it better. Who would expect a woman to be a killer?

Of course, Don Vincent was furious when he found out. The manner of his learning didn’t help – Angelina won a contract over him. He yelled and threatened, forbidding her to do the job. She simply smiled. “How do you intend to stop me, papa? I’ve watched you and learned. I’ve operated on my own and learned. There are things I can do and places I can go that you can’t. Face it, papa – like father, like daughter. I am a Vertinelli. I deal in blood, just like you.” She pushed past him, and walked out into the night.

A few years later, as Angelina stepped back from the victim she had just stabbed to death, she heard a deep but mellow voice behind her. “Do you always waste life in this fashion?” She didn’t think; she reacted. In a blink, the pistol was in her hand and she fired two shots at the man who had spoken. She heard the *thud, thud* as bullets struck flesh, and echoes of the gunshots rang in the night. She waited, but there was no third thud, the sound of a body hitting the ground. She turned to look, knowing she could not have missed, not at this close range.

The man still stood there. In the dim light, she could just barely make out two holes in his overcoat. “Is that how you choose to greet your new teacher? Appropriate for your chosen profession, I suppose, but it won’t win you any favors from me. Your first lesson, my dear – how to run.”

Angelina felt a twinge of fear as the man approached; he had obviously been hit by her shots. Then she looked at his face and saw the fangs. She panicked and ran for blocks until she couldn’t run anymore. Her shoes had been lost in the night, but she didn’t care. Shoes were replaceable. What mattered was that she’d escaped from that monster, whatever it was.

She heard a slight sound behind her, and felt a grip of steel on her shoulder.

“You gave a good chase, Angelina, but I win the race. I’m afraid you’ve learned the Assassin’s First Rule the hard way – if you get caught, you’re dead.” Fangs flashed and buried themselves in Angelina’s throat. She didn’t hear herself scream....

Angelina woke dreadfully hungry, in a place she didn’t recognize. Lying next to her was a young blonde girl, no more than 20. Without thinking, Angelina tore the girl’s throat out with her teeth and drank the blood. After drinking her fill, she realized what she had done. She almost screamed, but stopped herself. *I’ve killed before*, she told herself. *Nothing’s really changed. I used my teeth instead of a knife, but all I did was rip her throat open. But why did I drink her... blood?*

“Because, my dear Angelina,” as the man who had bitten her stepped into the room. “You are now a vampire. A creature of the night, destined to live until the end of time – if you’re good enough. To live, you must drink the blood of the living. Make no mistake; you are quite dead. But by my kiss, I brought you back from death, to a new life. A life of glorious thirst and limitless possibility. You are my child now, Angelina. I will teach you more about being a killer than you ever thought possible. Where before, you killed by contract, now, you will kill because you enjoy it.”

Angelina spent many years learning from the vampire who had bitten her, before she grew tired of his endless, aristocratic chatter and removed his head from his body. She had learned all his tricks, but there was one he had failed to learn – eventually, the student becomes the master.

She fit well into vampire society. Respected for her skills, Angelina was paid well to eliminate various people, living and undead. While on a job in Russia, she discovered her rare immunity to the deadly sun that vaporized her kind, though her blood abilities were still difficult to use during the day. She quickly used this to her advantage, killing personal rivals in their sleep during the day and resuming a semblance of normal life (strictly for cover, of course).

Only a few times did she run into mortals with unusual abilities. One of her targets turned out to have skin impenetrable to her sword – but not to her teeth. She drained him and let the blood out of her own veins to disguise the evidence of a vampire attack. Wouldn’t do to let the mortals know that vampires were real.

artwork by Jeff Ward

Angelina no longer bothers to maintain her family name. Now, she is simply Angelina, and those who know her, fear her.

Personality/Motivation: If Angelina stood still, one might swear she was a statue. Her face almost never betrays emotion of any sort. Only when she hasn't fed and needs blood *now* does she show emotion, a bestial expression of hunger as she tears into her victim. The only emotion she has retained (if you can call it an emotion), is her professionalism. Once she accepts a job, she will complete it, unless her employer says otherwise. However, she's not so foolish as to accept a job she knows she can't complete. One would-be employer tried to hire her to assassinate a superhero, one known to be very hard to even get close to, much less kill. After studying her intended target, she determined him to be beyond her abilities and so informed her employer. He flew into a rage, demanding she complete the task he'd paid her for, or she'd be the one who ended up dead. His family reported him missing a few days later.

In her years as an assassin, she has lost most of her emotion and humanity. She feels almost nothing except the hunger for blood and the desire for vengeance against those who wrong her. In the eternal game of unlife, what else is there?

Lately though, something has begun to stir in her frozen heart. A desire for something more than this endless death is beginning to grow, suppress it though she tries. It is only a matter of time before she either goes insane from trying to suppress the final remnant of her humanity or chooses to explore the emotions she's nearly forgotten.

Quote: "Diamonds are too shiny. Blood is my best friend."

Powers/Tactics: Silent, swift, deadly. Angelina will often spend days studying her target, longer if necessary. The perfect assassination is one that is not expected until it's too late. She seldom fails an assignment.

In straight-out combat, she employs fast and brutal tactics, preferring to strike with her silvered katana, but perfectly willing to ventilate a target with her needler pistol. Hit them hard and fast until they don't get up again – ever. To accomplish this, she will freely utilize any of her abilities to get the job done. When fighting normals or a group, she often boosts her DEX and SPD to gain an edge. When fighting one-on-one, she boosts her STR and lays in with her sword. She will occasionally use Mind Control if she is outmatched and needs help. Any mortal will do, even if only as a distraction.

Because of her experience, Angelina has been able to develop many more blood powers than most other vampires. Even some city governors that have lived hundreds of years longer than she do not possess as wide a variety of powers as she commands.

In addition to the blood powers all vampires have, Angelina can read objects to see images from their past. Silence is hers to command. Mentally, she can make herself unobtrusive, becoming effectively invisible. She exerts her will to dominate others, or simply communicate with them mind-to-mind.

Campaign Use: Angelina is a powerful vampire assassin. She could easily be hired by just about anyone to kill one of the PCs, and will even attempt to do so if she thinks she has a good chance of succeeding. Having worked for more people than she could possibly remember, she's made more enemies than she even knows she has.

Angelina Hunts for only two reasons – either she's been hired to kill the person she's Hunting, or this person has somehow made her very unhappy. Either way, she will shadow the target for a few days, learn their environs and routines, and then strike unexpectedly from the shadows.

To increase Angelina's power, boost her Blood Powers, physical Characteristics and add more Combat Skill Levels. You might also add more weapons or other technology, perhaps putting them all in a Multipower or Variable Power Pool. To reduce her effectiveness, decrease the Active Points in the Blood Pool, lower or remove her Combat Skill Levels, and drop the SPD boost.

Appearance: Angelina appears to be in her mid-20s, but she's actually almost a hundred years old. Her long black hair and gray eyes turn many heads. Her once-olive skin is now quite pale, unless she's recently fed. When not on a job, she favors expensive but comfortable clothing. White fangs gleam when she smiles, and she only smiles when someone's about to die.

Angelina's armor is made of the same ballistic cloth used by UNTIL, dyed dark gray. She doesn't bother with a helmet or facemask. Her katana is made of an unknown steel alloy that includes silver, and her needler pistol somewhat resembles VIPER weapon designs. The source of these weapons is unknown.

ANGELINA PLOT SEEDS

One of the PCs' enemies hires Angelina to learn as much about them (either the team or an individual) as possible. Will she discover their Secret Identities or other damaging information? What will the enemy choose to do with this information? Having hired an assassin, surely spying won't be her only task....

Hearing a scream in the night, PCs investigate, to find a body with the throat torn out, and not much blood on the ground. Spotting movement on the roof of a nearby building, the chase is on. The killer moves with unnatural speed and agility. Will the killer escape, or will the PCs catch more than they bargained for? Who was the victim, and why?

Angelina's long-suppressed emotions surface at an inconvenient time. Hired to kill a male PC, she stalks and studies him. Remarkably, his strength of character stirs her heart, and she finds herself in love with him. Not knowing how to express this love, she tortures herself mentally, struggling with the unfamiliar



Angelina

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH [1]
25	DEX	45	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
20	CON	20	13-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 14-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
18	COM	4	13-	
12	PD	9		Total: 24 PD (20 rPD)
12	ED	8		Total: 24 ED (20 rED)
5+2*	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
9	REC	4		(2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12)
40	END	0		* <i>Supernatural Speed</i>
35	STUN	2		<i>Multipower Slot</i>

Total Characteristic Cost: 150

Movement: Running: 15"/30"
Leaping: 3"/6"
Flight: 10"/20"

Cost	Powers	END
14	<i>Blood Pool:</i> Endurance Reserve (70 END, 12 REC); Only Recovers When Uses <i>Drink Blood</i> Power (-1/4), Only Recovers Up To Amount Rolled By <i>Drink Blood</i> Power (-1/2)	0
30	<i>Blood Powers:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve; all slots Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-1/2), x3 END in Daytime (-1/2)	
1u	1) <i>Claws (left hand):</i> HKA 1d6+1 (2d6+1 with STR); Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-1/2), x3 END in Daytime (-1/2)	2
1u	2) <i>Claws (right hand):</i> HKA 1d6+1 (2d6+1 with STR); Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-1/2), x3 END in Daytime (-1/2)	2
2u	3) <i>Supernatural Strength:</i> Aid STR 6d6; Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-1/2), x3 END in Daytime (-1/2), Costs END (-1/2), Self Only (-1/2)	6
2u	4) <i>Supernatural Reflexes:</i> Aid DEX 6d6; Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-1/2), x3 END in Daytime (-1/2), Costs END (-1/2), Self Only (-1/2)	6
1u	5) <i>Supernatural Speed:</i> +2 SPD; Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-1/2), x3 END in Daytime (-1/2), Costs END (-1/2)	2
1u	6) <i>Silence Field:</i> Darkness to Hearing Group 3" radius; Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-1/2), x3 END in Daytime (-1/2)	3
1u	7) <i>Psychometry:</i> Retrocognition Clairsentience (Sight Group and Normal Hearing); Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-1/2), x3 END in Daytime (-1/2), Blackout (-1/2), OAF (object to be read; -1), Retrocognition Only (-1), Only To Read Object's History (-1/2)	4

- 2u 8) *Self-Healing:* Healing BODY 5d6, Can Heal Limbs; Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-1/2), x3 END in Daytime (-1/2), Self Only (-1/2) 5
- 1u 9) *Unobtrusiveness:* Invisibility to Sight Group; Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-1/2), x3 END in Daytime (-1/2), Only To Blend Into A Crowd Or Seem Like Nondescript Person (-1/2) 2
- 2u 10) *Dominate:* Mind Control 12d6; Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-1/2), x3 END in Daytime (-1/2), Eye Contact Required (-1/2) 6
- 2u 11) *Mind Touch:* Telepathy 12d6; Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-1/2), x3 END in Daytime (-1/2), Eye Contact Required (-1/2) 6
- 2u 12) *Create Vampire:* Major Transform 4d6 (sentient beings into vampires, heals back by resurrection ritual); Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-1/2), x3 END in Daytime (-1/2), Limited Target (sentient beings, -1/4), No Range (-1/2) 6
- 22 *Drink Blood:* RKA 1d6, NND (defense is not having blood or having Hardened rPD; +1), Does BODY (+1), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); Activation Roll 13- in Daytime (-1/4), No Range (-1/2), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1/4) 0
- 20 *Silvered Katana:* HKA 2d6 (3d6 with STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); OAF (-1), No Knockback (-1/4), Real Weapon (-1/4) **plus** +1 OCV; OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-1/4) 0
- 22 *Advanced Needler Pistol:* RKA 3d6, Armor Piercing (+1/2); OAF (-1), Beam (-1/4), 2 Clips of 8 Charges (-1/4), No Knockback (-1/4), Real Weapon (-1/4) [8]

Martial Arts: Karate

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4 Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, 25 STR
4 Dodge	-	+5	Dodge; Abort
4 Punch/Snap Kick	+0	+2	+2d6 Strike
5 Side/Spin Kick	-2	+1	+4d6 Strike
1 Use Art with Blades			
8 <i>Light Body Armor:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED); 14- Activation (-1/2), OIF (-1/2), Real Armor (-1/4)			0
8 <i>Natural Toughness:</i> Damage Resistance (8 PD/8 ED)			0
15 <i>Immortal:</i> Healing 2d6 (Regeneration; 2 BODY per Day), Resurrection (stopped by burning the body or cutting off the head), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Persistent (+1/2); Self Only (-1/2), Extra Time + Increased Time Increment (2 BODY/Day; -2/4),			

DIGITAL HERO #6

- Resurrection Only (-½), Leaves *Blood Pool* Endurance Reserve at 0 END (-½) 0
- 35 *Undead*: LS (Self-Contained Breathing; Longevity: Immortal; Immunity: All terrestrial diseases and biowarfare agents; Immunity: All terrestrial poisons and chemical warfare agents) 0
- 5 *Strong Mind*: Mental Defense (9 points) 0
- 10 *Vampire Grip*: Clinging (normal STR) 0
- 20 *Vampire Flight*: Flight 10" 2
- 18 *Swiftness*: Running +9" (15" total) 3
- 6 *Supernatural Awareness*: +2 PER with all Sense Groups 0
- 5 *See Body Heat*: Infrared Perception (Sight Group) 0
- 5 *Earpiece*: Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group); OAF (-1) 0

Perks

- 15 Money: Filthy Rich
- 4 Reputation: Deadly Assassin (throughout the criminal world) 11-, +2/+2d6
- 3 Well-Connected
- 2 1) Contact: Mafia Weapons Dealer 11-, useful resources
- 1 2) Contact: Financial Manager 11-
- 4 3) Contact: Police Detective 11-, useful resources, access to major institution, contact has significant contacts
- 5 4) Contact: Vampire City Governor 11-, extremely useful resources, contact has significant contacts
- 2 5) Contact: Street Sneak 11-, contact has significant contacts

Talents

- 12 Combat Luck (6 PD/6 ED)
- 15 Combat Sense 12-

Skills

- 10 +1 Overall
- 8 +1 with Combat
- 6 *Range Skill Levels*: +2 vs. Range Modifier with All Attacks
- 3 Acrobatics 14-
- 3 Analyze Combat Technique 12-
- 3 Breakfall 14-
- 4 CK: Campaign City 13-
- 3 Climbing 14-
- 3 Combat Driving 14-
- 3 Fast Draw (Common Melee Weapons) 14-
- 3 Fast Draw (Small Arms) 14-
- 3 Linguist
- 3 1) Language: Italian (native accent)
- 2 2) Language: Japanese (completely fluent)
- 3 3) Language: Vampyr (native accent)
- 2 4) Language: Russian (completely fluent)
- 3 Lockpicking 14-

- 3 Scholar
- 3 1) KS: Criminal Underworld 13-
- 2 2) KS: Karate 12-
- 3 3) KS: Mafia 13-
- 1 4) KS: Martial Arts 11-
- 2 5) KS: Supernatural World 12-
- 3 6) KS: Vampire World 13-
- 3 Security Systems 12-
- 5 Shadowing 13-
- 5 Stealth 15-
- 5 Streetwise 13-
- 2 WF: Common Melee Weapons
- 2 WF: Small Arms

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 450

Total Cost: 600

200+ Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Feature: Vampire (Easily Concealed; Always Noticed)
- 20 Enraged: at the sight/smell of blood when Endurance Reserve at 20 or less (Uncommon), go 14-, recover 11-
- 15 Hunted: Enemies From Her Past 11- (As Pow, Kill)
- 10 Hunted: Local City Governor 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Stake Through The Heart Paralyzes Her Until Stake Removed, character cannot move or use powers but is aware of surroundings, if character is dead, Resurrection Healing will not work until stake removed (Infrequently, Fully Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: REC Does Not Heal BODY (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Undead, Requires Blood as Food (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Cold-Blooded, Emotionless (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Loyal to Employer (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Overconfidence (Very Common, Moderate)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Uncommon, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: deadly assassin, 11- (Extreme, Limited Group: criminal world)
- 15 Social Limitation: Hides Vampire Nature (Frequently, Major)
- 10 Susceptibility: to sunset, Drain Endurance Reserve 2d6 (Uncommon)
- 20 Vulnerability: 1½x STUN and 1½x BODY from Fire (Common)
- 200 Experience Points

Total Cost: 600

emotion of concern for another's well-being. She will no doubt try to kill the PC out of frustration, trying to kill her emotions as well. Will she be able to force herself to destroy the object of her affection, or will she succumb to her emotions and give in to love?

VAMPIRE TEMPLATE OPTIONS

Common Special

Powers: All powers listed are designed to fit in the *Blood Powers* Multipower shown in the Vampire Template write-up.

Draining Touch:

Drain STR 3d6 (30 Active Points). Total cost in Multipower: 1 point.

Blood Spit:

EB 6d6 (30 Active Points). Total cost in Multipower: 1 point.

Entrance:

Entangle 1d6, 1 DEF, Based On ECV (+1), Takes No Damage From Physical Attacks (+1/4), Works Against EGO, Not STR (+1/4) (30 Active Points); Eye Contact Required (-1/2). Total cost in Multipower: 1 point.

Glamour:

Sight and Hearing Group Images, -5 PER penalty (30 Active Points). Total cost in Multipower: 1 point.

Dominate:

Mind Control 6d6 (30 Active Points). Total cost in Multipower: 1 point.

Command Beast:

Mind Control 6d6 (Animal class of minds) (30 Active Points). Total cost in Multipower: 1 point.

Angelina



Vampire Template

Description: Vampires are universally pale of skin unless recently fed, with retractable needle-sharp fangs used to draw blood from victims. A vampire could be anyone, as anyone could be a vampire. The basic nature of a vampire is that of a parasite. They require the blood of the living to sustain their undead bodies. Because of their thirst, vampires have a tendency to lose control when they are hungry, and attack the first source of food they come across. When a vampire awakens after sunset, they must feed to replenish the blood digested while sleeping. Because they are undead, their bodies do not heal with time as living creatures do. They must use blood they drain from the living to heal themselves.

All vampires are vulnerable to the cleansing effects of fire on their undead bodies. Most are also very susceptible to sunlight. There is a rare occurrence of vampires who are immune to the damaging effects of sunlight, but even they have difficulty using their blood powers during the day. Most vampires shun their brethren who are immune to sunlight as freaks, though many city governors employ them for various tasks. Those immune to sunlight are often referred to as daywalkers.

Several abilities are common to all vampires – enhanced physical Characteristics, blood drain, Endurance Reserve for *Blood Powers*, Characteristic boosting, self-healing, flight and enhanced running speed, enhanced senses, damage resistance, clinging, and the ability to turn people into vampires. Combat tactics vary by individual.

Many vampires also possess powers beyond those detailed in the template. The write-up below is for a generic vampire who has one custom ability, left for the GM to select as desired. Any vampire character will have at minimum the characteristics and abilities shown in the write-up. The special abilities listed in the accompanying sidebar are relatively common; others are certainly available. Some vampires develop completely unique abilities.

A pool of 35 points has been set aside for equipment. Most vampires use the points for weapons and/or body armor, though some buy vehicles, bases, or other abilities. Sample equipment is listed in the sidebar. Additional guns and equipment can be found in the *HERO System 5th Edition* rulebook and *Dark Champions*.

Campaign Use: Vampires, while not common, are numerous enough to pose a serious threat should they choose to reveal themselves. Fortunately, the vampire elite have adopted a policy of secrecy. Any mortal who discovers the truth must either be killed or turned into a vampire. Through the ages, this rule has not always been enforced, but the secret of their existence has never truly been in danger.

Most vampires congregate in cities where food is plentiful. Each city is ruled by its own governor, who strives to maintain order and secrecy with the aid of his Council of Clans. It is not known how many clans there are; estimates range between 7 and 15.

Vampires make excellent villains and thugs. Most conceal themselves amongst a city's street-life, but many can be found in higher society strata as well. Some own well-known businesses, especially nightclubs.

VAMPIRE TEMPLATE OPTIONS

Common

Equipment: The sample equipment items listed below are readily available through legal or black market sources. More exotic items are possible, as the GM desires. Note that weapons were purchased without STR Minimum limitations, and are One-Handed.

Electro-Stun Baton: EB 8d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (60 Active Points); OAF (-1), No Knockback (-1/4), No Range (-1/2), Real Weapon (-1/4). Total cost: 20 points.

Club: HA 4d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (30 Active points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-1/2), OAF (-1), No Knockback (-1/4), Real Weapon (-1/4). Total cost: 10 points.

Sword: HKA 1d6+1 (2d6+1 with STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (30 Active Points); OAF (-1), No Knockback (-1/4), Real Weapon (-1/4). Total cost: 12 points.

9 mm (Browning HP): RKA 1d6+1, 20 Charges (+1/4) (25 Active Points); OAF (-1), Beam (-1/4), No Knockback (-1/4), Real Weapon (-1/4). Total cost: 9 points.

.50 (Desert Eagle):

RKA 2d6+1, +1
Increased STUN
Multiplier (+¼) (44
Active Points); OAF
(-1), Beam (-¼), 9
Charges (-¼), No
Knockback (-¼), Real
Weapon (-¼) **plus** +1
OCV (5 Active
Points); OAF (-1),
Real Weapon (-¼).
Total cost: 17 points.

9mm (Uzi): RKA
1d6+1, Autofire 5
shots (+½), 40
Charges (+½) (40
Active Points); OAF
(-1), Beam (-¼), No
Knockback (-¼), Real
Weapon (-¼) **plus** +2
OCV (10 Active
Points); OAF (-1),
Real Weapon (-¼).
Total cost: 19 points.

7.62 R (AK
47/AKM): RKA 2d6,
Autofire 5 shots (+½),
+1 Increased STUN
Multiplier (+¼), 30
Charges (+¼) (60
Active Points); OAF
(-1), Beam (-¼), No
Knockback (-¼), Real
Weapon (-¼) **plus** +2
OCV (10 Active
Points); OAF (-1),
Real Weapon (-¼)
plus +1 Ranged Skill
Level (3 Active
Points); OAF (-1),
Real Weapon (-¼).
Total cost: 27 points.

Light Body Armor:
Armor (6 PD/6 ED)
(18 Active Points);
14- Activation (-½),
OIF (-½), Real Armor
(-¼). Total cost: 8
points.

Earpiece: Radio
Perception/
Transmission (Radio
Group) (10 Active
Points); OAF (-1).
Total cost: 5 points.



Vampire Template

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
15	CON	10	12-	
10	BODY	0	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll: 11-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
9	PD	6		Total: 9 PD (5 rPD)
8	ED	5		Total: 8 ED (5 rED)
4	SPD	10		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	0		
30	END	0		
26	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 80

Movement: Running: 12"/24"
Leaping: 3"/6"

Cost	Powers	END
12	<i>Blood Pool:</i> Endurance Reserve (50 END, 12 REC); Only Recovers When Uses <i>Drink Blood</i> Power (-¼), Only Recovers Up To Amount Rolled By <i>Drink Blood</i> Power (-½)	0
12	<i>Blood Powers:</i> Multipower, 30-point reserve; Activation Roll 8- in Daytime (- ½), x5 END in Daytime (-1)	
1u	1) <i>Supernatural Strength:</i> Aid STR 3d6; Costs END (-½), Self Only (- ½), Activation Roll 8- in Daytime (-½), x5 END in Daytime (-1)	3
1u	2) <i>Supernatural Reflexes:</i> Aid DEX 3d6; Costs END (-½), Self Only (- ½), Activation Roll 8- in Daytime (-½), x5 END in Daytime (-1)	3
1u	3) <i>Claws (left hand):</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR), Activation Roll 8- in Daytime (-½), x5 END in Daytime (-1)	1
1u	4) <i>Claws (right hand):</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR), Activation Roll 8- in Daytime (-½), x5 END in Daytime (-1)	1
1u	5) <i>Self-Healing:</i> Healing BODY 2d6, Can Heal Limbs; Self Only (- ½), Activation Roll 8- in Daytime (-½), x5 END in Daytime (-1)	2
1u	6) <i>Create Vampire:</i> Major Transform 2d6 (sentient beings into vampires, heals back by resurrection ritual); Limited Target (sentient beings, -¼), No Range (- ½), Activation Roll 8- in Daytime (-½), x5 END in Daytime (-1)	6
1u	7) Choose One Special Power	
5	<i>Natural Toughness:</i> Damage Resistance (5 PD/5 ED)	0
21	<i>Drink Blood:</i> RKA 1d6, NND (defense is not having blood or having Hardened rPD; +1), Does BODY (+1), Continuous	

- (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½);
Activation Roll 11- in Daytime (-½),
Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), No Range (-½) 0
11 *Immortal:* Healing 1d6 (Regeneration; 1
BODY per Day), Resurrection (stopped by
burning the body or cutting off the head),
Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½),
Persistent (+½); Self Only (-½), Extra
Time + Increased Time Increment (1
BODY/Day; -2¾), Resurrection Only (-½),
Leaves Endurance Reserve at 0 END (-½) 0
25 *Undead:* LS (Self-Contained Breathing;
Longevity: Immortal; Immunity: All
terrestrial diseases and biowarfare agents) 0
10 *Vampire Grip:* Clinging (normal STR) 0
12 *Swiftness:* Running +6" (12" total) 2
5 *See Body Heat:* Infrared Perception
(Sight Group) 0
35 *Equipment:* select from the sample list or
other source

Skills

- 3 KS: Vampire World 12-
2 KS: Supernatural World 11-
4 Language: Vampyr (native accent)
3 Shadowing 11-
3 Stealth 13-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 170

Total Cost: 250

100+ Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Feature: Vampire (Easily
Concealed; Always Noticed)
20 Enraged: at the sight/smell of blood when
Endurance Reserve at 15 or less
(Uncommon), go 14-, recover 11-
15 Physical Limitation: Stake Through The
Heart Paralyzes Vampire Until Stake
Removed, character cannot move or use
powers but is aware of surroundings, if
character is dead, Resurrection Healing
will not work until stake removed
(Infrequently, Fully Impairing)
10 Physical Limitation: REC Does Not Heal
BODY (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)
10 Physical Limitation: Undead, Requires
Blood as Food (Frequently, Slightly
Impairing)
10 Psychological Limitation: Choice
(Common, Moderate)
15 Social Limitation: Hides Vampire Nature
(Frequently, Major)
30 Susceptibility: to sunlight, 1d6 STUN and
BODY damage per turn (Common)
10 Susceptibility: to sunset, Drain Endurance
Reserve 2d6 (Uncommon)
20 Vulnerability: 1½x STUN and 1½x BODY
from Fire (Common)

Total Disadvantage Points: 250

