

DIGITAL HERO #45

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Table of Contents

HERO SANDWICH

WHEN LAST WE LEFT OUR HEROES...

Keep up with the news from Hero Games. This issue – does *The Ultimate Energy Projector* become a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero*? 2

HEROGLYPHS

See how Steve Long himself answers rules questions. This issue – become an expert in Skill Quality rules. 4

YOU GOTTA HAVE CHARACTER

Spring-Heeled Jack terrorized London by accosting young women and leaping away. Is he now on the move in your town? 5

COOL STUFF

BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY

Populate your Fantasy Hero world with these unusual variants on common races, and customize with the suggested options. 11

A FEW TALENTS MORE

Further customize your Fantasy Hero characters with an extra fistful of ready-made Talents. 16

MURDER AT MONTEGO CAY

The Terran Empire planet of Halcyon has just experienced its first murder in a decade. Can your heroes solve the case? 23

DIGITAL HERO

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Issue #45 (September/October 2007)



When Last We Left Our Heroes...

by Steven S. Long

This month we've got two books for you – one just released, and one “on deck.”

POST-APOCALYPTIC HERO

The end of the world – and, paradoxically, what happens after that – has always fascinated writers and readers alike, whether they're the early tale-spinners who devised the legends of Ragnarok and Deucalion, or modern-day Science Fiction authors like Walter Miller, Paul Williams, Larry Niven, Stephen King, or David Brin. It's not surprising that this subject also interests gamers.

Post-Apocalyptic Hero is your guide to this genre (or perhaps more accurately, subgenre of Science Fiction) for gaming. It provides all the resources you need to use the *HERO System* to create Post-Apocalyptic characters and adventures every bit as exciting as those you read or watch. Like *Hero's* other genre books, you can think of it as a sort of “instruction manual” that shows you how to use the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* “toolkit” to create the best, most interesting characters and campaigns possible.

Chapter One, *Ruins, Wastelands, and Mutants: The Post-Apocalyptic Genre*, reviews the genre as a whole, including its subgenres (such as Low and High Post-Apocalyptic, Road Wars, and Zombie Apocalypse), major elements and themes, and how it interacts with other genres and metagenres. If you don't know much about the genre, or you're looking for some inspiration for a character or campaign, this is the place to start.

Chapter Two, *Building a Better Mutant: Post-Apocalyptic Character Creation*, covers the topic of creating characters for *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* games. It has three main sections. The first includes Package Deals that cover the wide range of characters in the genre. The second reviews the *HERO System* character creation elements like Skill and Powers, discussing how best to use them in the genre and providing expanded or optional rules for elements like the *Survival Skill* and the *Money Perk*. The third and final section covers Post-Apocalyptic equipment, ranging from swords and shields to laser pistols, Geiger counters, and decontamination foam.

Chapter Three, *Adventure Among the Devastation: Gamemastering Post-Apocalyptic Hero*, is for the GM's eyes only. It provides general guidelines and advice for running Post-Apocalyptic games, ranging from what type of apocalypse the GM wants to use to destroy the

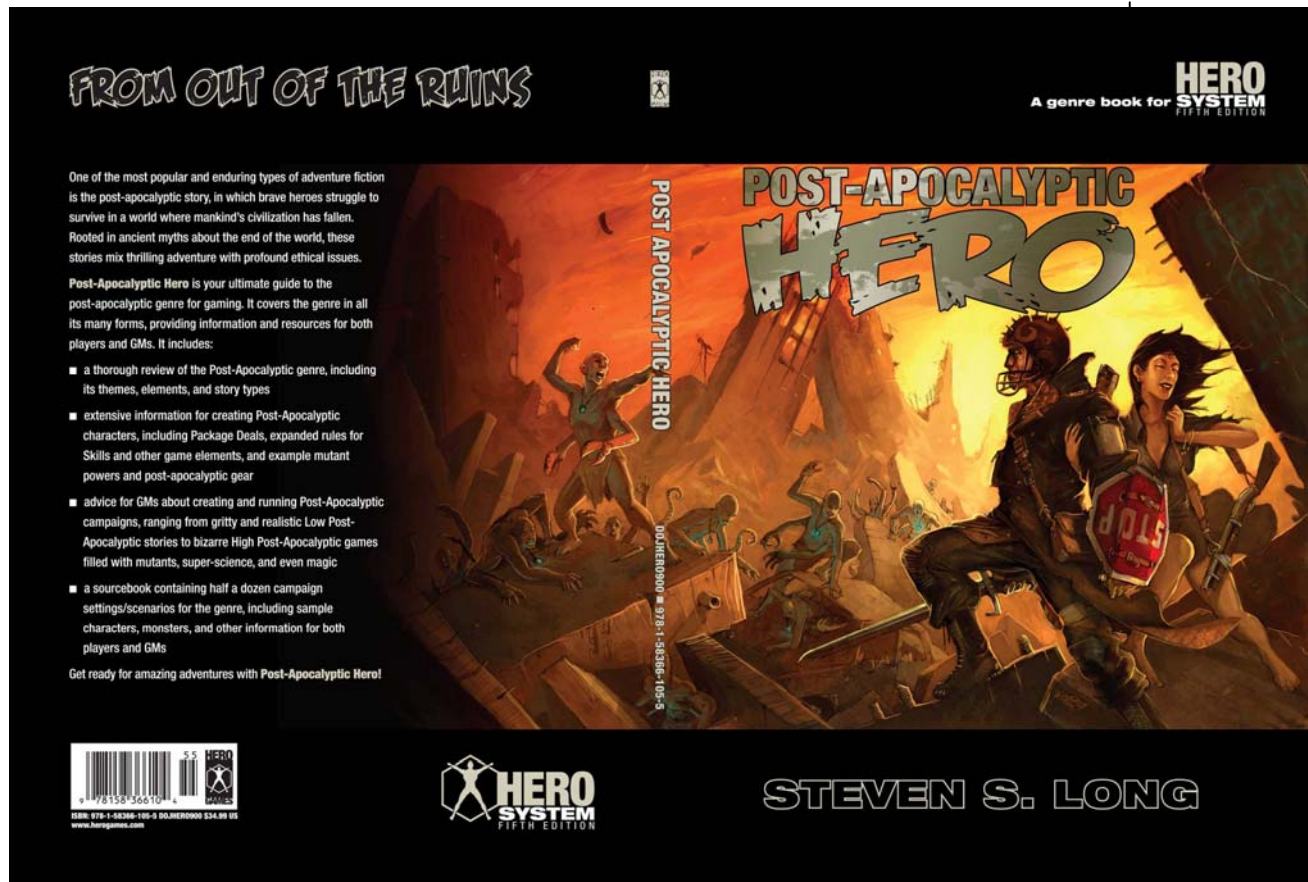
world (and the implications of each one), to the timeframe of the campaign in relation to the apocalypse, the campaign's technology level, campaign style and tone, and how best to use villains and NPCs. It includes advanced rules for genre-appropriate subjects like scavenging, the condition of ruined buildings and equipment, radiation, and starvation.

Chapter Four *After the Apocalypse: A Post-Apocalyptic Sourcebook*, provides settings, scenarios, and other resources GMs and players can use in their Post-Apocalyptic games. The settings include:

- *Amrica*, a Low Post-Apocalyptic setting centuries after a devastating series of wars and catastrophes
- *After the Blast*, a High Post-Apocalyptic setting that includes dozens of example mutant powers (both beneficial and disadvantageous) and character sheets for mutated animals and similar threats
- *The Moonshattered Earth*, a High Post-Apocalyptic setting in which magic has returned to a world where near-miss by an asteroid breaks Earth's continents apart and moves the Moon closer to the planet
- *Zombie World*, in which the dead have arisen to feast on the living
- *Revelations 1001*, in which the events prophesied in the Book of Revelation come to pass in the year 1001
- *Destinations*, a Low Post-Apocalyptic game in which the characters struggle to reach a safe haven and find enough to eat in a world virtually stripped bare by a solar flare
- *Mechanon Triumphant*, in which your *Champions* heroes travel to an alternate Earth to see what happens when the master villain wins
- *Tobacco Road*, a “Road Wars” Low Post-Apocalyptic campaign set in central North Carolina

The major settings also include example characters, maps, and detailed descriptions of specific areas the GM can use in his game.

Lastly, the book concludes with a Bibliography of Post-Apocalyptic literature and movies. It offers plenty of sources of inspiration for players and GMs alike, so be sure to pick up a copy!



CHAMPIONS OF THE NORTH

With a little luck, by the time you read this the summer weather will have cooled a bit and we'll be looking toward a pleasant autumn. Thoughts of cooler climes bring to mind the wilds of Canada – the subject of our next book, *Champions of the North*!

Written by native Canadian Scott Bennie (author of *Villainy Amok*), “CotN” (as we refer to it here in the office) is your complete guide not only to Canada in the Champions Universe and how to campaign there, but all the background information you need to know to make Canada a more vibrant part of your games. It consists of four chapters.

Chapter One, *Canada: A History of Heroism*, presents a history of Canada from its earliest days up through the rise of superheroes in the Golden Age and into the early 21st Century. Scott's included a lot of juicy details that will both catch your attention and inspire character and campaign ideas.

Chapter Two, *The Canada Gazetteer*, describes Canada briefly, but with enough information to give GMs and players in Champions games set there some verisimilitude. It covers political structure, provinces and major cities, climate and geography, art and culture, police and military, and, yes, hockey. Its final section discusses Canada's First Nations

(Indian), Metis, and Inuit cultures, including their cosmologies, magics, and monsters.

Chapter Three, *Gamemastering Canada*, reviews the GM's job as it pertains to Canada-based games. It discusses the pitfalls of running a campaign in Canada and lists lots of useful plot seeds. (My favorite section here was Scott's list of common stereotypes about Canada and what the truth is – which I gleefully excerpted and rewrote as a humor piece I'll post on the boards after the book debuts.)

Chapter Four, *Canada in the Champions Universe*, is the largest in the book. In addition to a *GM's Vault* with plot seeds and additional information about the subjects of the first three chapters, it discusses what established Champions Universe heroes, villains, and organizations are up to in the Great White North. Most importantly, it provides character sheets and descriptions for some of Canada's many superheroes and villains – everyone from powerful master villains like Borealis, Baron Nihil, and Necrull, to supernatural menaces like Tilingkoot, solo thugs like Chain Gang, and the VIPER Nest Leader Mechaniste. Get ready to send your heroes north of the border!

— Steven S. Long
HERO System Line Developer





HEROGlyphs by Steven S. Long

I Know More Than You

OPTIONAL RULES FOR SKILL QUALITY

While writing *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* I had to think about how much a character in a post-apocalypse world might know about a given subject compared to someone from the pre-apocalypse world. I discuss this in general terms on page 35 of that book, and in a slightly different context on page 10 of *The Ultimate Skill*. It's since occurred to me that this concept – that some people are trained better than others, or have access to more knowledge, or what have you – could have broader application and be codified with rules. That's what I'm going to do in this installment of *HEROGlyphs*.

To make this system work, it's assumed that by default all characters are trained to a "Standard" level of Skill Quality with each Skill they know – they don't get any benefits, but they don't suffer any penalties. Their learning hasn't been of notable quality, but it hasn't skipped over anything important either. The accompanying table and text describe the other four levels of Skill Quality.

A character with a *Low Quality* Skill hasn't been as well-trained as average – he didn't learn about some potentially important things, he lacked access to the full range of training materials, or his teacher simply didn't know as much as he should have. As a result, the character suffers a -1 penalty on all uses of the Skill. At the GM's option, this may qualify for a -¼ Limitation on the Skill, though in some cases it's simply a campaign default under some circumstances.

A character with a *Very Low Quality* Skill has been even more poorly trained – he suffers a -2 penalty on all rolls with that Skill. At the GM's option, this may qualify for a -½ Limitation on the Skill, though in some cases it's simply a campaign default under some circumstances.

On the other hand, a character with a *High Quality* Skill has been better trained than normal. Perhaps he has access to some particularly knowledgeable or insightful teachers or reference sources, or maybe he just has an inherent grasp of the material that makes it easier for him to use the Skill. He receives a bonus of +1 to all uses of the Skill (or, alternately, the GM may require him to buy the roll at a minimum level of Characteristic Roll +1). At the GM's option, this may require a +¼ Advantage on the Skill, though in some cases it's simply a campaign default under some circumstances.

A character with a *Very High Quality* Skill has received the best training possible in the campaign – he had the best learning materials, teachers, and opportunities to learn and practice. He gets a standard bonus of +2 on all rolls with the Skill (or, alternately, the GM may require him to buy the roll at a minimum level of Characteristic Roll +2). At the GM's option, this may require a +½ Advantage on the Skill, though in some cases it's simply a campaign default under some circumstances.

You can extend the Skill Quality Table further if you like, creating categories that offer ±3, ±4, and so on.

SKILL QUALITY

Quality	Category	Modifier	Notes
Very Low	-2		May entail -½ Limitation
Low	-1		May entail -¼ Limitation
Standard	+0		The default level of Skill Quality
High	+1		May entail +¼ Advantage or minimum purchase
Very High	+2		May entail +½ Advantage or minimum purchase

USING THE SKILL QUALITY RULES

Typically the Skill Quality rules within a campaign are used to indicate relative breadth and quality of knowledge among various groups. For example, perhaps the Black Disciples of Mordak are particularly well-versed in the art of Necromancy, so anyone studying with them learns KS: Necromancy and Power: Necromancy as High Quality Skills. On the other hand, a hedge wizard out in the hinterlands somewhere might not know much about Necromancy at all, so studying with him means learning those Skills at Very Low Quality.

The GM could also impose Skill Quality requirements as campaign settings for specific genres or Package Deals. For example, in a Post-Apocalyptic setting so much knowledge of electronics may have been lost that no matter where or how a character trains, the best he can do is Very Low Quality in Electronics, SS: Electronic Engineering, and similar Skills – thus indicating his poor training compared to the multiversal default level of Standard.



You Gotta Have Character

by Jason Walters

“Some individuals (of, as the writer believes, the higher ranks of life) have laid a wager with a mischievous and foolhardy companion (name as yet unknown), that he durst not take upon himself the task of visiting many of the villages near London in three disguises – a ghost, a bear and a devil; and, moreover, that he will not dare to enter gentlemen’s gardens for the purpose of alarming the inmates of the house. The wager, however, been accepted, and the unmanly villain has succeeded in depriving seven ladies of their senses.”

— Letter from a Resident of Peckham to the Lord Mayor

In many parts of suburban London during the 19th Century just mentioning the name “Spring-Heeled Jack” was enough to make sophisticated ladies swoon and courteous gentleman curse. Part prankster, part supervillain, and part supernatural creature, “Jack” appeared out of the shadows of the night, attacking his victims with balls of choking fire and metal claws, and then bounding away using superhuman leaps before he could be captured. His ghoulish features and terrifying laugh provoked terror wherever he appeared. He seemed particularly fond of accosting young servant girls and harassing authority figures.

The authorities of the time took the matter of Spring-Heeled Jack fairly seriously... though they took great pains to point out that he was some sort of mechanically assisted prankster, not a demon. The Lord Mayor of London found it doubtful “that the ghost performs the feats of a devil upon the earth.” Nevertheless, due to the extraordinary number of reliable witnesses and victims, he declared Spring-Heeled Jack a public nuisance in 1838. Rewards were offered for his capture, and armed vigilante groups went out into the night in search of him. Several of them found them too, though none of them managed to capture him.

Spring-Heeled Jack was never apprehended, and has continued to reappear at roughly 20-year intervals right up to the present day. At some point wanderlust seems to have undertaken the villainous prankster: he has been spotted in Massachusetts, Texas, and North Carolina. He seems to have returned home in the 21st Century, however, and was most recently spotted harassing schoolchildren in West Surry, England.

Background/History (Public): It is unclear how far back in history the tale of Spring-Heeled Jack goes in English history. In 1808, a letter to the editor of Sheffield Times related how “Years ago a famous Ghost walked and played many pranks in this historic neighborhood.” This anonymous author went on to identify this mysterious spirit as the “Park Ghost or Spring-Heeled Jack,” and described its ability to take enormous leaps and frighten passersby. He then rather wryly commented that, “he was a human ghost, as he ceased to appear when a certain number of men went with guns and sticks to test his skin.” But the first well-recorded outbreak of Spring-Heeled Jack assaults began in 1837, when a businessman out walking at night reported that a muscular man with glowing eyes and diabolical features jumped over the high railings of a cemetery to land directly in his path. Later that year in October, the same figure came bounding out of an alley to kiss and grope a young servant girl named Mary Stevens – but bounded away when she screamed for help. The next day he jumped in the way of a passing carriage, causing the coachman to lose control, crash, and become severely injured. Witnesses reported that the mysterious prankster then escaped by jumping over a nine foot-high wall while laughing maniacally.

As news of these attacks spread the press and public dubbed the figure “Spring-Heeled Jack,” both because of his ability to leap extraordinary distances and because of his resemblance to the infamous prankster-ghost of Sheffield. “Jack” seemed particularly partial to attacking young women (mostly servant girls) and taunting policemen in the London suburbs of Kensington, Hammersmith, and Ealing. By January of 1838 the situation had become dire enough that Sir John Cowan, the Lord Mayor of London, was forced to call a public session in the Mansion House to review the matter. Numerous witnesses complained in person and by letter of Spring-Heeled Jack’s “wicked pranks,” which included frightening young women into “dangerous fits” and attacking them so that they were “severely wounded by a sort of claws the miscreant wore on his hands.” Another correspondent claimed that in the suburbs of Stockwell, Brixton, Camberwell, and Vauxhall several people had died of fright (though the Lord Mayor doubted this), and others had had “fits.”

The Lord Mayor had mixed feelings about the affair. He felt that “the greatest exaggerations” had been made, but on the other

SPRING-HEELED JACK QUOTES

“The figures, appearing gigantic in the shadows, bounded toward her on legs that covered such distances with each stride that they scarcely seemed human. Behind it swirled a cloak, which bellowed and flapped noisily. But above this cloak, it was the face that caught and held Polly’s attention: a face from the very depths of hell. A laugh rang out from the creature.”

— Polly Adams, 1837

“...he threw off his outer his outer garment, and applying the lighted candle to his breast, presented a most hideous and frightening appearance, and vomited forth a quantity of blue and white flames from his mouth, and his eyes resembled red balls of fire. From the hasty glance, which her fright enabled her to get of his person, she observed that he wore a large helmet, and his dress, which appeared to fit him very tight, seemed to her to resemble white oil skin.”

— London Times, 1838

“While returning from a friend’s house in Brixton Hill last evening, I was accosted by that malapropos fellow the



Ghost. I had just arrived at the point in Herne Hill Road... when the figure came forth from beside the stile. I confess I was momentarily frightened, but speedily recovering my presence of mind, was on the point of making an onslaught with my umbrella, when the object turned sharp round, and clearing the low railings at a bound, made off across the country. Being now over forty, it was useless thinking of pursuit, but I, however, satisfied myself that he is clad in a black suit, which, by some means, he transposes into white when needful. He also has a spring-heeled or India-rubber soled boots, for no man living could leap so lightly, and, I might say, fly across the ground in the manner he did last night."

— GHR Davidson,
1872

"For some time past the neighborhood... has been disturbed each night by a man dressed in a sheep skin, or something of the kind, with a long white tail to it. The man who is playing this mischief has springs to his boots, and can jump to a height of 15 or 20 feet. The other night he jumped upon a college, and got into a window on the roof, and so frightened the



hand personal friends of his had attested to the accuracy of the claims. So he instructed the London police to search for the individual or individuals responsible for the "pantomime display," and also offered a reward for their capture. Various vigilante groups and bounty hunters went in search of the "ghost," but none were successful... and the attacks continued. On February 20th, 18-year-old Jane Alsop opened the door to her home only to be attacked by a horrifying figure with claws that blew fire on her. She would later state that, "he was wearing a kind of helmet, and a tight fitting white costume like oilskin. His face was hideous; his eyes were like balls of fire. His hands had claws of some metallic substance, and vomited blue and white flames." Five days later, 18-year-old Lucy Scales was walking down Green Dragon Alley in Limehouse when a similar figure emerged from a doorway to breathe fire into her face. Lucy fell to the ground, seized by violent spasms that lasted for several hours.

After these incidents, Spring-Heeled Jack became a popular Victorian antihero. His alleged exploits were frequently reported in the newspapers, and he became the subject of a variety of penny dreadfuls and plays. Yet even as his infamy grew, reports of his activities became less and less frequent. In 1843, however, a wave of fresh sightings swept England. He struck at young women in the Midlands, where he was reported as "the very image of the Devil himself, with horns and eyes of flame." Then he went to the coast, where he amused himself attacking mail coaches in East Anglia. This wave of bizarre activity continued throughout England until 1845, when a figure resembling Spring-Heeled Jack murdered a 13-year-old London prostitute named Maria Davis.

After this murder the mysterious prankster suddenly vanished. Whether this is because he was guilty of killing the girl, or quit his pranks in disgust after another man usurped his identity for foul ends, is unclear. But he would not reemerge for 25 years, at which point Jack returned from obscurity to amuse himself in several diverse locations. He showed up in Sheffield in November of 1872, frightening local inhabitants until they were "in a state of commotion owing to what is known as the 'Peckham Ghost,' a mysterious figure, quite alarming in appearance." He then reappeared in Hampshire in August of 1877, where he would surprise sentries at the massive Aldershot's barracks by sneaking up on them and slapping them across the face. When pursued by armed soldiers, he leapt over their heads and vanished into the surrounding darkness. In autumn of the same year he was cornered by an angry mob in Lincolnshire, who fired at him seemingly without effect. Witnesses reported that the shots made hollow, metallic

sounds like an "empty bucket" when they struck him. As usual, Spring-Heeled Jack used his jumping ability to make his escape.

As was his habit, Spring-Heeled Jack then vanished for roughly 20 years, reappearing in Liverpool in September of 1904. Numerous witnesses saw him leap from the rooftop of massive Saint Francis Xavier's Church and land safely behind a nearby house. When they rushed to the scene, they found a "tall and muscular man, fully dressed in white and wearing an egg shaped helmet." The man then laughed hysterically and sprung away in a massive leap that took him behind neighboring houses. For the next week, Spring-Heeled Jack amused himself by hurling pieces of brick, old bottles, and other missiles down on Liverpool's inhabitants from their rooftops.

Perhaps tiring of his native land, Jack subsequently spent some time in the United States. He appeared in Provincetown, Rhode Island in the autumn of 1938, where he attacked both men and women (but never seriously injured anyone). The locals dubbed him the Black Flash because of his speed in leaping and his ability to avoid law enforcement. A local restaurateur later reported, "We became afraid to go out after dark. He'd jump out on people from behind a tree, maybe, or over a wall – a figure dressed all in black. He was very agile; some people said he must have had springs on his feet." Rather considerably, he only haunted the town during the off-season (October to March), and thus never adversely affected the tourist trade. He was later reported in Cape Cod, where he reputedly leapt down the middle of a busy street.

In the 1970s Jack was seen in such diverse places as Houston, Texas, Plano, Texas, and Sydney, North Carolina. In each instance he was described as being tall, wearing a cape with tight clothing, and being able to leap extraordinary distances "like an astronaut on the moon." He seems to have grown tired of wandering, however, because back in Sheffield, England the inhabitants began complaining of a red eyed prowler that bounded between rooftops, walked down the sides of walls, grabbed women, and punched men. He vanished after being chased by the police.

Perhaps predictably, in the early 21st Century Jack has turned up once again, this time in West Surry. There he stalks elementary school children, who describe him as "all black, with red eyes and a funny all-in-one white suit with badges on it." They have indicated that he can run as fast as a car, and (rather more ominously) approaches dark haired children with the statement, "I want you."

Background/History (Secret): Henry Beresford, Marquis of Waterford, was one of the principle “bloods” of the late Regency and early Victorian period. A noted sportsman, boxer, equestrian, and practical joker, the “Mad Marquis” was frequently in the news in the 1930s for drunken brawling, vandalism, and rude behavior toward young women. Reputedly, while celebrating a successful fox hunt in 1837, Henry and several of his friends stumbled across a case of red paint, which they then liberally daubed upon the buildings of Melton Mowbray, thus originating the phrase “painting the town red.” Mad Henry was also a man with a particular dislike for police officers, who tended to get in the way of his womanizing, dangerous pranks, and general rowdiness.

One fine spring day in 1936, the Mad Marquis stumbled across the wreck of an “airship” (actually an early Se’ecra survey vessel) while rabbit hunting alone in Oxfordshire. The Marquis found the devilish-looking pilot (an insect-like Se’ecra) of the ship dying a hundred yards away from the wreck. Though fascinated by the creature, he immediately realized that it was in incredible pain, and shot it to put it out of its misery. He then removed its bizarre garments (an exploration suit), salvaged a few items from the wreck, and had the lot buried in the field by some trusted servants.

After some practice, the Marquis realized that his new black-and-white “oilskin” suit conveyed amazing powers on its wearer. While wearing it, he could leap for incredible distances and was impervious to most bullets. By donning the terrifying-looking helmet that the creature wore, he could also breathe underwater, amplify his voice, and see outlines in the dark. Furthermore, an odd device he recovered from the wreckage allowed him to project bursts of debilitating blue flame several times each day (it’s actually a Se’ecra device for knocking out specimens). Ideas began to form in the Mad Marquis mind. He added a long, mysterious black cloak and razor tipped gloves to the outfit, making it perfect for his purposes – namely, playing brutal, dangerous pranks and terrorizing any young women or policemen he happened across!

The Mad Marquis then set to having the time of his life. He groped and terrorized pretty young servant girls (especially ones that refused his not-too-subtle advances), frightened coachmen, baffled and eluded policemen, and generally made a nuisance of himself throughout the greater London area. Later he broadened his activities to include England’s east coast and Midlands. He continued enjoying himself on-and-off for almost seven years, at which point the sickening execution of a young London

prostitute was blamed on him. Although the Mad Marquis was an obnoxious, dangerous prankster and mild sexual deviant, he wasn’t a murderer. Disgusted by the killing and concerned about Spring-Heeled Jack’s “reputation,” he put away his costume and gave up “pranks” for the remainder of his life. He married a respectable woman named Louisa Stuart and moved to Ireland, where he became a well-respected philanthropist.

Unfortunately for the world, there must be something in the Beresford genes that instinctively leads the men of that family to pranks, practical jokes, and the harassment of women. After the Mad Marquis death in 1859, one of his sons discovered the Spring-Heeled Jack costume, and began using it to “prank” about England. The outfit has subsequently passed through the hands of a dozen male Beresfords, each of whom has put his own villainous (though generally harmless) spin on the legend. Typically, each new “Jack” is given the costume by his father when he turns 26 – Henry Beresford’s age when found the “airship” – and is expected to play with it for only a few years before putting it away again. The current Spring-Heeled Jack resides in London, where he amuses himself by alternately frightening and entertaining schoolchildren.

Personality/Motivation: Though each of the dozen or so Spring-Heeled Jacks has had his own distinct personality, the personality of each of the male Beresfords are similar enough to the others that a single, “generic” Jack personality can be assembled. Jack loves violent practical jokes that result in people fainting, running in terror, or getting hurt (though not fatally). He enjoys frightening and baffling people, especially pretty young women and authority figures such as police officers and soldiers. Jack is also something of a sexual pervert. He enjoys kissing, groping, and tearing the clothes off of teenaged girls, but does so in a slapstick manner that has never deteriorated into rape. Nor has Jack ever committed murder or an act of physical violence that has left a victim with anything more than small scars.

In his secret identity, Jack is generally charming, athletic, and mischievous in a distinctively upper-class English manner.

Quote: “HA-HA-Ha-Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!”

Powers/Tactics: Spring-Heeled Jack has a variety of powers that derive from his costume. His “demonic” headgear (a Se’ecra exploration helmet) allows him to scare opponents (both visually and audibly using amplified laughter), see in the infrared spectrum, and grants him Self-Contained Breathing. His long opera cape not only makes it difficult to see him at night, but

ladies that one has not yet recovered from the shock.”

— Illustrated Police News, 1877

“...a giant of a thing, all in black, with long silver ears. I thought it was some kind of wild animal, so I shot it, and when I did the damned thing just laughed and jumped over my eight foot high back fence in one leap!”

— Farmer Charlie Farley, 1945

SPRING-HEELLED JACK PLOT SEEDS

Teen Champions:

Millennium City's parks, high schools, and college campuses are being stalked by a superpowered apparition that attacks young women, frightens old people, and then bounds away into the night before it can be stopped by the police. Can the students of Ravenswood Academy stop this menace... or will they become its next victims?

Victorian Hero:

Spring-Heeled Jack this! Spring-Heeled Jack that! The Lord Mayor of London is tired of hearing about Spring-Heeled Jack! The PCs are a group of detectives, occult investigators, and former soldiers that have been hired by him to uncover – and put a stop to – the legend of Spring-Heeled Jack once and for all. But can they find him? And, if they do, can they catch him?

Vibora Bay: The mysterious and despised Spring-Heeled Jack has moved to the Queen City – only this time he is stopping crimes, not committing them. When confronted by the PCs, he admits that he is a “new” Jack who wants to redeem the infamous

also breaks up his silhouette, making him more difficult to hit. While potentially deadly combat weapons, his clawed gloves are almost exclusively used to tear away women's clothing, rather than injure or kill. His white “oilskin” (a Se'ecra exploration suit) makes him nearly bulletproof. His Blue Flame Emitter allows him to knock out opponents using bursts of flaming gas (though he can only do this three times a day). Finally, his Spring-Heeled Boots (antigravity jumpers) allow him to bound rapidly away when danger threatens.

A prankster and stalker of young women, Spring-Heeled Jack typically leaps in front of his opponents in an attempt to scare them using a PRE Attack. He may also “breathe” blue flame upon them or enhance his PRE Attack using his amplified “mad laughter.” If his victim is a pretty young woman, he will also attempt to grapple her, cackling hideously and tearing at her clothing until she runs away in terror. Jack never makes a genuine attempt to pursue his victims – though he may appear to do so if it frightens them further – and will flee if confronted by any determined attacker or if his victim screams for help.

Campaign Use: Spring-Heeled Jack is an extremely minor, relatively harmless supervillain. His motives are more closely related to a drunken fraternity student with a roll of toilet paper than a master thief of would-be world conqueror. He doesn't steal, rape (at least in the traditional sense of the word), murder, or destroy large amounts of property. He's more of a bizarre, unsettling public menace than anything else, and would undoubtedly shy away from any proposed alliance with a “real” supervillain. If he were to cooperate with anyone, it would be with more lighthearted scoundrels such as Foxbat, ZigZag, or the members of GRAB... though it is highly unlikely that female supervillains would put up with him for very long.

Still, Jack's disturbing need to terrorize young women, cause accidents, and tie up precious police resources make him a villain worth getting rid of. Spring-Heeled Jack is a particularly suitable villain for Teen Champions characters, as he will gravitate to high schools, college campuses, and other places where there are teenager girls to terrorize. As a kind of “prototype” supervillain, he also is a natural fit for any Swashbuckling, Victorian, or Western Hero campaign. In the bleak world of Hudson City, Spring-Heeled Jack could be reinterpreted as a more sinister character: a murdering sexual predator that the vigilantes of Dark Champions need to put down. Finally, Jack's status as an “immortal” villain makes him a suitable opponent for any Cyber Hero or Star Hero campaign set in a city of the future.

Appearance: Spring-Heeled Jack is a tall, athletic man in a skintight white jumpsuit, black opera cape, and knee-high black boots. He wears a vaguely bullet shaped Se'ecra exploration helmet with “demonic” features and glowing red eyes. His weaponry includes black gloves that end in small claws and a strangle “lantern” that is strapped to his chest (later Jacks built it into the helmet). Additionally, different Jacks have added diverse costume elements to the outfit depending on their individual tastes and the era in which they lived. These have included bearskins, sheepskins, phosphorescent “ghost” paint, “little green men” features, highwaymen clothing, and “astronaut” accoutrements.

A Victorian eyewitness described one Jack this way: “He was wearing a kind of helmet, and a tight fitting white costume like an oilskin. His face was hideous; his eyes were like balls of fire. His hands had claws of some metallic substance, and he vomited blue and white flames.”

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Spring-Heeled Jack



character's name by
doing good deeds.
Can they trust him, or
is it all just an
elaborate prank?

Spring-Heeled Jack

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

Total Characteristic Cost: 79

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 22"/44"
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
24	<i>Blue Flame Emitter:</i> Drain STUN 3d6, Limited Range (2") (+¼), Area Of Effect (8" Cone, +1); 3 Charges (-1¼), OIF (-½)	[3]
4	<i>Clawed Gloves:</i> HA +1½d6 (4d6 with STR); HA (-½), OIF (-½)	1
18	<i>Bulletproof White "Oilskin" Costume:</i> Armor (9 PD/9 ED); OIF (-½)	0
3	<i>"Demonic" Helmet:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OIF (-½)	0
7	<i>"Demonic" Helmet:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing); OIF (-½)	0
6	<i>Opera Cape:</i> +3 DCV; Activation Roll 11- (-1), OIF (-½)	1
10	<i>Opera Cape:</i> Invisibility to Sight Group; OIF (-½), Only Works in Darkness (-½)	2
13	<i>Spring-Heeled Boots:</i> Leaping +20"; OIF (-½)	2
10	<i>"Demonic" Helmet:</i> +20 PRE; OIF (-½), Only to Cause Fear (-½)	0
6	<i>"Demonic" Laughter:</i> +10 PRE; Only to Cause Fear (-½), IIF (-¼)	0

Perks

5 Money: Well Off

Skills

3 CK: London (or other appropriate city) 12-
5 High Society 12-
3 PS: Wealthy Upper Class Twit 11-
1 Seduction 8-
3 Shadowing 12-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 121

Total Cost: 200

100+ Disadvantages

5 Hunted: Cryptozoologists 8- (Less Pow, Capture)
20 Hunted: Scotland Yard 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
15 Psychological Limitation: Coward (Common, Strong)
20 Psychological Limitation: Hatred of Attractive Young Women and Authority Figures (Very Common, Strong)
15 Reputation: Villainous Prankster and Sexual Deviant, 11- (Extreme)
15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity [Mr. Beresford] (Frequently, Major)
10 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 200



Be Fruitful and Multiply by Curtis Gibson

Peopling Your Fantasy Hero World

Presented here are a number of races, suitable for Fantasy, although easily adapted into other genres, especially Star HERO. In addition to the race description, a paragraph is included on what niche was that race filled, or what tone or feel was being created by choosing it. Few of the inspirations for the races presented were from fantasy; many interesting things from other genres can be incorporated into fantasy game with nary a change in flavor.

Elan

The most distinctive thing about the Elan are their wings. At full extension they extend twelve to fifteen feet. Elan have a barrel chested look, as they effectively have a second set of pectoral muscles for their wings. Other than that, they have a slight build, and long almost prehensile feet. The average height is five foot five inches. The hair color, which generally matches the color of the wings, ranges from white to black, and pastels.

Meeting an Elan is an uncommon event, they tend to live in high places only accessible by flight. They are often wanted for scouts for armies, and a tradition of hiring out in such situations has developed in many enclaves; these scouts bring much money to their homes, and are held in high regard by their people.

Elan tend to be quiet and intense people. They are somewhat mercurial in temperament, and feel themselves a race apart. They have a tendency to avoid getting involved in the politics of the day; aside from the hired scouts.

The Elan are the classic “flying human” race, but I wanted something a bit different, and went with a more realistic muscular structure, giving the race their unique look. The name is an nod to the classic Winged Folk from early Dragon Magazine.

ELAN PACKAGE DEAL

Cost Ability

- 6 *Wings:* Extra Limbs, Inherent (+¼)
- 13 *Flight:* Flight 8”, Usable as Gliding (+¼); Restrained (-½)
- 3 *Longsight:* +2 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group

Cost Options

- 0 *Dexterous Feet:* Include Feet in the Extra Limbs
- 7 *Fast Elan:* Flight +4” (as above)
- 7 *Wing Buffet:* HA 2d6; HA (-½)



artwork by Jonathan Zuchowski

Kharg

Kharg are a solid and bulky people, very muscular and with thick leathery skin that tends a greenish cast. They stand about six feet tall, and their hair tends to darker colors. They have small claws and large fangs, but not large enough to use in combat without extreme training. They are a strong and durable race, and excel in most physical activities.

Kharg (never *the* Kharg, just Kharg) are a very formal and honorable people. They respect strength, forwardness and direct action. Their particular code of honor is one of personal responsibility, action and deeds. Unfortunately they are a little easier to manipulate than other races, and have been the foot soldiers of the armies of conquerors many times in history. They also have been the stalwart defenders of good on almost as many occasions.

Individual Kharg hold strong opinions, and as strength and directness are cultural virtues, they tend to be very assertive about their beliefs. Kharg they hold a low opinion of an individual's life and are sometimes seen as somewhat barbaric, but individual Kharg have been among the greatest heroes of the ages.

This is a race that I came up with to replace the ubiquitous Orc. But unlike the classically evil Orc, the Kharg have some redeeming features. Socially and stylistically modeled on Next Generation/Deep Space Nine era Klingons.

KHARG PACKAGE DEAL

Cost	Ability
3	+3 STR
6	+3 CON
4	+2 BOD
3	<i>Survival Awareness</i> : +1 PER
1	<i>Endurance Training</i> : LS: Extended Breathing (1 END per Turn)
Disadvantages	
-4	-2 EGO
-1	-2 COM
Options	
10	<i>Claws</i> : HKA ½d6
2	<i>Toughened Skin</i> : Damage Resistance (2 PD/2 ED)
8	<i>Message Runner</i> : Running +2" (8" Total), Reduced Endurance (½ END, +¼) on All Running



Winter Ogres

WINTER OGRE PACKAGE DEAL

Cost Ability

- 5 +5 STR
- 10 +5 CON
- 1 +1 PD (on top of figured)
- 1 +1 ED (on top of Figured)
- 4 +4 Stun (on top of figured)
- 2 *Arctic Dweller*: LS Safe in Intense Cold
- 2 *Master Brewer*: LS: Reduced Effect of Alcohol
- 2 *Second Eyelid*: Flash Defense Sight (2 points)

Disadvantages

- 5 Physical Limitation: Easily Overheated (Infrequently, Slightly)

Options

Ogre Variant: Drop the Arctic Dweller, Second Eyelid, and Physical Limitation

Winter Ogres are large humanoids covered in hair, which covers them completely from head to foot. Mostly in lighter colors, white, light grays, pale blues, the hair helps protect from the extreme cold that is their primary habitat.

Ogres are a nomadic people, having a family, clan, tribe social organization. With a lack of necessary materials, and being nomadic, their level of technological development is lower than standard for the world, but those who live outside their ancestral homeland have no difficulty understanding and using said equipment. Ogres, due to their nomadic culture, have very little attachment to material possessions, aside from a special weapon, or something small they can carry with them.

Ogres are a very private people, and do not open up to many. Those few to whom they do are considered almost adopted family. A Ogre friend is a friend for life, and through any difficulties. They are fiercely loyal to friends and family. They do not generally wear clothes, but do wear weapon straps, and pouches or packs.

Ogres were created based on the idea of the Wookiee. I'd had players in previous fantasy games that wanted to play something like that, so this is what I came up with when developing my current fantasy world. I started with the Yeti concept, fleshed out the abilities that implied survival in cold, and added the appropriate Characteristics for playing a physically strong hairy character.



Pecks

Pecks stand between three and four feet high, and are mostly hairless with a soft down on the top of the head and a few other small places. They are amphibious, completely at home in the water or land. They can breath either air or water interchangeably, and are immune to most poisons delivered through gaseous means. Additionally they have air sacks inside and can go without breathing for great lengths of time. They are quick, and very hardy for their size.

Peck live mostly in coastal areas, and are a very friendly people. As a race they are amazing seafarers, and divers. Most pearls that are seen throughout the land were gathered by Peck divers. Culturally devoted to families with genealogy that spans centuries and generally have all sorts of odd names for relationships that most other races ignore (such as a specific name for a second cousin three times removed on the mother's side).

I didn't want to use any of the classic short races: Dwarves, Gnomes, Halflings, but it is a staple of fantasy so I threw in an amphibious twist, for extra flavor, to have something different from the norm. The name is taken from Willow.

PECKS PACKAGE DEAL

Cost	Ability
3	+3 DEX
4	+2 CON
2	+4 END
1	<i>Long Lived</i> : LS: Longevity (200 Years)
5	<i>Amphibious</i> : LS: Breathe Underwater
2	<i>Air Bladders</i> : LS: Extended Breathing (1 END per Minute)
3	<i>Filter System</i> : LS: Asphyxiants
3	<i>Great Swimmers</i> : Swimming +3"
3	<i>At Home in the Water</i> : Aquatic Movement

Disadvantages

-5	-5 STR
-4	-2 BODY
-5	Physical Limitation: Small (Infrequently, Slightly)
-2	Running -1"

Options

2	<i>Deep Diver</i> : LS: Safe in High Pressure
1	<i>Legendary Breath</i> : Up Air Bladders to (1 END / 5 Minutes)



G'Kaari

The G'Kaari (soft 'g'), have a reptilian cast, with skin coloring in grays and greens, with decorative spots all over their skin. They are hairless, and their eyes tend towards colorful eyes that almost seem to glow; strong red, or bright yellow for example

They are a philosophical and intelligent race, that tend towards research, magic or stories. G'Kaari are a varied and diverse in personality with one difference: they do not often tend evil. Their memories are so nearly perfect that any overt evil act they make, they can never forget, and the guilt of such actions lingers for decades.

I created the personality for the G'Kaari because I wanted an adviser race besides elves, and this fits the bill. I was floundering for a look and style for the race, and while watching Babylon 5, I had it, so the look and name of the race are an homage.

G'KAARI PACKAGE DEAL

Cost	Ability
3	+3 INT
6	+3 EGO
3	+3 PRE
5	A G'Kaari Never Forgets: Eidetic Memory

Options

3	Strengthened Scales: Armor (1 PD/1 ED)
3	Strong Mind: Lighting Calculator
4	Archivist: Speed Reading



COMBAT TALENT COSTS

Combat Talents are Naked Advantages or extra damage that is applied to the character's normal damage. These were built assuming a 45 Active Point attack. The default form of the Talent applies to all weapons and attacks the character has.

Costs are included for specific weapon groups (such as Swords or Axes) and for specific weapons (Long Sword, Rapier, Dagger), with -½ and a -1 additional Limitation, respectively.

ROUNDING WEAPONS

The rounding rules put the cost for the Weapon Group and the Single Weapon for Improved Feint the same. As an option, the Single Weapon cost can be rounded heavily in the character's favor and only cost 4 pts. This is the option the author's campaign uses.

A Few Talents More by Curtis Gibson

Ah, Talents; those fun and useful little abilities somewhere between Powers and Skills. Various rulebooks, and this article's predecessor, **A Fistful of Talents** (*DH41*) present quite a number of them.

Why have so many? They can be used in a number of ways; to help build flavor and color in a game world. They can help give real flair for a character. And when introducing someone to Fantasy Hero from that other really popular fantasy game in its revised third edition, having a laundry list of special abilities might help them make the transition by finding character creation a little more familiar.

And beside, who doesn't like to look at a list of really fun abilities and think to themselves "I want that, and this, and the other one here...."

Combat Talents

DIVINE FLAME

This Talent bestows the ability to make any weapon you hold to be a holy weapon. It is counted as both Holy and Flame for SFX when attacking. This adds no direct damage, but will trigger any Vulnerability or Susceptibility based on those special effects. END Cost: 4.

Divine Flame Cost: 8, 6, or 5 Character Points (bought as Variable Special Effects (Holy and Flame, +¼) for up to 45 Active Points, Lingering up to 1 Turn (+½) (16 Active Points); Increased Endurance Cost (2x END, -½), Restrainable (-½))

FINDING CHINKS

The character is trained to know the weak spots in armor. The defense from non-natural armor (including any magical enhancement to the defense of said armor) is halved. This doesn't halve the normal defense, or magical defense from items or spells, or any natural armor the character may have by race, just the defense of regular worn armor. END Cost: 2.

Finding Chinks Cost: 9, 7, or 6 Character Points (bought as Armor Piercing (+½) for up to 45 Active Points (22 Active Points); Only Affects Worn Armor (Including Enhanced Enchantments, -1), Restrainable (-½))

IMPROVED FEINT

The character can feint so well, his attack cannot be dodged. When this Talent is activated, an extra 1½d6 killing is rolled and added to the attack. The BODY and STUN of this attack can only be used to negate Combat Luck. END Cost: 2.

Improved Feint Cost: 6, 5, or 5 Character Points (bought as HKA 1½d6 (25 Active Points); Only to Match Combat Luck (-2), -2 Decreased STUN Multiplier (-½), No STR Bonus (-½), Requires a Feint Roll (Active Point Penalty to Skill Roll is -1 per 20 Active Points, -¼))

KNOW THY ENEMY

The character has immense knowledge of the physiology, psychology, and training methods (if applicable) of a specific race (or culture, or specific organization). He knows how their bodies move, and the weak spots of any combat technique they might have. When attacking an opponent of this race, the character can choose to take a -2 DCV penalty and gain the ability to attack twice in that phase.

This Talent is a favorite of Dragonhunters, or Holy Knight types (who often choose Undead or Demons).

Know Thy Enemy Cost: 10, 7, or 6 Character Points (bought as (Total: 15 Active Cost, 10 Real Cost) Two-Weapon Fighting (HTH) (10 Active Points); Only versus Specific Racial type (-½) (Real Cost: 7) **plus** Rapid Attack (HTH) (5 Active Points); Only versus Specific Racial type (-½) (Real Cost: 3))

RIPOSTE

This Talent grants the ability to make a lightning fast counterstrike after a successful block. The user of the Talent, after a successful block roll, may make an attack at the person he blocked at 1d6 killing (same STR Min of the weapon) or the weapons damage, whichever is less. END Cost: 3.

Riposte Cost: 15, 12, or 9 Character Points (bought as HKA 1d6, Trigger (Successful Block, Activating the Trigger is an Action that Takes No Time, Trigger requires a Zero Phase Action to Reset, +¾) (26 Active Points); OIF (Weapon of Opportunity) (-½), Same STR min as normal weapon (-¼))

SURPRISE ATTACK

The character can take extra advantage on a target that is slowed down or restrained. When character uses this Talent, he gains a +1 stun multiplier on his attack. The base form of this Talent works with any weapon. END Cost: 1.

Surprise Attack Cost: 7, 5, or 4 Character Points (bought as +1 Stun Multiplier (+¼) for up to 45 Active Points (11 Active Points); Only when Target is at ½ DCV (-½))

SWORDBREAKER

The character is skilled at destroying weapons. When he attacks a weapon he gains +3 DC with the attack. No end cost.

Swordbreaker Cost: 9, 7, or 6 Character Points (bought as HKA +1d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½) (22 Active Points); Only when Attacking Foci (-1), No STR Bonus (-½))

Spell Manipulation Talents

The spells manipulation Talents assume that each spell is bought with a single Charge. Alternate costs are also given for other Charges.

GHOST TOUCH

Casters with this Talent know how to make their spells exist on more than one plane, and can affect those things that are incorporeal. END Cost: 2.

Ghost Touch Cost: 3 Character Points (bought as Affects Desolidified (Single Special Effect, +¼) for up to 60 Active Points (15 Active Points); 1 Charge (-2), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (2x END, -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼))

- 1 Recoverable Charge: 4 points
- 2 Charges: 3 points
- 2 Recoverable Charges: 6 points
- 4 Charges: 6 points

HIDE SPELL

The user of this Talent can make any spell he casts be invisible to sight. The effects of the spell are still seen after the spell is done, and any other sensory effects of the spell are intact (such as sound). END Cost: 3.

Hide Spell Cost: 7 Character Points (bought as Naked Modifier: Invisible to Sight Group (+½) for up to 60 Active Points (30 Active Points); 1 Charge (-2), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Costs Endurance (-½))

- 1 Recoverable Charge: 9 points
- 2 Charges: 8 points
- 2 Recoverable Charges: 10 points
- 4 Charges: 10 points

MAGICAL CONTROL

A caster with this Talent has great control of his area spells, and may cast such spells without damaging friends in the target area. The only drawback is that he has to make normal attack rolls on those he wishes to damage with the spell. END Cost: 2.

Magical Control: 3 Character Points (bought as Naked Modifier: Adds Selective to any Area of effect (+¼) for up to 60 Active Points (15 Active Points); 1 Charge (-2), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼))

- 1 Recoverable Charge: 5 points
- 2 Charges: 4 points
- 2 Recoverable Charges: 4 points
- 4 Charges: 6 points

WAR MAGE

This Talent represents specialized training that is handled in the colleges of war mages. Using this ability increases the size of a normal area spell and makes it huge. The Talent would adjust a fireball that had a normal 3" radius, and the adjusted version of the spell could have up to a 3 kilometer radius. The caster chooses the size, from normal area up to the maximum of 1 kilometer per inch when he casts the spell. END Cost: 3

War Mage: 7 Character Points (bought as Naked Modifier: Mega Scale Area (1" = 1 km, Can be Scaled Down to 1" = 2m, +½) for up to 60 Active Points (30 Active Points); 1 Charge (-2), Costs Endurance (-½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼))

- 1 Recoverable Charge: 9 points
- 2 Charges: 8 points
- 2 Recoverable Charges: 10 points
- 4 Charges: 10 points

DUPLICATION, DIGITAL HERO MATERIAL ONLY (-2)

Spell Manipulation Talents are reflections of greater training with magic, and allow the character to modify details of the spells. Most are bought with Charges, to show the resistance of magic to modification. Many of these Talents have a high Active Point cost, so charges works very well in flavor, and to bring the cost down. Buying extra Charges, or buying the Charges Limitation off completely can be done by the character, if he is willing to spend the points. These talents are bought as Naked Advantages that can be applied to any spell the character has purchased. Limitations that are required on spells are also recommended for these Talents, as they are just modifications to said magic. The default build of these Talents assumes Gestures and Incantations.

MUFFLE SPELL

A variation of the Hide Spell talent, *Muffle Spell*, just replaces Sight group with Hearing group for the Advantage.

ARMORED CASTER

Armored Caster just applies Limitations to the normal skill progression cost of +1 to the skill for 2 pts. Some GMs may find that too cost effective. If so, use regular Skill Levels and a slightly higher Limitation value. *Ritual Caster*, *These Spells aren't That Tough to Cast*, and *Minor Magics Master* also use this same mechanic.

General Talents

ALERTNESS

The character is very alert, and anytime he makes any kind of Perception Roll, he negates the first -5 in penalties to the roll; this does not affect range penalties, but it does affect any other kind of penalty (cover, darkness, stealth, etc.).

Alertness: 7 Character Points (bought as +5 with All Perception (15 Active Points); Only versus Non-Range Penalties (-1))

ANCESTRAL ENEMY

The character with this Talent has a specific creature type (Dragons, Elves, Trolls, Orcs, etc.) that he has a historical or personal reason to hate and has trained to be better at combat when dealing with them as foes. He gains +1 OCV, DCV, and Damage Class (with any weapon) when fighting his chosen type of enemy.

Ancestral Enemy: 13 Character Points (bought as + 1 OCV, +1 DCV, +1 DC (20 Active Points); Only versus One Racial Type (-½))

ARMORED CASTER

The character has trained to overcome the difficulties in casting spells while in armor. Whatever armor penalties due to encumbrance the character has to his Power Skill Magic roll are halved, rounded in the character's favor. (-1 becomes no penalty, -3 becomes -1, and so on).

Armored Caster: 4 Character Points (bought as +5 to Power Skill Magic roll (10 Active Points); Only to Offset Armor/Encumbrance Penalties (-1), Can No More Than Halve Penalty (-½))

BATTLEFIELD AWARENESS

The character is very aware of combat around him. He can tell friend from foe within his awareness field. If the character cannot see or hear, he loses this ability. No END Cost.

Battlefield Awareness: 13 Character Points (bought as: Spatial Awareness (Unusual Group), Increased Arc of Perception (360°), Range (32 Active Points); Only to Tell Friend/Foe Positions (-1), Affected as Sight and Hearing (-½))

BOARS' RUN

The character can move quickly in combat, coming to full speed from launch, and can stop instantly. END Cost: 2.

Boars' Run: 3 Character Points (bought as Naked Modifier: Combat Acceleration/Deceleration (+¼) for up to 20 Active Points (5 Active Points); Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END, -½))

CLOSE COMBAT BOW SPECIALIST

The character is extra deadly with his bow when at close range (within 6") and gains an extra 2 DC of killing damage with his attacks. END Cost: 1.

Close Combat Bow Specialist: 8 Character Points (bought as RKA +½d6 (10 Active Points); Limited Range 6" (-¼))

COMBAT ANTICIPATION

The character with this Talent has the uncanny knack to know which way his opponent will dodge. An opponent's +3 DCV from Dodge is negated by the user of this Talent. Martial Dodges are unaffected (so the target still gets the full +5 DCV). This Talent is considered to be in use all the time.

Combat Anticipation: 5 Character Points (bought as +3 with OCV (15 Active Points); Only to Offset Dodge DCV Modifier (-2))

DEATHBED PARAMEDIC

The character takes one turn, doing nothing else and dropping to 0 DCV the entire time. He then makes a Paramedic Roll and pays the Endurance cost. If the roll is made by 2, then the patient stabilizes, and if he was less than 3 body away from death, is also brought back (the SFX is something like "Mostly Dead"). END Cost: 5.

Deathbed Paramedic: 9 Character Points (bought as: Healing BODY 3d6, Resurrection (50 Active Points); Concentration (0 DCV Throughout, Character is Totally Unaware of Nearby Events, -1½), Extra Time (Post-Segment 12, Character May Take No Other Actions, -1½), Gestures (-¼), Only to Stabilize Bleeding/Heal to 1 BODY Away from Death (-1), Requires a Paramedic Roll (-1 per 20 Active Points, -¼))

ENJOYS THE CHALLENGE

Characters with this Talent really relish pitting themselves against others in contests of skill; when he gets into a situation where is being tried by someone else, he seems to do better. The character gains +4 with all skills, but can only use them in an opposed skill roll check.

Enjoys the Challenge: 11 Character Points (bought as +4 with All Non-Combat Skills (32 Active Points); Only for Opposed Skill Rolls (-2))

EXTRA SPELL SLOT

The character with this Talent has one more spell slot available than the normal INT/5.

Extra Spell Slot: 2 Character Points (bought as +5 INT, Only for Calculating the Number of Spells Active (-1½))

FEARFUL PRESENCE

The user of this Talent is very good at frightening others, and has a fearsome visage and/or demeanor. He gains +4d6 on fear-based PRE Attacks.

Fearful Presence: 8 Character Points (bought as +20 PRE (20 Active Points); Attack Only (-1), Fear-based Only (-½))

FOLLOW THROUGH

The character is very adept at combat movement, and can move into the hex of a dropped enemy automatically after the enemy drops. END Cost: 1.

Follow Through: 3 Character Points (bought As Running 1", Trigger (Takes No Time, Resets Automatically Immediately after It Activates, +1) (4 Active Points); Only to Move into the Hex of Opponent That Just Went Down (-½))

GREAT HELPER

This Talent if for characters that help others in what they do. It grants them +4 with any skill, but only when Assisting another with the skill. Commonly used for assistants or master teachers.

Great Helper: 11 Character Points (bought as +4 with All Non-Combat Skills (32 Active Points); Only for Assisting Another (-2))

HARDY

The character is extremely resistant to damage, and 1 point of his base PD & ED are Resistant. A favorite of those barbarians that don't wear much armor.

Hardy: 1 Character Point (bought as Damage Resistance (1 PD/1 ED))

"I WANT YOU TO HIT ME AS HARD AS YOU CAN"

The character fights best when the chips are down, and he has been in the fight for a while. Anytime the character drops below half STUN, he gains +1 OCV, +1 DCV, as well as a +1 Damage Class in Hand-to-Hand Combat.

"I Want You to Hit Me as Hard as You Can": 9 Character Points (bought as +1 OCV, +1 DCV, +1 DC (Hand-to-Hand) (16 Active Points); Only when STUN is Below Half (-¾))

IMPROVED DISPEL

A character with this Talent is exceptionally good at dispelling magic. Anytime the caster uses a dispel spell, he may spend the END for this Talent and add +5d6 to the Dispel. END Cost: 2.

Improved Dispel: 13 Character Points (bought as Dispel +5d6, Variable Special Effects (Any One Magical Effect, +¼) (19 Active Points); Variable Limitation -½ [takes -1 worth of limitations that the original spell has: usually Gestures, Incantation and Requires a Skill Roll])

INSTANT SHIELD BASH

The character who takes this Talent has trained to be able to take advantage of openings in combat, and if he makes an attack by 2 or more, he gets a free shield bash attack in. The damage of this is the normal damage for the shield bash, but the character does not take the OCV penalty usually associated with the bash. END Cost: 3.

Instant Shield Bash: 13 Character Points (bought as Hand Attack +3d6, Trigger (Makes an Attack by -2, Takes No Time, Requires a Zero Phase Action to Reset, +¾) (26 Active Points); Hand Attack (-½), OIF (-½))

EXTRA THANKS

Extra Spell Slot
courtesy of Bob
Greenwade

MANA MANA, DOO DOO DOODOO DOO

Mana Stealer is written assuming an Endurance Reserve provided end for spells, called Mana. Just change the terminology to Heal normal Endurance if your campaign doesn't use Reserves.

Normally Healing cannot be purchased to be used every segment, but in this case, because the effect is fairly minor, it has "GM Permission" ...at least in its home campaign.

IRON STOMACH

The character can eat spoiled or generally inedible food, or drink brackish and salt water, and suffer no ill effects. It is as if he ate normal food.

Iron Stomach: 1 Character Point (bought as Life Support (Eating: Spoiled or Inedible Food, Brackish or Salt Water))

KICK UP, PICK UP

The character is very talented at using his feet, and can do a quick kick on an object to flick it to his hand. Flipping an object to his hand in this way takes no time. A favored Talent of fencers. END Cost: 1.

Kick Up, Pick Up: 4 Character Points (bought as Telekinesis (3 STR), Trigger (Takes No Time, Resets Automatically Immediately after It Activates, +1) (9 Active Points); No Range (-½), Only to Pick up Small Objects on the Ground (-1))

MANA STEALER

The character has the ability to siphon just a bit of Mana from any spell that targets him (aside from those he casts himself). He gains 1 Mana for each spell cast on him (this could be another mage casting a helpful spell, or an opponent casting a damaging spell). If multiple spells hit the target, then he gains 1 Mana from each one. The siphoning is not automatic; the character has to roll 14 or less for each chance. This Talent costs no Endurance.

Mana Stealer: 9 Character Points (bought as Healing Mana Battery 1 point (standard effect: 1 point), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½), Trigger (Takes No Time, Trigger Resets Automatically Immediately after It Activates, +1), Decreased Re-use Duration 1/Segment (+2) (13 Active Points); Activation Roll 14- (-½))

MASSIVE ATTACK

The character with this Talent has learned a type of attack that is so intense that is virtually impossible to ignore. The character makes a normal melee attack, and rolls 10d6. This is applied to the target's CON, and if beats the CON+10, then the target engages the character. All rules for Mind Control apply, including the first breakout roll, and all negative modifiers for rolling greater than the needed effect.

This ability costs 6 END to initiate and 3 END per phase to maintain. The character must stay engaged with the target (with normal attacks and defenses) to keep this Talent going.

Like the *Really Impressive* Talent, this is an example of a world class combatant, one that can distract or face down an enemy due to skill and reputation.

Massive Attack: 14 Character Points (bought as Mind Control 10d6 (Human Class of Minds), Telepathic (+¼) (62 Active Points); Based on CON (versus Mental Defense, -1), User Must Spend Each Phase Attacking to Maintain (-1), Restrained (-½), Single Command: Attack/Defend against ME! (-½), Costs END to Maintain (Half END Cost, -¼))

MASTER GRAPPLER

The character with this Talent is very good at holding onto an opponent. He adds 10 STR to his effective STR when holding someone; this is in addition to any martial maneuvers he may have. It does not affect damage.

Master Grappler: 6 Character Points (bought as +10 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½) (15 Active Points); Only for Holding on with Grabs (-1), No Figured Characteristics (-½))

MASTER HELMSMAN

The character with this Talent is always welcome on shipboard. When he takes the helm the ship moves faster; whatever it's noncombat movement multiplier is, increase it by one, so a standard x2 would become a x3. This takes exceptional concentration, so when in use the character is at 0 DCV. The increase in speed happens a Turn after the character takes the helm.

Master Helmsmen: 8 Character Points (bought as Swimming 0" (2" Total) (x4 Noncombat), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½), Usable As Attack (x8000 Maximum Weight per Inanimate Target, +4¼) (29 Active Points); Only Adds (+x1) to Speed, Not Doubling (i.e. from x2 to x3 or x4 to x5) (-1), Concentration (0 DCV Throughout, -1), Extra Time (Post-Segment 12, Only to Activate, -¾))

MASTER OF KNOWLEDGE

This character knows a little bit about everything. He can make an 8- skill check with any Knowledge Skill he wishes to attempt.

Master of Knowledge: 10 Character Points (bought as Universal Knowledge (20 Active Points); Activation 8- (-1))

MASTER OF MINOR MAGICS

The caster has mastered the ability to cast minor spells. He gains a +4 to his Power Skill Magic Roll, but only when casting spells that have a -1 or a -2 Magic modifier due to Active Points. These levels are not just offsetting penalties; the net effect of a -2 spell with this Talent is a +2 to the Magic Roll. Note that if the character has levels to negate Magic penalties due to Active Points, such as the Talent *These Spells Aren't That Tough to Cast*, that would bring the adjusted penalty to -2 or less, then this Talent also applies.

Master of Minor Magics: 4 Character Points (bought as + 4 to Power Skill Magic Roll (8 Active Points); Only when Casting Spells with a -1 or a -2 Magic modifier (-1))

MYSTIC TRANCE

The character can drop into a meditative trance and while in the trance, he can recover Mana. The character can take no other actions, and is at 0 DCV throughout this trance. The recovery of Mana starts five minutes after the meditation begins, and the character gains 1 END per Minute, not to exceed half of his Mana pool.

Mystic Trance: 1 Character Points (bought as 1 REC for Mana Pool (1 Active Point); Extra Time (5 Minutes, Only to Activate, Character May Take No Other Actions, -1¼), Concentration (0 DCV Throughout, -1), Extra Time (1 Minute between Applications, -½), Cannot Recover More Than Half of Mana Pool (-½))

PACK MULE

The character can carry much more than normal. His STR is increased by 10 for purposes of figured encumbrance. This Talent costs no Endurance, and is considered in effect all the time.

Pack Mule: 4 Character Points (bought as +10 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½) (15 Active Points); Only for Calculating Encumbrance (-2), No Figured Characteristics (-½))

PAIRED BLADES DEFENSES

A character with this Talent is skilled at defending when holding two weapons. The character needs to have purchased Weapon Familiarity: Off Hand to use this Talent; but with it, he gains an additional +1 DCV with a blade in each hand.

Paired Blades Defenses: 3 Character Points (bought as +1 with DCV (5 Active Points); OIF (-½), Only with a Weapon in Each Hand (-¼), Requires WF: Off Hand (-0))

PATIENT

A character with this Talent gains bonuses to hit by waiting for just the right time to attack. If the character uses one Phase for a defensive action (Dodge, Block, etc.), then on his next Phase attacks, he gains +2 OCV. If he spends two Phases performing defensive actions then attacks, he gains +4 OCV.

Patient: 11 Character Points (bought as +4 with OCV (20 Active Points); Only Gets +2 OCV for each Defensive Action in Previous Phases (-¾))

ULTIMATE KNOWLEDGE

For more information on Universal skills other than Universal Translator see pages 47-50 in *The Ultimate Skill*.

REALLY IMPRESSIVE

This Talent represents a character who is so impressive in combat that he daunts those he fights with his skill and displays of combat expertise. Any target fighting him in hand-to-hand combat is at -2 OCV to hit him. Obviously this Talent only works on those that can be impressed by his swordplay – and thus does not work on those that have no mind, or those with a base CV of 2 over the character's. The motions that the character add are somewhat tiring, and take 1 END per Phase he keeps up the intimidation.

Really Impressive: 6 Character Points (bought as Change Environment 1" radius, -2 OCV, Personal Immunity (+¼) (12 Active Points); No Range (-½), Only versus Sentient Beings (-¼), Not versus Targets That Have a CV of 2 over Character's (-¼))

REINFORCED SOUL

The character is resistant to Werewolf and Vampire Bites, Undead Characteristic Drains, and certain Demon or Devil attacks. The character gains 5 points of Power Defense against the natural (or rather, unnatural) attacks of such creatures. This has no effect on any spell, even if from the same beings.

Reinforced Soul: 2 Character Points (bought as Power Defense (5 points) (5 Active Points); Only versus the Natural Abilities (Not Magic) of Demons, Devils, Lycanthropes, etc.) (-1))

RITUAL MASTER

A character with this Talent has a real knack when taking extra time to cast a spell. For each step up on the time chart, he gains +2 to his roll, rather than the customary +1.

Ritual Master: 5 Character Points (bought as +6 to Power Skill Magic Roll (12 Active Points); Adds +1 per Step on the Time Chart (in Addition to the One Normally Gained) (-1½))

SOLID GRIP

The character has a knack for hanging on to his weapon. When making a STR versus STR Roll to defend against a Disarm the character adds +30 STR. This is cumulative with other modifiers, such as bonuses for martial maneuvers. There is no Endurance cost.

Solid Grip: 7 Character Points (bought as Clinging (STR + 30) (20 Active Points); Only to Hold onto Held Weapon (-2))

THESE SPELLS AREN'T THAT TOUGH TO CAST

The caster is extremely talented at casting spells that are normally very difficult to cast. Any spell that has up to a -12 Magic Skill Penalty has its negative modifier halved; a -6 becomes a -3, a -4 becomes a -2.

These Spells aren't That Tough to Cast: 4 Character Points (bought as +6 to Power Skill Magic Roll (12 Active Points); Only to Offset the Active Point Penalty of Spells (-1), Can Only Halve the Penalty (-½))

TOUGHENED PERSONAL ARMOR

This Talent represents characters who already have armor as a racial ability, and are just much tougher than others of his race. Only those that have natural armor can purchase this Talent.

Toughened Personal Armor: 5 Character Points (bought as Armor (2 PD/2 ED) (6 Active Points); Only to Add to Personal Natural Armor (-¼))

ULTIMATE BREAKFALL

The character is very very good at taking falls. Any time he falls, is knocked back, or is thrown, he takes half damage after defenses. This is a common Talent for Monks.

Ultimate Breakfall: 10 Character Points (bought as Physical Damage Reduction 50% (20 Active Points); Only against Damage from Falls, Knockback, or Throws (-1))



Murder at Montego Cay

by Bob Greenwade

In the Terran Empire, one of the most peaceful vacation spots in the galaxy is Montego Cay on the planet Halcyon (see *Worlds of Empire*, page 21).

Despite the planet's proximity to the Thorgon Empire, its crime rate is incredibly low. It's been more than ten years since the last crime more serious than grand theft, and violent crime is nearly unheard of in the resort planet's 35-year history.

This scenario explores what happens when the PCs have to solve the planet's first murder in over a decade.

Bring in the Player Characters

This scenario is designed for a group of characters in the *Terran Empire* setting. Since it's based more on role-playing and puzzle-solving than on combat, the size of the group and number of points per character are of minor importance at best. (Dynamically, it would probably work better for smaller groups than for larger ones.)

As with any puzzle-solving scenario written for a role-playing game, the GM should be wary of abilities that could spoil the outcome. Powerful telepathy or accurate clairvoyance (especially retrocognition) are two major "red flags" in this case, though some allowance is provided for their presence. Most other psionic powers (as described for the *Terran Empire* setting on pages 18-21 of *Digital Hero #8*) might be helpful to PCs in this scenario, but aren't likely to unbalance it.

GETTING THEM INVOLVED

In order to get the PCs involved in this scenario, they need to be present in Montego Cay when events transpire. At the very least, they should be on Halcyon when the murder actually occurs. There are several ways for the GM to arrange this; below are a few suggestions.

- As part of a reward for a job well done, either on Halcyon or on a nearby system, the PCs are given a one-week vacation to Montego Cay.
- A larger "treasure hunt" or "scavenger hunt" type of adventure leads the PCs to another part of the island where Montego Cay sits. This can be particularly closely-tied if Remus Caine has an important clue as to the target item's location – or even the item itself – and it's stolen or (temporarily) lost in his murder. Alternately, one of the (innocent) suspects could be in possession of what the PCs need, and agree to give it to them only after they've cleared him.

- The PCs are on the trail of a fugitive, and the trail leads them to Montego Cay. The GM could even exercise some creativity so that identifying their fugitive is dependent on identifying the killer in this scenario, or vice versa – even if they don't know it at first.
- A sometime associate of the PCs is framed for an unrelated crime, and calls on them to help him out. Caine could even be personally involved in the matter. Once the PCs have straightened things out (for example, discovering that the jewels the associate was accused of stealing was actually swallowed by the owner's pet dog) you can segue directly into the murder mystery.
- The PCs are on the trail of a major Clone Mob operation, and learn of Irving Maljek's status and location. Since he'd be a major source of information, they go (or are sent) to talk to him. As above, he agrees to tell what he knows only if the PCs clear him and find the real killer.
- If a player needs to miss a session or two, you could excuse his character's absence by saying that he's "on vacation" at Montego Cay. (If his normal tastes would run to another resort on Halcyon, use a bit of dramatic license and say that he stays at Montego Cay while making day trips elsewhere.) The murder happens just as his colleagues come to pick him up.
- If one of the PCs, or a closely-associated NPC, has precognitive powers such as Foresight (see *Digital Hero #8*, page 18), a dream or vision could lead them to Montego Cay just in time to witness and solve the murder.

GM'S REQUIREMENTS

This adventure is set in the *Terran Empire* setting; that campaign book, along with *Star Hero*, are both highly recommended. *Worlds Of Empire*, in which the planet Halcyon is described in detail, would also be very helpful in making sense of many of the references here. However, these books are not *absolutely* necessary for running this adventure.

The GM may even run this adventure in a "home-brew" universe. The species to which the various NPCs belong and other background facts of the case can be changed (by proverbially "filing off the serial numbers") to fit whatever the GM wants to do without seriously disrupting the story.

WHO IS WHERE?

For the current scenario, the specific locations of only two guests really matter: Remus Caine, in unit D (at the northwestern corner of the larger bungalows), and the Nureila family, in unit C (next door, to the east). The Dar'loshes, Foswells, Gen'shirs, Kaspars, and Thompsons take up five of the remaining larger bungalows, arranged as the GM prefers. All other NPC guests are scattered among the smaller bungalows.

Where the PCs are located should be dictated by their own status, their reason for coming to Serenity Resort in the first place, the needs of the scenario, and dramatic and common sense.

Life on Halcyon

The basic information on what life is like on Halcyon in general, and at Montego Cay in particular, can be found in *Worlds Of Empire*. Below are a few details not covered there, which are pertinent to this scenario.

ENVIRONMENT

Halcyon has a gravity of 0.88 G, and an atmosphere about 0.88 as thick as Earth's. This has the following effects:

- The acceleration of falling is 4" per Segment, though maximum velocity is still 30".
- In hand-to-hand combat, a character without the *Low-Gravity Training* form of Environmental Movement suffers a -1 penalty to OCV and DCV.
- The range of thrown and other projectile weapons is multiplied by 1.14. Characters using such weapons suffer at -1 OCV penalty for the first Turn of use unless they have Low-Gravity Training.
- A character, piece of equipment, or Vehicle with Flight can climb 1" per 1.76" of Flight. This means, for example, that the Firebird firefighting vehicles can climb 273" per Phase in noncombat conditions, rather than the 240" they could climb in 1 G.
- Conversely, if a character (either naturally or through equipment) has Gliding, maximum speed is multiplied by 0.88. For example, a character with Gliding 25" can only move 22" on Halcyon.
- If Encumbrance rules are used, the amount a character can carry is also multiplied by 1.14, unless flying (the thinner atmosphere neutralizes the effect of the equally lighter gravity).

For other effects of gravity and atmospheric pressure, see pages 278-284 of *Star Hero*.

MEASUREMENTS

The day on Halcyon is slightly shorter than Earth's at 22.3 standard hours long. For local purposes this is divided into 20 local hours, each 1 hour, 6 minutes, and 54 seconds long in standard time. Each of those hours is divided into 100 minutes, which last 40.14 seconds in standard time. Each of the 50 seconds in an hour is thus just over 0.8 seconds long. (The GM should continue to use "standard time" for combat rather than try to create a new Speed Chart with 10-second Turns.)

Among themselves, the long-term residents refer to local time as simply "days," "hours," and

so forth, while using "standard day" and "standard hour" in its usual context. With visitors the terms "local day," "local hour," and the like are more common. The visitors themselves can use either set of terms depending on personal taste. All printed matter use Halcyon time by default (with a note to that effect).

With 20 measured hours in a day, the planet is divided into 20 time zones, with Balhaph in the center of the Primary Time Zone and the Date Line cutting through the continent of Vorwald. The Montego Time (shared by New Monaco) is 8 hours later than Primary Time.

Dividing up the Halcyonian year is rather more difficult. Each year has 432.65 local days, but the orbit of the sole moon (called Fortune) is 35 days. Burton Terhane, the resort planet's founder, decided to ignore the moon and simply divide the year up into twelve months of 36 days each, with two bonus days every four years and a third bonus day as needed for the extra .15 of a day to keep the calendar on pace with the sidereal year. For ease of familiarity (mostly Terhane's own), Halcyon uses the same names for the twelve months and the seven days of the week as are used by English speakers on Earth.

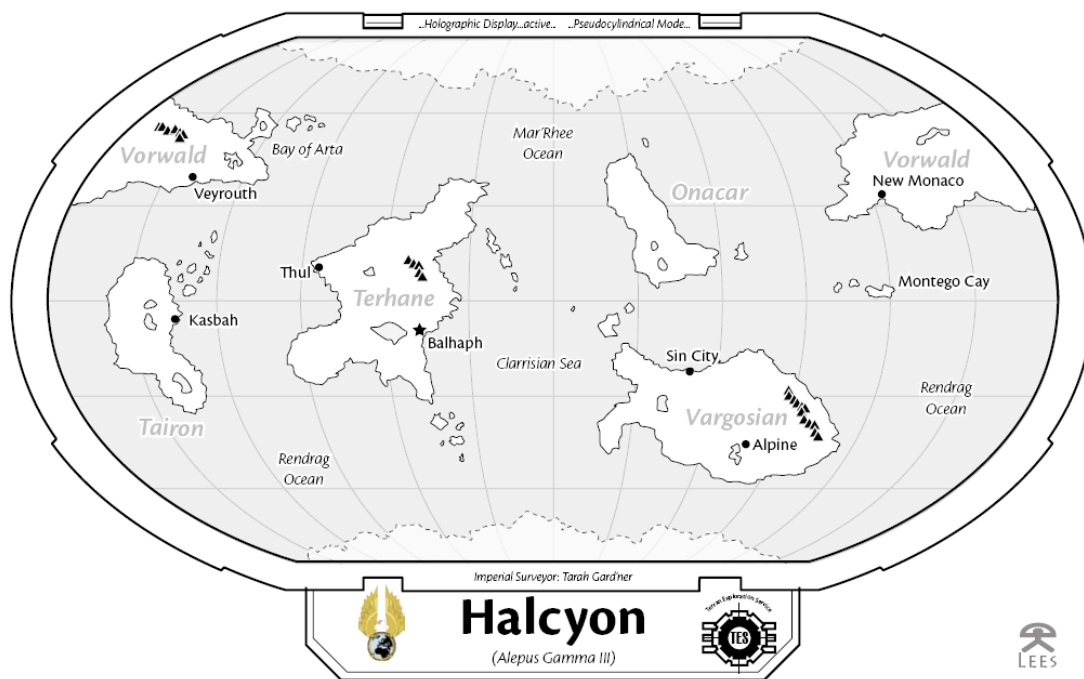
January 1, Year 1 on Halcyon was the day the Halcyon Corporation was founded in the Earth year 2575; by coincidence it was the day of the Vernal Equinox (the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere) on the planet. Between this and the longer year, the Halcyon year roughly corresponding to 2640 on Earth is 60.

CRIMINOLOGY RESOURCES

Because the crime rate on Halcyon is so low, the planet has relatively little in the way of law enforcement resources. Its personnel are well trained as a security force, but they don't often have to deal with violent crimes – most of the offenses are property crimes.

The planet has three forensic laboratories. The main one is in Belhaph; the others are in Sin City and New Monaco. All have the current standard equipment for processing biometric evidence such as DNA, ridge details (fingerprints and footprints), hairs, blood and other body fluids, and so forth. The main lab in Belhaph has slightly better equipment overall, and its lab technicians tend to be better trained by a slight margin (an average of an extra +1 to the Skill Rolls in both cases).

Besides their basic equipment and personnel, the Sin City and New Monaco crime labs have specialty divisions related to their respective areas. Because prostitution and other "adult" entertainments are so prevalent in Sin City, the lab there has special equipment for dealing with drugs, poisons, and diseases, equivalent to a +4 in Forensic Medicine and SS: Chemistry when dealing with such matters. The



lab in New Monaco has an expertise in dealing with forgeries, particularly counterfeit cash and gambling chips; it has a +5 to Criminology and Forgery for the purpose of detecting and identifying forged items, and an additional +5 when dealing with counterfeits. (This makes it the top crime lab in this sector of space for purposes of forgery.)

Other than the above, the crime labs on Halcyon are nothing special.

Because they're not used to dealing with homicide, and because Remus Caine is a well-liked figure in their circles (if not a personal friend), the lab technicians on Halcyon will be emotionally shaken by this case, and their performance will suffer (by -2 to all Skill Rolls) as a result. If the PCs have the appropriate training and standing to use the labs themselves and don't have equipment of their own, they'll be welcome to use what's available here.

Serenity Resort

Geographically, Montego Cay is a large island just north of Halcyon's equator. The beaches are largely pristine, with soft, white sand, though there are also a few rocky beaches and a few with black sand.

The city of Montego Cay is located on the island's northwestern point. It includes about a dozen resort hotels, plus numerous restaurants, souvenir shops, and similar attractions. The rest of the island has a few small resorts around the perimeter, with the interior virtually untouched.

The island is warm and pleasant all year around. There's some occasional rain during the equinoxes, but it's usually no stronger than a

very light drizzle. Most of the water sustaining the island's plant life comes from volcanic hot springs near the epicenter. (These hot springs are a popular tourist destination in their own right, the parks around them and the unpaved roads leading the way being the main artificial "improvements" to the island's interior.)

Serenity Resort is located about twelve miles east of the city, on the east side of a small inlet. Though isolated from the city by the wooded areas, the resort has a tube shuttle terminal in its main building to take people into the city on demand (the trip takes just under a minute depending on the specific destination and the ambient traffic), as well as points beyond.

The amenities at Serenity Resort combine the simple with the modern. All bungalows include dataports, communications consoles, outlets for electrical power, hot and cold running water, natural-gas and laser ovens, refrigerator, and other conveniences.

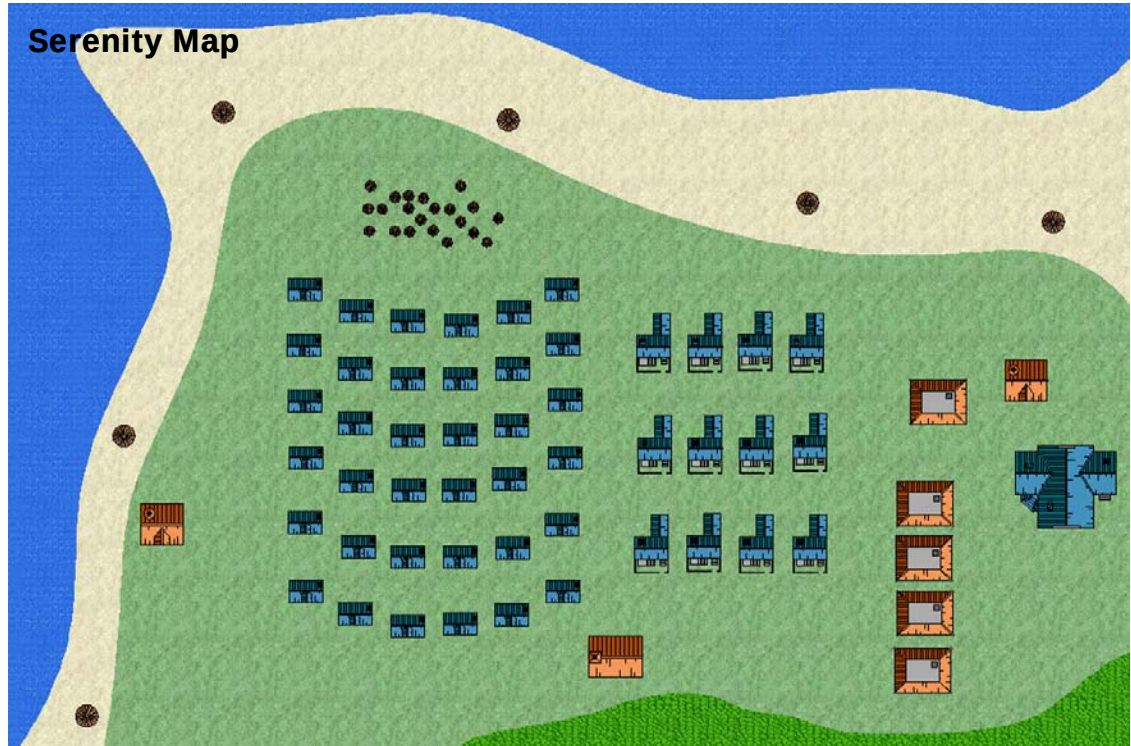
MAP KEY

The map on the next page gives the general layout of Serenity Resort.

The resort is built on a corner of land where the dense tropical forest once abutted the beach. A large section of the forest was cut away to make room for the resort, including some space for future expansion, but much of it was left alone – even the shuttle tube runs underground to preserve the land's integrity. The remaining forest rises abruptly to the south, going immediately from clearance to dense wood.

The main part of the resort is made up of three dozen single-room bungalows, arranged in

Serenity Map



rows of six. These were originally set up for singles and couples traveling alone, though some have been “retrofitted” for small groups of friends. They are equipped with a mini-kitchen and a private lavatory including hot-water bath and shower; they are numbered from 01 on up.

Nearby are a dozen larger bungalows, designed for families and other larger groups, though sometimes wealthy visitors who just want more personal space rent them. Their layout would make for a modest, cozy two-bedroom home; they are labeled by letters from A to L.

The beach area is mostly pristine. The only disturbance is the presence of a lifeguard tower every few hundred feet or so. The lifeguards’ job is an easy one, since there are no dangerous sea creatures, the tides tend to be relatively calm even during surfing season, and motorized water vehicles are permitted in the inlet only by special arrangement with the management. There’s about one incident a day on average (if that), usually in the form of a fight between guests or someone overestimating their own swimming ability.

At the far east end of the resort grounds is the main resort building. This includes the resort lobby, offices, tube shuttle terminal, maintenance robot storage, and other central resources.

Between the main building and the bungalows are four small buildings that serve as on-site restaurants. The northernmost, and most popular, is the Tiki Sun, which serves Terran cuisine including barbecued ribs, hamburgers, kebab, roast beef sandwiches, and similar fare. Next to it are the Mroanas, a Fex milk shop; and the Shar’kim Kez, a Mon’dabi salad bar. The

fourth space is currently empty (or may be filled with a shop of the GM’s creation).

Directly north of the main building is a large shed where the maintenance robots are stored and maintained. West of that is a larger building with three banquet halls; this may be rented for wedding receptions and other large functions.

Just north of the small bungalows are an apparently random scattering of small changing-huts, most of them opening to the north. While most guests change between swimwear and dining wear in their bungalows, some prefer to do otherwise; the huts may also be used by day visitors. They rent by the hour (for 20 credits per local hour) at the main building, and are secured by retina scans.

At the far west end of the complex is a building operated by the resort, where guests may rent equipment such as beach chairs and loungers, kayaks (with oars), SCUBA gear, snorkels, surfboards, and the like. A smaller part of the building is devoted to an office and storage shed for the lifeguards.

A total of thirty fixed security cameras are located throughout the complex, positioned to monitor all areas of Serenity Resort except the interior of the bungalows. The cameras among the bungalows do monitor all entrances, however, including crawlspace access. The picture quality is rudimentary by twenty-seventh century standards, giving only two-dimensional images of about the resolution of an HDTV system of the early twenty-first century; at a place like Serenity Resort, the management never expected to need anything more sophisticated.

Initial Events

The following events take place before the actual murder, in more or less the order given. Ideally, the PCs should be present to witness at least some of them, though if that's not possible NPCs may describe them afterward without much prodding.

First, the suspects not already located at Serenity Resort arrive there, in no particular order. They are unaware of each other except as mere fellow vacationers and unaware that Remus Caine will soon arrive among them. Within the PCs' view they scarcely interact with each other.

When Caine arrives (or when the PCs arrive, assuming they do so before the murder), he makes a point of meeting the PCs, especially if any of them have any sort of Reputation. If the PCs are government employees on a mission, he will offer whatever assistance he can give. If they're on vacation, he'll simply make his name known and tell them that he doesn't mind being interrupted if there's anything he can do to make their stay more pleasant. If they're criminals he'll warn them to keep their act clean while here, but otherwise to enjoy themselves (and both parts of that are quite sincere). If they have exploits worth telling in tale, he'll ask to have dinner with them at the Tiki Sun restaurant to hear their stories.

During the mid-afternoon (around 12 PM), raised voices are heard from inside Caine's cabin. Most listeners can't hear the actual conversation, though those with enhanced hearing (at least +1 to Hearing PER after Range Modifiers) can make out individual words and short phrases such as "my sister," "slave," "rescue," "powerless," and so forth. The two men's voices are too similar for most of them to tell which one said what. Witnesses – preferably including at least one PC – see Kirby Thompson, manager of the Tiki Sun, leaving with a very cross expression.

Shortly before dinner, the maintenance crew starts sending robots into the crawl spaces under the cabins. (When mentioning this detail, bury it under other details of the setting: "Guests are lounging on the beach, a couple is taking a romantic stroll, the lifeguard is watching the waves casually, maintenance robots are working the crawl spaces, a couple of security guards are standing around telling jokes, and the aroma from the Tiki Sun's kitchen is enticing your appetite.") If asked, one of the Human – or, at any rate, non-robotic – supervisors will explain that the safety sensors detected a minor surge in the power conduits, and the robots are being sent in to make sure all the systems are functioning correctly.

At dinner, Caine carries on a friendly conversation, whether with the PCs or with some

other guests. He explains that his wife, Ryoko, is busy with a software update to the planet's communications system that took a little longer than originally expected, and that she's supposed to join him there first thing in the morning.

Having a Real Blast

The time is two-twenty in the morning. Almost the entire population of Serenity Resort is awakened by a large explosion. Even without looking, most of the residents know from the distance and direction which cabin blew up: the one occupied by Remus Caine. A quick glance outside will show it to be burning violently.

FIRST, THE OBVIOUS

Several details will be quickly apparent; if the PCs don't notice them right away, then some of the other bystanders will.

First, while the bomb was able to set almost the entire cabin aflame almost instantly, it did little damage to the neighboring cabins: the windows on the facing walls are shattered, and debris from the roof of Caine's cabin fell on the other roofs, but there isn't much beyond that.

Second, a Kalishari security guard (Kalipu, described below) was injured in the blast as he happened to pass by.

Third, people may well wonder why the resort's security systems didn't catch whatever it was that caught the explosion. (Some onlookers will assume it's a mad bomber, while others will discount the notion of violent crime and say it's a mechanical failure, but both groups will wonder why the staff wasn't able to stop it before it happened.)

Fourth, it will be quite obvious that the local firefighting team are overwhelmed by the fire's strength. Both Firebirds (essentially, flying fire trucks) on the island are brought out, and the dozen firefighters seemingly can do nothing to stop the fire no matter what they throw at it. The few sparks and bits of flaming debris affecting neighboring buildings are extinguished easily enough, but the cabin is a total loss: by noon, despite the fire-retardant chemicals used in all wooden structures on Halcyon, there's virtually nothing left but ash.

Initial Investigations

Before the fire is even extinguished, Janice Terhane (*Worlds Of Empire*, page 22) and Richelle Smith come to observe the incident. This is, after all the planet's most spectacular crime since it opened up as a resort over a half-century ago.

Smith's big problem is in how to investigate the arson. She does have some resources available to her, but she's not really qualified to lead a homicide investigation, nor are any of her investigators really up to the task. In fact, only

OH, SO MUCH STUFF!

As written, this scenario deliberately includes as many false leads ("red herrings") as could reasonably fit, including such murder-mystery and crime procedural tropes as a suspicious spouse, a criminal on the run, an alternate target, and so forth. Most should be a minor distraction at most, but as GM you may feel free to disregard any of them if you think they make the plot overly complicated.

FLASH PAPER AND FLASH PLASTIC

Flash paper is a real-world substance sometimes used by gamblers and other criminals to hide traces of their written records. It burns quickly (a full-sized sheet would vanish in about two seconds) and leaves no ash behind.

Flash plastic is a theoretical extension of this technology (an ATRI 8 development in the Hero Universe). It's a harder, physically more durable substance typically used with fireworks and other explosives – a rocket made from flash plastic has less debris that could fall on a bystander or vulnerable structure.

MERCIFUL MINERVA!

Data requests to Minerva will take four days to a week. However, any character with a KS related to law enforcement procedures would know that data on convicted criminals, including DNA profiles and other biometric information as well as record of convictions and known *modus operandi*, is shared regularly across all law enforcement databases in the Empire. A Skill Roll will only be needed if the KS isn't *directly* related to the subject of police procedure.

one member of the Halcyon Security Patrol's Investigative Branch has ever been really qualified to investigate a homicide, and he's the one who was murdered.

If the PCs have any investigative background – for that matter, if Smith has any reason to believe that even one of them is better qualified to work on a homicide investigation than she herself is – a brief conversation between Smith and Terhane will have the former asking the latter for their help. If the PCs have official standing, especially as ISP or TSS officers, she may even ask them to take over the official investigation altogether (though you should give the players time to take the initiative on this).

Even if they're just civilians, an offer of their help will be accepted – *after* Smith has checked their backgrounds to make sure they didn't have an obvious motive (such as if they're wanted criminals or rebels, or some such).

The PCs will be given 60 local hours to work their investigation and report their findings to Smith and Terhane. After that time, any guests who have been detained (that is, kept at their cabins pending the investigation) will be released. If the PCs are not ISP or TSS investigators, this will also be the time that a group of ISP people will arrive, and the case will be turned over to them.

SPECIAL SENSES

If the PCs have special senses or sensory devices, they might be able to determine the following while the fire is still burning.

- **Sight:** A character with Infrared Perception or any heat-related senses, coupled with an appropriate Skill (see below; no Range Modifier applies) may notice that the fire is burning quite a bit more hotly than a normal wood fire.
- **Smell:** A particularly acute sense of smell (the Analyze element for Normal Smell or the Smell/Taste Sense Group should do the trick) will detect several scents within the fire. The explosive from the bomb is an ingenious blend of common household chemicals; one set of chemicals created the initial blast, and a completely separate set splattered all over the cabin and keeps the fire going. A PER Roll at -4 (or at no penalty if the character's Smell includes the Microscopic element) will reveal the scent of burning Human flesh.
- **Touch:** A character with Analyze Fire, PS: Firefighter, or any similar Skill might be able to tell by touch (with a successful Skill Roll, with a normal Range Modifier of their distance from the burning cabin) that this fire is burning quite a bit more hotly than a normal wood fire, by roughly a factor of four.

QUESTIONING WITNESSES

Most of the witnesses at the resort know, at best, little more than the PCs. After all, most of them were asleep at the time of the explosion. The basic details of what the ones who were awake can tell, if asked, are as follows:

- Dr. Thazi Araken was just over the hill to the south at the time of the explosion, and so didn't see the blast itself. At first she was too stunned by the sudden violence to do much of anything, except take off her nightvision goggles. About two minutes after the blast, she saw a dark figure running from the resort into the woods.
- Leo Braverman, who was standing at the beach's edge just north of the equipment rental hut, reports that a large piece of debris flew overhead from the explosion and into the water about 1000 feet from shore. Dr. Araken confirms this (though it doesn't occur to her to volunteer the information).
- Kalipu, another security guard, was walking only a few yards away from the destroyed bungalow, and was injured by flying debris. He's initially convinced that the explosion was the work of Thorgon agents.
- Lazmél Nureila was putting the finishing touches on the second movement of a string septet that Montego Cay had inspired. The main window by the snack table in his cabin overlooks the ocean, but also has a clear view of Caine's cabin through another window. He'd looked out that window many times during his work, and had seen no activity after midnight other than the security patrol. He'd just turned his head away from the window to reach for a glass of water when Caine's cabin blew up. The glass from the window shattered, burying shards in his left arm and chest and the back of his head.
- Anyone in a cabin near Sigmund Mallory's will know that, right after the explosion, he started screaming as though in utter panic. They won't know the reason, of course, but they may make assumptions ranging from compassion for his fear to skepticism that anyone would legitimately have a reaction that extreme, and anything in between, depending on their background and preconceptions. In any event, right after breakfast he checks into the Montego Cay Medical Center (known informally as "the infirmary") for treatment – not for injuries, but for extreme stress.

Individuals from the Mon'dabi Federation – specifically Kalakato Tenkitu and the Dar'losh family – will be aware of the sex scandal in

Shelako Gen'shir's past, and the potential risk to Zhelasi Dar'losh. Given that Gen'shir is a noted demolition expert, that should make him an early prime suspect. However, Gen'shir's whereabouts are easily documented from his arrival until the bomb blast: he and his wife arrived in mid-afternoon, unpacked, and spent most of the day either on the beach or in the Shar'kim Kez.

FORENSICS

After the fire, forensic analysis should get under way immediately. What the PCs discover will depend on whether they leave the work to the locals, or do it themselves.

Regardless of who does the work, forensic scientists face one major obstacle. The equipment used by the Montego Cay Firefighting Unit would be considered advanced by our standards, but by twenty-seventh century standards it's fairly antiquated. Whereas other firefighting units, even elsewhere on Halcyon, use modern chemicals and devices that extinguish fires without disturbing trace evidence, the Montego Cay unit simply pumps water from the ocean onto the fire. Besides washing away nearly all trace evidence, the ocean water affects the chemical composition of the fire's remains.

Arson Analysis: It's a simple matter for anyone with any training at all to determine that the core of the explosion – and thus the location of the bomb – was right below the floorboards of the cabin's bedroom. The bomb was engineered to direct most of its force upward, into the bed directly above, spewing numerous chemicals along the way. Among these chemicals were a set of two or more interactive gases, inert on their own but highly reactive once combined; this accounts for the almost instantaneous spread of the fire through the building. Once these facts are noted, Dikra Thal instructs his people to collect samples of ash for chemical analysis (see below) at the Belhaph Crime Lab.

Forensic Medicine: There's almost nothing left of Remus Caine's body but a skeleton covered by deeply charred flesh. The local lab can take a bone marrow sample easily enough, and match the DNA to what's on file for Caine in order to positively identify the body. The immediate cause of death was severe shock from the explosion; the force liquified his internal organs, including his heart and brain, causing instantaneous death. The burning of his body occurred after death – a small fraction of a second after, but still *after*.

If someone suggests that Caine, or someone else, planted a twin or clone to fake his own death, dental records will rule out that possibility.

Guest Processing: Unless the PCs are official law enforcement officers, Richelle Smith will instruct them to take no fingerprints, DNA samples, or other biometric measures from guests without either getting their permission or checking with her first. Few, if any, of the guests will grant permission (Dr. Araken and Lady Pippi being the two main exceptions), and Smith will only clear the procedure if the PCs can present a legitimate reason to suspect a particular individual or individuals of the crime. (After all, there's no sense in unnecessarily upsetting someone's vacation.)

On the other hand, all employees, and any visitors with criminal records, will have that information on file at the central computer system in Belhaph. If the PCs are working with Smith on the investigation in any capacity, the information will be made available on request.

Trace Evidence: The local criminologists can find little in the way of trace evidence. There are a few partially-melted wires, but from what investigators can tell all other materials used in the bomb were highly flammable. This would suggest the use of flash paper and/or flash plastic (see sidebar) in the bomb's construction.

Skilled PCs might find something, however. With a Criminology roll at -3, PCs may discover traces of blood and epithelial cells on the rock near the explosion's center. The DNA profile comes back from in-house employment records as belonging to Artemus Logan, a maintenance robot supervisor (described later).

There are no footprints near the cabin that do not belong there; they all belong to Caine, the maintenance crew, or the security patrol.

CRIMINAL PROFILING

If one (or more) of the PCs has a Skill set that would allow for psychological profiling, they might come up with some or all of the following information. The exact information will depend not only on how well the PC makes his Skill Roll, but also what other Skills, including Complementary Skills, he uses to arrive at his conclusions.

The bomber is most likely a male in his early adulthood – early twenties to mid-thirties for a Human – from a species whose culture values dominance (which would not include Fex, Kolajik, Vayathurans, and similarly highly peaceful cultures). He's highly intelligent, with a quiet demeanor; he probably keeps to himself most of the time, and doesn't have much interaction. He is also highly resourceful, indicated by the fact that he was able to come up with just the right materials to leave a minimum of physical forensic evidence.

The nature, construction, and timing of the bomb indicates that he was specifically targeting Remus Caine, and wanted to make as sure as

possible that Caine was killed while taking as little risk with anyone else as he could. The bomber may therefore have some remorse for the other two people who were injured, and possibly express more concern over them than over Caine's death.

The fact that Caine was so specifically targeted for such a brutal attack suggests that the bomber had a very strong motive for revenge. Since Caine is a law enforcement officer, this probably means some criminal he helped to put away, either here on Halcyon or in his previous job on Minerva, or possibly the family member of a convict who died in prison or a suspect who was killed in pursuit.

AN OVERHEARD CONVERSATION

The following brief conversation between Gérard Guillaume and Sigmund Mallory may be used to liven things up. It takes place a couple of hours after Mallory is released from the infirmary, and begins as something overheard by the PCs though of course they may join in or interrupt at any time.

Guillaume: Say, I heard you had a hard time after the explosion last night.

Mallory: Yeah, I have a bit of Post-Traumatic Stress.

Guillaume: You okay?

Mallory: I dunno. I was supposed to be here to relax. The explosion... it reminds me...

Guillaume: Oh, okay, I get the picture. Yeah, it's a terrible thing. You probably came here to relax, even more than anyone else here, and so someone goes and arranges for a bomb.

Mallory: Yeah. It's only been, like, a year or so.

Guillaume: Since what happened to you?

Mallory: Yeah. My therapist sent me here.

Guillaume: Well, don't worry. I'm sure the security folks will catch the bomber.

Mallory: I hope so. I haven't even heard who it might be.

Guillaume: Well, I overheard something somewhere about the widow, but I wouldn't put too much stock in it. But don't worry. I'm sure it'll come out okay. So you take it easy.

Mallory: Okay, thanks.

If the PCs ask Gérard what it was he heard about Mrs. Caine, he'll tell them (not remembering the source) about her suspected affair with Adonis Trehane. From that he concocted a hypothesis that she might have killed her husband to avoid a messy divorce and

still be free to marry Trehane, who stands to inherit the lion's share of the planet when Burton Trehane finally passes away. Gérard doesn't sell the idea hard, as he doesn't take it very seriously, but he'll volunteer it if asked.

Observant PCs may notice two other things about the conversation. First, Gérard does seem genuinely concerned about Mallory's well-being. No amount of digging, even through Telepathy, will reveal anything different; he really is worried about the man.

The other interesting point is that he said that someone "arranged" for the bomb, not that someone planted it or set it off. You may leave it to the players to notice that point on their own, or ask for a PER or Deduction roll for them to wonder how he came up with that particular detail. If they ask him about it, he'll simply explain that it figures that the bomb would be arranged by someone who didn't want to be connected to the murder, and so the real killer probably has an apparently airtight alibi. Again, he downplays his own hypothesizing in the face of the PCs' (and/or the authorities') obviously superior detective skills.

Following Up on Leads

The PCs will naturally want to follow up on the leads presented in the initial investigation.

THE GRIEVING WIDOW

Normal investigative procedure would demand that Ryoko Caine be considered an initial suspect. The combination of her numerous sexual flings – one of which is the grandson of Burton Trehane's incredibly handsome grandson, Adonis – and her "convenient" absence at the time of the explosion should make her look especially suspicious.

To make matters worse, Ryoko deals with the shock of her husband's death sexually. She will go straight out and seek a particularly lengthy and intense liaison, possibly even falling into the arms (willing or otherwise) of one or more PCs. Unless one of the PCs has KS: Psychology Of Grief or something related (which would inform that PC that this is a perfectly natural response, especially given her nymphomania), this will probably make her almost the exclusive suspect.

However, there is no connection, either direct or indirect, between her and the bomb. PCs will find no record of any communication between her and any demolitions-savvy people, whether those on the scene or anyone else. Certainly no money has changed hands that would suggest that she hired a bomber to kill her husband.

If all other ways of clearing Ryoko fail, Adonis himself will come forward and confess that not long ago he made an offer to Ryoko to

“help get rid of” her husband, and she responded with an emphatic rejection. For all of her sexual escapades, she truly loved Remus.

SERENITY RESORT SECURITY VIDEO

If the PCs have any official standing in the investigation whatsoever, they may see any segment of the resort’s security video recordings on request.

Examining the video is a laborious process. The camera angles are clearly indexed, and two different cameras have views of the crawlspace entry below Bungalow D. Nonetheless, viewing the recordings manually to watch for anyone sneaking under the cabin will take time. The PCs may decide for themselves how much of the video to review, and how much time to spend at it.

Sight Perception Rolls operate as though the character was standing at the camera’s position, carefully watching the location. The camera only records Normal Sight with Nightvision; while most special Senses or Sense Modifiers the observer has (Infrared, Telescopic, and so forth) won’t work, everyone observes with Nightvision for free so there are no penalties for observing nighttime action. The distance gives a Range Modifier of -2; the characters watching the video can be assumed to be giving a “long look” for a +2 bonus (see the Sight Perception Modifiers table on page 353 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*).

PCs watching the video may speed up the recording and watch it in fast-forward, reducing the time needed to review in exchange for a penalty to PER. For each step up the Time Chart they speed the tape, they take a -2 penalty. A PC with the *Rapid* Modifier on Sight eliminates up to -4 from this penalty for every level of Rapid.

For all that, the PCs will find very little from watching Caine’s bungalow. They will find that Artemus Logan went under the building the afternoon before the explosion to retrieve a lost kickball. Observant PCs (with a straight PER Roll, though if the players think to ask directly no Roll should be needed) may notice that his trip under there was quite quick – almost certainly too quick to retrieve the ball *and* plant the bomb – and that his outfit had no good place for him to conceal a bomb if he was carrying it. Before that the last living beings under that building was a pair of young Mon’dabi kids about a month ago. In the hours before the explosion, the maintenance robots were also down there for the scheduled plumbing upgrade and to investigate the power surge.

A successful Deduction roll at this point (assuming the players don’t figure it out on their own) will suggest that the killer somehow programmed the robots to plant the bomb. Computer Programming, Electronics, Inventor,

or any appropriate Science Skill may serve as Complementary Skills.

If the PCs don’t ask to see the recording, or if they’re acting on their own without sanction from the resort, Richelle Smith will have security technicians look carefully at both angles covering Bungalow D for the twelve hours preceding the explosion and more cursorily at the sixty hours preceding that, taking two hours for five technicians. They reach the same conclusion as that described above.

Similar procedures will also confirm Shelako Gen’shir’s alibi for the day, and follow the whereabouts of any other suspect.

Along those lines, if the PCs use the security recordings to follow Gérard Guillaume, they may notice his two trips under his own cabin. The first is at a little after two o’clock three nights before the explosion; the last is at about the same time on the night before. They will have to be watching either him specifically or a camera angle showing his cabin, and be following the correct time of night, but if they are then his movements will be pretty easy to see. (If asked about it, he says that he thought he’d heard a cat in distress under the cabin, but after checking the second time decided it was just a dream.)

THE MYSTERIOUS FIGURE IN THE WOODS

If one or more PCs has the *Tracking* Skill, or if they recruit Dwight Logan for the job, following the figure Dr. Araken saw fleeing into the woods is a simple matter. The figure is Lyle Allen, and as he has no particular Skills for hiding in the woods he doesn’t stand a chance against anyone with even sketchy experience at hunting. Furthermore, the soil is soft enough to give +2 to a PC’s Tracking roll.

Allen went a ways into the woods; following him at a normal walking pace takes about four hours. He’s unarmed and won’t fight, but once he hears the PCs approaching he’ll try to run away. You should give the PCs a chance to catch up to him using their own skills and abilities, but if unlucky Skill Rolls get in the way Allen trips over a rock, falls, and sprains his ankle, making his capture inevitable. Either way, once captured he comes along quietly.

When interrogated, Allen explains that he ran because of his record, and assumed that he’d be automatically accused of the bombing.

However, there’s no forensic evidence to link him to the bombings. Furthermore, as noted above, the bomb is built to specifically target Remus Caine and otherwise keep the damage contained, whereas Allen’s bombs tended to just do as much property damage as possible. He also has no motive for targeting Caine, nor does he have the kind of resourcefulness to use the kind of materials used in his bomb – his were simple,

high-incendiary devices that took out large residential buildings. He also lacks the knowledge of chemistry to put together the advanced combination of gases that fueled the fire in this case.

Tracking him down and clearing him will not be a complete waste of time. If the PCs characterize it as such, Richelle Smith will point out that it's an investigative thread that the real bomber's defense attorney won't be able to use against them. Also, once he's cleared, the PCs will be able to draw on Allen's expertise in bombs and bombers – including most of the profile described earlier.

THE DEBRIS THAT FLEW INTO THE WATER

PCs with aquatic Skills (TF: SCUBA at the very minimum, though the same character should also have Criminology) may want to try and retrieve the piece of debris that flew into the water. If they don't have the proper Skills but still want to have it retrieved, Richelle Smith can bring in aqua-forensic specialists from Belhaph to do the job. The water is clear, so the item is easy to find without any Skill Rolls.

The debris proves to be a piece of headboard from Remus Caine's bed. The force of the blast sent it through the roof, which it penetrated neatly – and spectacularly, since it was also set aflame – before flying into the water. While it offers no forensic information intrinsically, it does show the precision with which the bomb was placed.

THE FILES OF REMUS CAINE

In the twenty-seventh century it's a common (albeit not universal) practice for law enforcement officials, upon retirement or transfer to a different location, to bring private copies of most of their case files with them. This is most helpful if they have to review their notes for depositions in appeals and retrials, follow up on a cold case, relate a current case to an older one, or track down someone with a revenge motive. It's in the last case that Remus Caine's personal files will come in most handy.

His old case files are kept on a personal computer in his office in Belhaph. Either Janice Terhane or Richelle Smith can give the PCs access, though it would take quite a bit of persuasion for either of them to give them even a temporary copy of their own (it would require a -4 to Persuasion, Bureaucratics, or Bribery).

Caine kept his files meticulously indexed, so finding any piece of information is easy enough that no Skill Roll is needed – *if* one knows what one is looking for.

Searches by name are relatively easy. A search on Irving Maljek will reveal the man's status as a fugitive from the Clone Mob. A

search on Gérard Guillaume will reveal the conviction of his brother Gautier as a serial killer under Caine's investigation. A search on John Kaspar will show an arrest for smuggling, though the matter was later cleared up as a misunderstanding on the part of the arresting officer (Caine was the one who cleared up the matter). No other name involved with this case will come up with any hits in the database.

If the PCs want to examine the file for bombing *modus operandi*, they will find no matches – at least, not for *all* elements of the crime in a single bomber. The use of flash paper and flash plastic for self-incinerating devices, creating computer worms to get robots to plant bombs, mixing advanced chemicals for incendiary effects, and all other aspects of the case do appear in the two dozen or so bomb-related cases Caine investigated back on Minerva, but never more than one or possibly two in a single case.

The PCs may also look at the individual bombers in these cases. Most are currently serving life sentences in various Imperial prisons. Three have been executed. The one who devised computer worms to create robotic accomplices was inadvertently killed by one of his own bombs. Thus, this particular lead is a dead end.

ALL THESE BOMBERS!

It may occur to the PCs (or, if necessary, be pointed out by an NPC) that the presence of at least two notable bombers – Lyle Allen and Shelako Gen'shir – at Serenity Resort when a bomb goes off may not be a coincidence. It may seem particularly suspicious once both suspects are cleared. An examination of how each of them came to be at Serenity Resort will reveal the following:

- Lyle Allen used a artificial-intelligence travel agent to determine the ideal location for his vacation. He'd already been leaning toward Halcyon as his destination; the agent narrowed his location to Montego Cay, and recommended Serenity Resort as the most relaxing possible spot.
- Shelako Gen'shir won this free trip for two courtesy of the Travel Network Sweepstakes Coalition. He's entered their sweepstakes regularly for the past ten years, but never expected to actually win anything.

If the PCs notice that both of these individuals were directed here by computerized agencies, they may also wonder who else was influenced in that way. Investigations into travel records will show that, at the very least, the Dar'losh and Thompson families were directed here by artificial intelligences – as was Remus Caine himself.

LET'S LOOK AT THOSE ROBOTS

Sooner or later, the PCs will want to take a close look at the programming of the maintenance robots' computer systems. Determining by examination of the security video (or via retrocognition) that the bomb was placed by the robots should be enough; if not, finding so many involved people directed to Serenity Resort by computer should arouse their suspicions.

Even in the twenty-seventh century, there's one aspect of computer worms that just hasn't changed: no matter what they can do to the rest of the program, even the most sophisticated erasure subroutines have an enormously difficult time fully erasing themselves. In this case, finding traces of the erasure subroutine requires a Computer Programming roll at -5; this will tell the PCs that there was a software worm in the robot.

From there it's a fairly easy procedure to actually retrieve the subroutine. This will easily tell the PC what server sent the worm to the robot. Tracing back further than that requires a Computer Programming roll at -20. If successful, the PCs will know that it originated on Earth; further tracking would require a trip there.

To find any other part of the worm also requires a roll at -20. Roll separately for the sections that retrieved the package from below Gérard's cabin, read his handwritten coded instructions, assembled the bomb, mixed the chemicals, and put the bomb in place. Either of the first two would be enough for a conviction against Gérard; the others could also be helpful in at least identifying him if the PCs are clever.

Even if the PCs don't follow this track, Artemus Logan will soon after he finds out that the bomb was placed by his robots.

In the Meantime...

While the PCs have their investigation going, other people at the resort have their own lives to lead (or escape from). The following developments can keep events interesting for the PCs:

- Newlyweds Larim and Sureth Wimpala are scheduled to leave Montego Cay and return to Veyrouth the day after the blast. Security personnel, unless instructed otherwise, will be reluctant to let them leave. The PCs may need to clear them as suspects, but the matter can be cleared up merely by pointing out that they're just going to another part of Halcyon and the planet is ruled by a single government, so extradition won't be an issue. An alternate solution would be to give them an extra two nights at the resort for free (Janice Terhane herself will approve the expenditure).

- On the afternoon after the explosion, Zhelasi Dar'losh, who has a crush on Shelako Gen'shir but is not really aware of his scandal, is playing on the beach when she sees him going into the Shar'kim Kez. She decides to follow, but is unseen by her parents. They start a search for her, and finally find her actually flirting with the older Mon'dabi. A minor altercation starts when Nazida Dar'losh shoves Gen'shir, accusing the latter of trying to seduce his daughter. When the PCs get on the scene (or security personnel, if the PCs are elsewhere at the time), Nazida loudly explains Gen'shir's past to the gathering crowd, and publicly suggests that Gen'shir killed Caine so he could get close to Zhelasi. (If for any reason the PCs aren't present at this time, Kalakato Tenkitu tells them about it.)
- Irving Maljek may threaten suicide, leaving it to the PCs to talk him out of it. Caine was one of the few real friends he still had in his life, and if he becomes the prime suspect in the murder (or is led to believe that he is) then that would only make matters worse. His means of suicide is up to the GM, and can range from barricading himself in his apartment with a laser pistol to going to the top of some cliffs east of Serenity Resort. (This development is only recommended if the GM feels that the investigation is going too easily, or needs some "perking up" with a tense moment.)
- Kirby Thompson may ask the PCs for help in rescuing his sister (see his character write-up for information on this). This doesn't have any real bearing on the case, though it may come up naturally if the PCs question him on his conversation with Caine, and it's a likely seed for their next adventure.
- If the PCs come to suspect Gérard Guillaume but lack evidence, and the fact becomes known, John Kaspar may remember on his own about the self-addressed package Guillaume sent to Halcyon, and volunteer the information.

The Solution

In a mystery, there are two aspects of the story's solution: figuring out what actually happened (who done it, where, and with what), and what the protagonist does about it.

How the Murder Happened

In the course of their investigations, the PCs should (if they're any good) eventually discover at least the majority of the following information.

There is actually one important exception to the previous statement that the suspects were unaware of each other as they arrive. This exception is Gérard Guillaume, who has carefully steered most of them here.

Gérard did this by creating several Artificial Intelligence worms, designed to transfer themselves along the interplanetary Datanet, perform their tasks, and wipe out all traces of their activity. One worked its way into Halcyon's own personnel computers and flagged Remus Caine for a recommended vacation. (Gérard's own research on Caine suggested that the man would choose Montego Cay as a destination, and that Serenity Resort had the best deal for the period in question; it took only a little bit of luck for him to be correct.) Another hacked into the Travel Network Sweepstakes Coalition computers and arranged for Shelako Gen'shir to win the trip for two to Montego Cay. Another influenced a computerized travel agent on Fexao to recommend Montego Cay as a vacation spot for the Dar'losh family; a similar one influenced Lyle Allen in like manner, after arranging for a stressful life at home on Rand IV.

(If investigators can discover traces of these worms – and despite Gérard's best efforts, there *are* traces, detectable with a -8 penalty to Computer Programming in addition to any other Skill Modifiers – it will constitute proof of long-term premeditation. This will allow Imperial authorities to put all law enforcement agencies onto his capture, and to impose a sentence at a maximum-security facility if not capital punishment. If PCs are the ones to find this evidence, it will earn each of them a Favor from Janice Terhane; she wants this bomber to never see the light of day again, and get the death penalty if possible.)

He also wrote and sent ahead a worm to infiltrate the maintenance and supply computers at Serenity Resort. With the supply system, the worm was to find out what chemicals would be available at the resort from which a bomb could be built with the characteristics Gérard desired, and report back to him what else would be needed. The maintenance system would wait for his arrival; from that point it would build the bomb using materials he supplied plus what it already had on hand, and then, under cover of the manufactured "power surge" (another function of the maintenance worm) plant the bomb under the bed of Caine's cabin. Each worm would remove any traces of itself after it was finished with its respective part of the job.

The aim of the bomb is simple: make absolutely sure Remus Caine is dead after it goes off, with minimum harm to anyone else at the resort. As much destructive force as possible has

to be focused on Caine's location, and as little as possible anywhere else.

With the supply worm's report in hand, he bought the handful of items still needed for the explosive – flash paper casings, a plastic sweep-motion timer, flash plastic chemical containment tubes, and a couple of normally non-volatile chemicals – from several separate suppliers, most of them on Tarkanis, paying cash for them when he could. Some of these items he brought with him on the trip to Halcyon; others he shipped to himself, packaged with several other items of similar nature to make the package seem more innocuous, knowing he'd arrive before they did.

Once at the resort, Gérard becomes a quick master at manipulating matters. Early on, for example, he recognizes Irving Maljek as a Clone Mob member, correctly deduces why he's here, and subtly suggests to him (outside anyone else's hearing) that Caine may be preparing to betray him: "You know, Caine strikes me as a real 'truth and justice' kind of guy. You know the type – the kind who can't stand for a deception very long."

On the night after his arrival, shortly after two in the morning (when very few people are about), he leaves his cabin, finds the crawl space access, and leaves the bomb parts he brought with himself. On the way out he was caught by Leo Braverman, and made the excuse that he thought he'd a cat in distress under there. After learning that there were no cats on the island, he went back to bed.

The package arrives two days later; about the same time of night, he goes through the same ritual with the bomb parts from that package, adding a handwritten coded message on flash paper. After waking, he reported this second trip to the concierge (Holiba Mrao) and asked that she pass on to Braverman his decision that the cat noises were just a dream.

The afternoon before the explosion, Gérard hears a group of kids playing Rigellian kickball (a game resembling a cross between hackysack and soccer) behind his cabin, and asks them to relocate, suggesting the area next to Caine's cabin instead.

From there he simply rides out the events, doing his best to stay under the investigators' radar until his scheduled time at the resort ends and he can go home. (He'd try to go home right away, but is afraid that might arouse suspicions.)

In Case of a Telepathic PC

If one of the PCs is telepathic, Gérard has arranged for a way out.

During the evenings while waiting out the events, he does a little research on some of the other guests just in case he has to arrange for a new suspect. In this research he comes across the

irregularities in Paul Richards' finances. With a little more investigation – including overhearing a conversation between Richards and Trey Baker – he learns that Richards is taking bribes.

Then, just in case the PCs' telepath starts zeroing in on his mind, he blackmails Richards into erasing all memories of his involvement with the murder. (To prevent Richards from just blacking out all memories of Richards' own dirty secret, Gérard emails the data to himself in a deeply coded packet, and informs Richards of that fact.)

Naturally, the memory will return over time due to the nature of Richards' powers, but by then Gérard should be well away from the investigators.

Gérard's weak point in this aspect of the plan is Richards himself. If cornered, the IPF agent will cave in and confess everything.

In Case of a Retrocognitive PC

While the GM may want to exclude PCs with Retrocognition from this scenario, in an ongoing campaign that's not always possible. Though retrocognition isn't among the abilities listed as "officially" available in the *Terran Empire* setting, the GM could allow a character with the ability. Fortunately, its presence doesn't have to be a scenario-breaker.

Generally, the amount of information a character can gain from retrocognition will be rather limited. If the ability relies on psionic traces, they'll only be able to determine that the bomb was there when Artemus Logan went down there to retrieve the stray kickball, but not a month earlier when a pair of young Mon'dabi kids went down to explore. If the power has the *Vague And Unclear* Limitation, all that the character sees is the sense of mechanical hands assembling and placing the bomb. (This may direct the characters to Sigmund Mallory.)

Typically, the most a retrocognitive will be able to determine is that the bomb was not put into place by any living being. A little luck or special care will be needed to determine that the bomb was placed by maintenance robots.

The worst case would be if the PC in question has a clear and well-controlled ability. He could then easily go to the explosion's "ground zero," see that the bomb was planted by the maintenance robots, then backtrack their movements until finding that they had picked up the parts from below Gérard Guillaume's cabin, and that Gérard himself had put those parts there. That would be enough to arrest him as the prime suspect, and gathering evidence for a conviction would be a fairly simple matter.

Even in that case, all is not necessarily lost. Gérard could easily use the same tactic as described above for the event of a telepathic PC. Then, when confronted, he can state truthfully

that he doesn't remember any of the actions. While he'll admit to having a motive, he'll claim that he was clearly "puppeteered" (Mind Controlled) into doing these things, probably by a psionic who'd found his motive and decided to use him as a patsy. Even a telepathic scan is unlikely to uncover anything to the contrary.

The GM could also make the premature solution of the crime merely a prelude to a chase, in which the PCs desperately try to track Gérard down and stop him from leaving the planet.

Conclusion and Aftermath

There are only two ways this story can be deemed a complete failure for the PCs: if they completely miss out on the copious clues in the mystery, and don't solve it at all; or if they identify and arrest the wrong suspect. In the latter case, the Imperial court will find the accused person Not Guilty; in either event the case will probably be left open and unsolved.

If Gérard gets even a hint that he's seriously suspected, he'll pack up and check out, giving the excuse that the murder and ensuing investigation have spoiled his relaxation. He will only obey sanctioned law enforcement officials (including the PCs if they qualify as such) if told to stay put. Even in that case, if he really feels like the PCs are getting too close, he may try to fabricate some excuse to go. If he's identified as the murderer after he leaves, he'll go on the run, creating the possibility for a chase scene and/or further adventures with him in the future (see the sidebar for Gérard Guillaume Plot Seeds).

On the other hand, if the PCs can intercept him before he leaves, all it will take to stop him will be to tell him that he's under arrest for the murder of Remus Caine. That, combined with a weapon pointed in his direction, will result in him fainting.

Unless the PCs have done something special in the way of evidence (see above regarding finding traces of the worms he used to arrange for the alternate suspects), Gérard will deal with the Justice Ministry to plead guilty to premeditated murder and arson by explosives, to serve a life sentence in a cyber-secure medium-security facility on New Canaan.

If the PCs' evidence is mostly circumstantial and based on witness testimony, he'll fight the charge, and the PCs will be called to testify at his trial. The GM should base the result of the trial on the quality of their testimony – and remember that he's rich enough to afford a competent attorney who can cross-examine them effectively. If they do poorly, he may be found Not Guilty. On the other hand, they may also continue to pursue the trail of evidence if they wish, and this may lead to revelations sufficient to bring about the death penalty.

GÉRARD GUILLAUME PLOT SEEDS

On the run following the events this scenario, Gérard needs to get his medication or he'll get sick and possibly die. He knows that, as a fugitive from the law, he can't openly go get a prescription refill. He also knows that the authorities, including the PCs, will be aware of this. He tries taking care of both problems at once, blackmailing a pharmacist on Fexao into providing his medication and using that very fact as bait for an elaborate trap to cause the PCs' demise.

Having disposed of Remus Caine, Gérard goes to Paragon to settle the score with other persons involved in his brother's death. This is a predictable move, and he knows it, so he arranges for several "red herrings" to distract the PCs and other authorities while he goes about his business.

Even when captured, people involved in Gautier's capture and death continue to suffer mysterious "accidents." Is one of the other Guillaume siblings involved somehow? Or did he program an AI to do his dirty work for him? And how will the PCs figure it out?

(The PCs may also continue to pursue evidence if they accuse the wrong person. This could lead to a reversal, and the eventual revelation of Gérard Guillaume as the killer.)

The ramifications for the other NPCs should depend on the PCs' actions. For example, if they expose Paul Richards' bribery scheme, it will probably also result in the public revelation of Trey Baker's high psi rating. The GM should allow the PCs to have whatever effect they wish on the NPCs' lives, based on dramatic and common sense.

Experience points should be given out in the usual manner for the campaign. If the PCs do particularly well, they may earn Assigned Experience Points toward a Favor from Richelle Smith, Janice Terhane, or some other NPC in this scenario.

NPCs

The core of any murder mystery is the interaction among the many characters who make up the story – not just the killer and his victim, but the accomplices, alternate suspects, witnesses, and various others who make up the "world" in which the crime took place.

THE CULPRIT (AND HIS ACCOMPLICE)

Of the NPCs involved in this scenario, these are the only two that the PCs are likely to do battle with, or encounter again.

Gérard Guillaume

Background/History: The fourth of seven children, Gérard Guillaume (he pronounces both Gs hard) often felt lost in the crowd, though his family was fairly tight-knit. Still, while his three older siblings were close in age and his three younger were likewise close to each other, he was separated by eight years on each side, making him more isolated than the rest. His older siblings had moved out of the house by the time he was ten, and his parents were often too busy caring for his younger siblings to give him much time.

The city of Paris was, at that time, one of Earth's biggest centers for computer development. Gerard found solace in computers, puzzles, and similar intellectual exercises. He attended the Paris Institute of Technology, and graduated fourth in his class (out of 953) with a Bachelor's degree in Computer Software Design at the age of 17. He immediately went on to achieve his Master's in Computer Simulations, and immediately got a job with SimArts Software on Tarkanis. He poured himself into designing the settings, plots, and intermediate puzzles in the company's *Turf Wars* series of games (in which players play troubleshooting ISP officers

dealing with organized crime on various planets), for which he's won several awards.

This would have been the end of his background story if not for his younger brother, Gautier. The only boy among the youngest three, he bore the brunt of his stepmother's verbal and physical abuses. The woman was eventually caught, jailed, and divorced, but the emotional damage to Gautier had already been done, to say nothing of some mild but key brain damage from a series of concussions. Gautier's fate was sealed before he left home: his inner rage would make him a serial killer.

Gautier was smart enough to avoid staying in any one place for long; after a half-dozen or so killings, even the most "backwoods" police would start to see a connection, so he moved frequently. The interplanetary law enforcement networks finally put out a general alert for this itinerant serial killer, along with his modus operandi. As soon as he hit his first victim on the planet Paragon, detective Remus Caine knew what to look for, and had Gautier in custody within two days.

Within a year Gautier was convicted of the entire string of 31 murders, all young women resembling his stepmother. Another year later he was executed by cerebrectomy, his brain cast aside and the rest of his body given to a terminally-ill man.

Despite Gautier's confessions, to say nothing of the fact that the killings stopped after Gautier was imprisoned, Gérard never believed his brother was guilty. He blamed Caine for framing Gautier, and determined to exact revenge. Since he had no recourse in the legal system, it became necessary to take matters into his own hands.

Personality/Motivation: Gérard is brilliant, and he knows it. That said, he doesn't like to brag or crow about his brilliance or his personal achievements, at least not beyond a normal excitement for his work.

He loves puzzles of all sorts. He loves literary murder mysteries, particularly those written by such puzzle masters as Agatha Christie and Steve Allen; his personal computer has a holographic 3D version of a game we'd recognize as a form of Tetris; and he always has a giant jigsaw puzzle in the works at his home. Of course, creating puzzles is an important pastime of his; besides the intricate puzzles he makes on the job, he loves to create bonus-sized crossword puzzles (as big as 101 by 101 squares), and building 3D mazes is one of his favorite ways to relax.

Though he comes across as a pleasant if rather "geeky" individual most of the time, Gérard is prone to holding grudges. He can let

Quote: “We’re already working on *Turf Wars XVII*. Yeah, I know, *Turf Wars XVI* only just got on the market, but we have to keep up on the franchise. Anyway, this one’s going to take place in a fictional Toractan city, so even the footwork has to deal with a true three-dimensional thought. And if you don’t know how their organized crime groups work already, you’ll be in for a lot of big surprises!”

Powers/Tactics: Though not the most brilliant computer programmer in the galaxy, Gérard is extremely talented in that field. He is also an extraordinary puzzle-creator with much well-earned acclaim within the computer game industry. His IQ, were it to be measured in the early twenty-first century, would come to around 195.

He is absolutely, positively not a physical combatant. He won’t strike a blow, and if cornered he’ll either surrender or (more likely) faint. This isn’t so much because of any measure of cowardice, but because he has a medical condition that leads to hypotension (low blood pressure). He has to take a special medication every six hours or his concentration and other abilities will slowly deteriorate.

Gérard’s puzzle-traps, of which this is one, have a certain “signature” to them. The situations look perfectly normal and straightforward at first, until the trap is sprung. He keeps numerous distractions, misdirections, red herrings, and other diversions on hand to confuse matters and seal his quarry’s fate. These diversions are drawn in from any number of sources and directions, making it hard to trace any connections among them.

Campaign Use: If Gérard escapes the PCs, he could become a running fugitive, possibly with a grudge against the PCs. If they find irrefutable proof of his responsibility for Caine’s murder, he can come back to haunt them, but he won’t be quite so careful in covering his tracks.

Gérard should never become a physical threat to the PCs. To make him more powerful, just increase his resources, giving him more Skill Levels with Intellect Skills, some additional Science Skills, and perhaps some new versions of Analyze. If you want to make him really threatening, give him some psionic powers, especially Precognition and Telepathy. To tone him down, lower his INT and Skill Levels and maybe take away some of his Knowledge Skills.

As this adventure clearly demonstrates, Gérard is a very likely candidate for Hunting someone who’s done him wrong. His years at making puzzles for the *Turf Wars* games has left him the habit of making intricate schemes, especially ones that (as noted above) look completely innocent until the trap is sprung.

Appearance: Though slightly on the tall side at 5’11” (180 cm), Gérard is also quite skinny at 155 pounds (70 kg). He has stringy brown hair, large brown eyes, and an oversized nose of a shape suggesting Greek heritage (though most of his ancestry is French). He wears utilitarian clothing in simple colors that don’t quite go well with his pasty complexion, usually black trousers and stark-white shirt.

Gérard Guillaume



Gérard Guillaume

Val	Cha	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	Lift 75 kg; 1½d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
11	CON	2	11-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
23	INT	16	14-	PER Roll: 14-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
2	PD	0		Total: 2 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
3	SPD	2		Phases: 4, 8, 12
4	REC	0		
22	END	0		
22	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 64

Movement: Running: 7"/14"
 Leaping: 1½"/3"
 Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
2	<i>Healthy Runner:</i> Running +1" (7" Total)	1
16	<i>Anticipation:</i> Precognitive Clairsentience (Sight, Touch, and Hearing Groups), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½); Concentration (½ DCV Throughout, -½), Extra Time (1 Turn [Post-Segment 12], -1¼), Precognition Only (-1), No Range (-½), Requires a Deduction Roll (Subject to Skill vs. Skill Contests, -¾), Time Modifiers (-½)	0

Perks

- 5 Money: Well Off

Talents

- 3 Absolute Time Sense
 4 Double Jointed
 5 Eidetic Memory
 3 Lightning Calculator
 4 Speed Reading (×10)

Skills

- 30 +6 with Intellect Skills
- 3 Acting 12-
 3 Analyze: Software 14-
 3 Bribery 12-
 3 Bureaucratics 12-
 23 Computer Programming 24-
 5 Cramming
 3 Criminology 14-
 3 Cryptography 14-
 3 Deduction 14-
 3 Demolitions 14-
 3 Electronics 14-
 4 Gambling (Card Games, Roulette) 14-
 3 Inventor 14-
 3 Paramedics 14-
 3 Persuasion 12-
 3 PS: Computer Programmer 14-
 13 PS: Puzzle Creator 19-
 3 Research 14-
 3 Scholar
 2 1) KS: Computer Game Systems 14-
 2 2) KS: Literary Murder Mysteries 14-
 1 3) KS: Martial Arts Styles 11-
 1 4) KS: Organized Crime 11-
 2 5) KS: Puzzles 14-
 1 6) KS: Species of the Milky Way 11-
 2 7) KS: Star Trek 14-
 2 SS: Chemistry 11-
 3 Sleight Of Hand 13-
 3 Stealth 13-
 4 Systems Operation (Communications
Systems, Environmental Systems) 14-
 3 Trading 12-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 188**Total Cost: 252****75+ Disadvantages**

- 5 Dependence: Special Medication
(Difficult to Obtain, Incompetence, 6
Hours)
 15 Physical Limitation: Prone to Fainting
When Under Extreme Stress
(Infrequently, Fully Impairing)
 20 Psychological Limitation: Loves to
Create Complex Puzzles (Very Common,
Strong)
 15 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful
(Common, Strong)
 10 Rivalry: Other Computer Programmers
(Professional, Mo Pow, Seek to Outdo,
Aware of Rivalry)
 5 Social Limitation: Famous Game
Programmer (Frequently, Minor, Not
Limiting in Some Cultures)
 107 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 252

PAUL RICHARDS PLOT SEEDS

The PCs need information from a notorious criminal. As it happens, just the previous day Paul showed up at his family's home and started investigating his daughter as a potential psychic. The criminal agrees to give the PCs what they want if they'll get Paul out of his family's hair.

A wealthy family whose youngest son has psionic powers claims that they tried to bribe him to keep their son out of the IPF facility, but he reneged on his part of the deal. The puzzling part is that not only did Paul not discuss a bribe with them, he hadn't even arrived on their planet when the child was taken away. Even a telepathic probe of the family's memories show they're telling the truth – and nobody seems to know where the boy is now. Paul asks the PCs for help in clearing his name for the one case of bribery he *hasn't* committed.

Paul's been found out by the Mind Police. The investigators know everything – his track of bribery, his psionic surgery, everything. He goes on the run as a fugitive. The PCs are assigned to bring him in – or

Paul Richards

Background/History: Two men came to the Richards family's apartment. They were a struggling family of nine. The second-oldest child, Paul, was what they came for. They were Seekers with the Imperial Psionics Foundation, they said. They were there to take Paul away from his family, away from the cobalt mines, away from Zemnar altogether. He'd be enrolled in a special IPF school where he'd be trained to use his telepathic powers for the good of the Empire.

His family was ambivalent. They'd miss Paul, but it was for the good of the Empire, and it would give him a chance for a better life than than what he'd have if he stayed on Zemnar -- no barely having enough money for food and shelter, no semi-toxic atmosphere, no looming Ackalian warships, no threat of raiders from Venwordien, and especially no oppressive labor contract.

The IPF trained Paul well. He was well-motivated; he saw how comfortable and well-fed the senior people were, and determined to become as much like them as he could. He pushed his mind until he was a smart, powerful telepath -- one of the most impressive in his class.

He was in the field when he discovered, almost purely by accident, his ability to alter the memories of others. While probing the mind of a potential subject, he found a memory of an incident of childhood abuse at the hands of a psi criminal. Thinking the youngster would be more amenable to joining the IPF if she didn't remember that event, he focused his mind on pulling that memory away from her. It worked, and she did join; by the time the memory later returned, she was already contractually obligated.

Since then he's used his abilities faithfully for the good of the Empire... except when sufficiently paid to do otherwise. Since his powerful mental defenses make it hard for other telepaths in the IPF to read his mind, he's become adept at taking bribes and altering memories to keep certain individuals with their wealthy families.

Personality/Motivation: Paul is just plain greedy. He wants all the money he can get, and he wants to use it to live comfortably. His early ambitions for promotion were primarily about the salary raise, and the main reason he hasn't continued to pursue it is because being in the field gives him better opportunities to accept bribes from wealthy families who don't want their children recruited into the Mind Police or otherwise forced into something dangerous, demeaning, or unpleasant.

He's not without dedication, however. When he isn't being bribed to adjust his findings, he does his job as an IPF seeker legitimately, to the best of his ability. He's also not entirely selfish in his money-handling; he frequently sends money back home to his parents, to help ease their burdens and hopefully help them buy their way off Zemnar.

Only one thing truly frightens Paul, and that's being found out. Should either his bribery scheme or his ability at psionic surgery be discovered, he's sure he'd be carted off to some top-secret Mind Police facility where his brain would be dissected, first figuratively and then literally. And while he's quite good at covering his tracks from psychic investigations, more conventional detectives (such as the PCs) might soon find something to use against him.

Quote: "It was a misreading. Some psis just read at a higher level of ability than they actually are, and Mr. Baker happens to be one. That's all."

Powers/Tactics: Paul is a high-grade psionic, officially rated as a Psi-Epsilon telepath, though technically he should be Psi-Zeta (Provisional). His most-used ability is straightforward telepathy, but he's also capable of a deep, powerful psionic surgery that would be highly sought after by many parties if he'd let anyone know he could do it. He's used careful manipulation of the system, as well as the power itself, to conceal the fact that he possesses it. He also has extremely powerful psionic defenses which help him conceal his psionic surgery ability; ironically, he could be classified as Psi-Zeta (Provisional) based on just his telepathy and defenses, and run a lesser risk of being found out about the psionic surgery.

The psionic surgery ability does have one significant drawback: it isn't permanent. Over time, any memories he alters or erases return to their normal state (the Transform heals normally, at the rate of the target's REC per month). Thus, while he can alter a subject's memories to keep that person's secrets from other IPF telepaths in the short term, the effects are only temporary. Also, while he could alter a colleague's memories to cover up his own secrets, the memories would come back and then he'd be in even more trouble. So far he hasn't been faced with what to do about that.

Paul is not a combatant, having only the rudimentary training required of IPF Seekers. In the event a fight breaks out his main priority is to get away -- not because of any cowardice, but because he realizes that he's outclassed in most fights. If possible, he uses his telepathy to determine what an attacker is about to do, and respond accordingly. He isn't quick enough to get any bonuses in combat from this, but he can adjust his tactics according to what his opponent

is thinking. For example, if someone wants to attack him hand to hand, he'll try to keep his distance; if someone is intent on forcing him over a precipice, he'll move away from the edge; if someone is about to draw a gun on him, he'll take cover; and so forth.

That said, if he has appropriate backup he won't shrink from a fight, but will lend what support he can.

Campaign Use: In the current adventure, Paul is intended as a complication for telepathic PCs. As soon as Gerard Guillaume realizes that one of the investigators is a telepath, he blackmails Paul into erasing his memory of the deed so the telepathic PC can't pick it out of his mind. However, this raises Paul's anxiety level considerably; not only does he worry about being caught at this, but he also knows that if Gerard could learn his secret, so could someone else.

On a broader scale, Paul can become a "flag" to the PCs that there's psi involvement in a case where that's not obvious. He can also be a personal complication should a PC have a juvenile DNPC with psionic ability. And should the PCs discover his secret, they could choose to blackmail him into the occasional "favor," especially where the IPF or the Mind Police are concerned.

To make Paul more powerful, give him a Telepathic Assault power (EGO Attack), or a bit more skill with his laser pistol. You could also get him into better physical shape, reflecting it with increases in his STR, CON, and BODY to 13 each. If you need to tone him down, reduce his Telepathy to 6d6 and his Psionic Surgery to 1d6.

Paul does not Hunt individuals on his own. For one thing he's not that prone to vengeance; for another, his obligations to the IPF would make it impractical. However, he could work as an agent for the IPF if they're Hunting someone, or possibly for the Mind Police.

Appearance: Paul is a small, mostly average-looking man with a demeanor that suggests that he wouldn't be quite so confident if not for his psychic powers. He stands 5'3" tall, and is slightly overweight at 155 pounds.

motivated by other means, such as a large reward posted for his capture.

Paul Richards



Paul Richards

Val	Cha	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	Lift 75 kg; 1½d6 [1]
13	DEX	9	12-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
8	CON	-4	11-	
9	BODY	-2	11-	
23	INT	16	14-	PER Roll: 14-
23	EGO	32	14-	ECV: 8
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
2	PD	0		Total: 2 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
3	SPD	7		Phases: 4, 8, 12
4	REC	0		
16	END	0		
17	STUN	0		

Total Characteristic Cost: 58

Movement: Running: 7"/14"
 Leaping: 1½"/3"
 Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
32	<i>Epsilon Telepathy:</i> Telepathy 8d6; Concentration (½ DCV, -¼)	4
16	<i>Epsilon Psionic Surgery:</i> Major Transform 1½d6 (mental "objects" in the minds of sentient beings into different mental "objects"), Works Against EGO, Not BODY (+¼), Based On EGO Combat Value (Mental Defense applies, +1); Extra Time (1 Turn, -1¼), Concentration (0 DCV, Character is totally unaware of nearby events; -¾), Limited Target (mental "objects" in the minds of sentient beings, -½)	6
20	<i>Gamma Mind Shield:</i> Mental Defense (25 points Total)	0

Perks

- 1 Fringe Benefit: Licensed Psionic
- 3 Fringe Benefit: Psionic Police Powers
- 1 Membership: Psionic League
- 3 Money: Well Off

Skills

- 10 +2 with Intellect Skills
- 3 Acting 12-
- 3 Analyze Psi Powers 14-
- 3 Bribery 12-
- 3 Bureaucratics 12-
- 3 Conversation 12-
- 3 Cloak 14-
- 3 Deduction 14-
- 3 High Society 12-
- 3 Instructor 14-
- 3 KS: The Psionic World 14-
- 2 KS: Sentient Species of the Terran Empire 11-
- 3 Paramedics 14-
- 3 Persuasion 12-
- 3 Power (Psionics) 11-
- 3 PS: Psionics Instructor 14-
- 3 Research 14-
- 2 SS: Psionics 11-
- 2 Systems Operation (Communications) 14-
- 3 Veil 14-
- 2 WF: Human Advanced Small Arms

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 142**Total Cost: 200****75+ Disadvantages**

- 20 Hunted: Mind Police 14- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Greedy (Uncommon, Strong)
- 15 Social Limitation: Minority (Very Frequently, Minor)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 10 Social Limitation: Harmful Secret (see text) (Occasionally, Major)
- 50 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 200

The Victim

REMUS CAINE

14 STR	13 DEX	13 CON
9 BODY	18 INT	11 EGO
18 PRE	12 COM	
3 PD	3 ED	3 SPD
6 REC	26 END	23 STUN

Abilities: +3 with Interaction Skills, Only Versus Criminal Suspects; Bureaucratics 13-; Conversation 13-; Criminology 13-; Deduction 13-; Interrogation 13-; KS: Halcyon Planetary Law 11-; KS: Investigative Procedure 14-; KS: Minerva Planetary Law 11-; KS: Popular Literature 13-; KS: Shakespeare 13-; KS: The Law Enforcement World 14-; Streetwise 13-; WF: Human Advanced Small Arms; Computer Link: Halcyon law enforcement database; Fringe Benefit: Planetary Police Powers; Rank: Planetary Police Commander

75+ Disadvantages: Age 40+; Distinctive Features: Uniform (Easily Concealed, Noticed And Recognizable); Psychological Limitation: Dedicated To Truth And Justice (Common, Total); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Notes: Remus Caine spent twenty-five years as a planetary police officer on his home planet of Minerva before retiring and accepting a job as Assistant Chief for Investigations for the Halcyon Security Patrol. Three years into his stint he investigated the only homicide in the planet's history (before his own), and that was ten years ago. His pension from the Minerva Planetary Police is actually higher than his current salary, but on Halcyon he gets to do what he loves at a relaxed pace so he'd keep his job even if it meant giving up his pension.

When facing down a suspect, he's a night-irresistible force against which the only reliable defense is factual innocence. This earned him the nickname of "Freight Train" Caine back on Minerva, and this name sometimes comes up again on Halcyon. To everyone else he's laid-back, easygoing, pleasant, and even jovial, with a fondness for quoting Shakespeare.

Chief Caine is a mostly nondescript individual, in relatively good shape despite his age (he's approaching 60 years) and about 20 extra pounds around his waist. He has salt-and-pepper hair, and keeps his face clean shaven. He only wears his uniform when on duty; the rest of the time he's in loose-fitting casual clothes.

He and his wife, Ryoko (described below), have three sons and two daughters, all of whom are grown, married, and raising children of their own, both on Minerva and elsewhere.

At Serenity Resort, Caine is looking forward to a relaxing vacation with his beloved wife, Ryoko (below). He has no idea anyone there is out to kill him, and while he'd take any specific allegations seriously he'll leave any general threats to the local security people.

Remus Caine



The Alternate Suspects

These are the people the PCs could suspect of having committed the murder of Remus Caine at some point in the investigation, but who were not actually involved at all. The scenario, as written, assumes all of these characters are present, though the GM may remove any of them (along with the “red herring” story lines connected to them) to make the mystery simpler for the PCs.

LYLE ALLEN

10 STR	13 DEX	12 CON
12 BODY	13 INT	15 EGO
7 PRE	8 COM	
2 PD	2 ED	3 SPD
4 REC	24 END	23 STUN

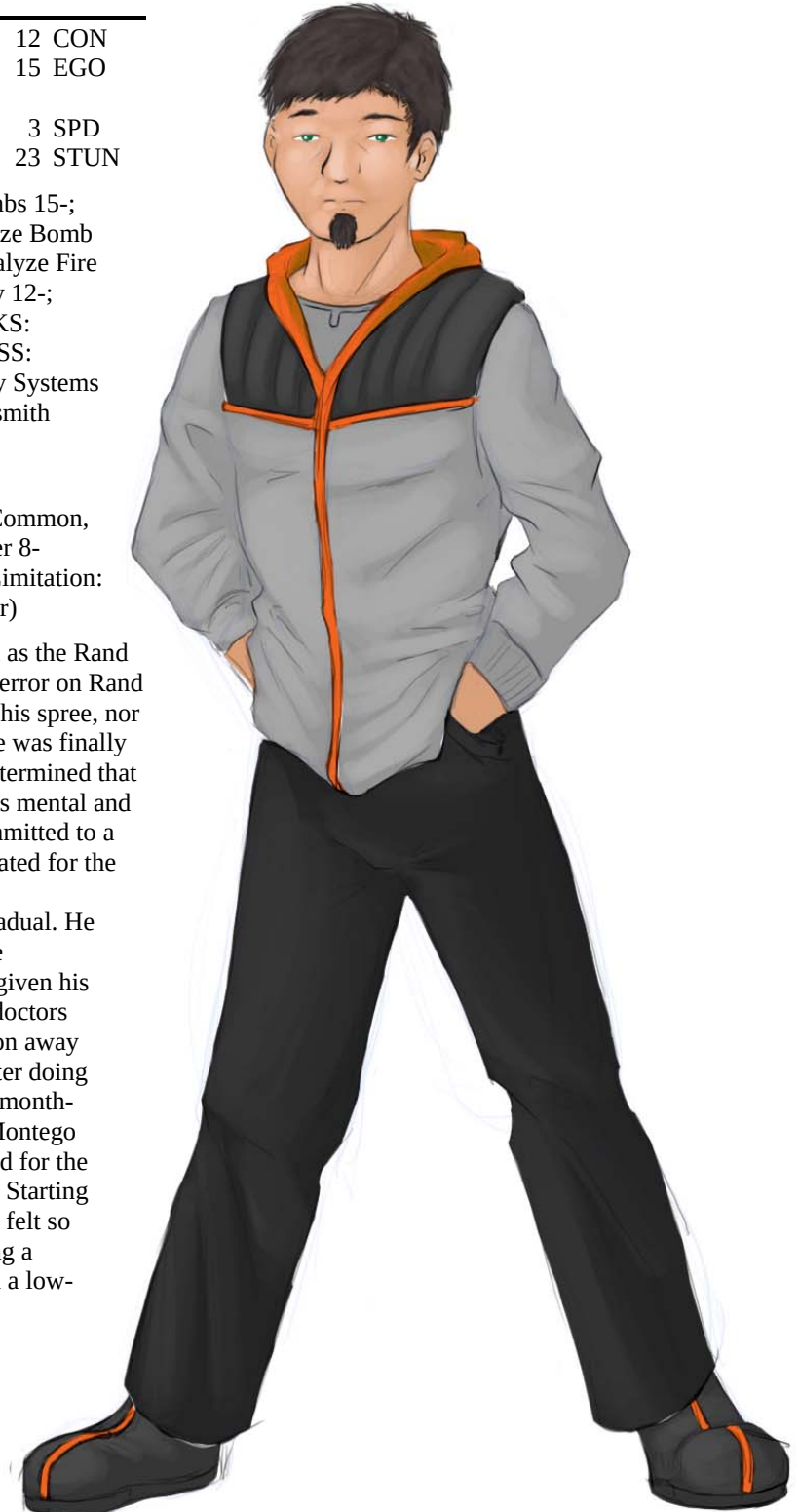
Abilities: Find Weakness with bombs 15-; +3 with bomb-related Skills; Analyze Bomb 12-; Analyze Construction 12-; Analyze Fire 12-; Concealment 12-; Criminology 12-; Demolitions 17-; KS: Bombs 11-; KS: Contract Law 11-; Persuasion 10-; SS: Abnormal Psychology 11-; Security Systems 12-; Survival (urban) 12-; Weaponsmith (Incendiary Weapons) 12-

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Compulsive Bomber (Common, Moderate); Reputation: mad bomber 8- (extreme, Limited Group); Social Limitation: Convicted Felon (Frequently, Major)

Notes: Lyle Allen was once known as the Rand Bomber, after a four-year reign of terror on Rand IV. Nobody was ever killed during his spree, nor even seriously injured, and when he was finally caught government psychiatrists determined that his actions were the result of serious mental and emotional disturbance. He was committed to a mental institution, and carefully treated for the next fifteen years.

His release into society was gradual. He did well at first, but had a hard time integrating into society, especially given his record and notoriety. Recently his doctors recommended that he take a vacation away from the stress of Rand society. After doing some research he decided to take a month-long trip to Halcyon, and relax at Montego Cay. (The Rand IV government paid for the trip, and was glad to be rid of him.) Starting on the day of his arrival, he’s never felt so relaxed in his life, and is considering a permanent move here if he can find a low-stress job.

As soon as the bomb goes off, he assumes that the investigators will blame him; this is why he runs away. Once the PCs clear him, he’ll gladly lend whatever expertise he has to the investigation – and where it comes to bombs, he had plenty of time to study up on the topic while in the asylum. (This, in turn, may just earn him a job as an arson investigator for the Halcyon Security Patrol!)



RYOKO CAINE

11 STR	13 DEX	12 CON
11 BODY	18 INT	18 EGO
18 PRE	16 COM	
2 PD	2 ED	3 SPD
4 REC	24 END	23 STUN

Abilities: Bureaucrats 13-; Computer Programming 13-; Security Systems 13-; Systems Operation 13-

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Feature: Unusually Beautiful Half-Vayathuran Woman (Easily Concealable, Noticed And Recognized); Psychological Limitation: Nymphomaniac (Common, Strong)

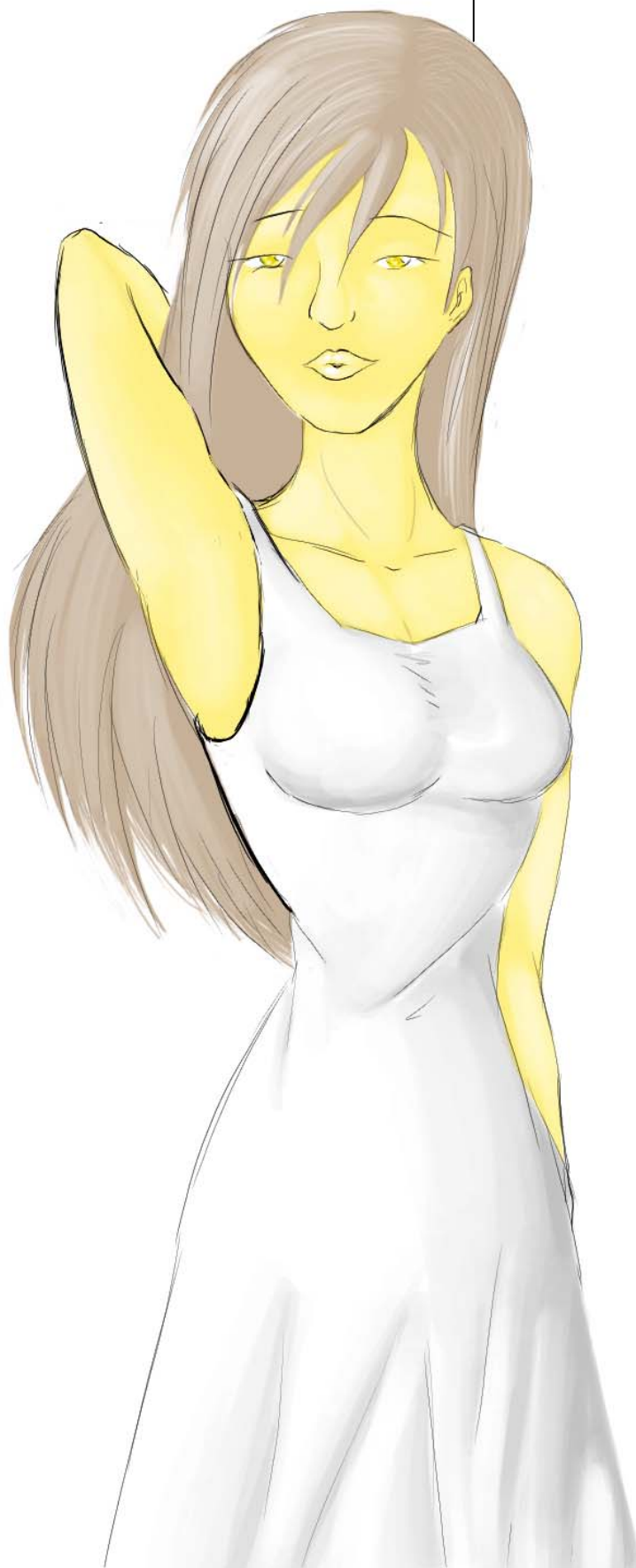
Notes: Remus Caine's widow, Ryoko works as an administrator in Halcyon's central communications bureau. An intelligent, strong-willed woman with an energetic demeanor, she was a perfect complement to her husband's more laid-back personal style: he helped her to relax in her approach to life, while she gave him an extra sense of drive to achieve.

Her main weakness is a moderate nymphomania. When she and Remus first married, she was quite a "wild child," gleefully working as a prostitute for one of Minerva's more respectable escort services (the industry is quite legal, though tightly regulated, on that planet). Observers thought at first the Remus' marriage to a beautiful woman nearly fifteen years his junior was a "trophy" marriage, but this was quickly proved wrong as she limited her flings to a few discreet "friends with benefits" affairs. Even now, on Halcyon, she only takes occasional excursions to Sin City, and discreetly keeps steady relations with only two co-workers and three neighbors plus an occasional fling with Burton Terhane's oldest grandson, Adonis.

(Despite her numerous sexual flings, all five of the couple's children are genetically her husband's.)

At the time of the blast, Ryoko was finishing up a software upgrade to the planet's communications system, and was scheduled to join her husband the following day. Further discussion on the PCs' probable investigation of her can be found under "The Grieving Widow."

Once she's cleared, Ryoko can be an asset to the investigation. For instance, if she's not under suspicion when Gérard Guillaume sends his "insurance" packet with information about Paul Richards, she'll notice this right away and notify the PCs (though obviously this will only happen if Gérard has reason to guard against a telepath). With that discovery, or if asked by the PCs, she can take a look at any other communications to or from Gérard, and possibly notice some otherwise innocent-looking communications that helped transport the worm he created.



SHELAKO GEN'SHIR

12 STR	11 DEX	12 CON
12 BODY	18 INT	13 EGO
13 PRE	14 COM	
3 PD	3 ED	2 SPD
4 REC	24 END	24 STUN

Abilities: Demolitions Expert (Find Weakness 15- with all Explosives attacks, Only Versus Structures); Fast Runner (+1" Running); +4 with Analyze, Demolitions, PS: Excavator; Analyze: Construction 13-; Climbing 11-; Demolitions 13-; KS: Explosives 15-; PS: Excavator 16-; Oratory 12-; Persuasion 12-; Streetwise 12-; Wealth: Well Off; Mon'dabi Bite (HKA 1 point, No STR Bonus); Mon'dabi Skin (Damage Resistance [1 PD/1 ED]); Mon'dabi Senses (+1 PER with All Sense Groups); Tail (Extra Limb, Inherent, Limited Manipulation); Wealth: Well Off

75+ Disadvantages: DNPC: Zhelagi (wife) 11- (Normal); Psychological Limitation: Pedophile (Common, Moderate); Social Limitation: Harmful Secret (see below) (Occasionally, Minor); Social Limitation: Mildly Famous (Occasionally, Minor)

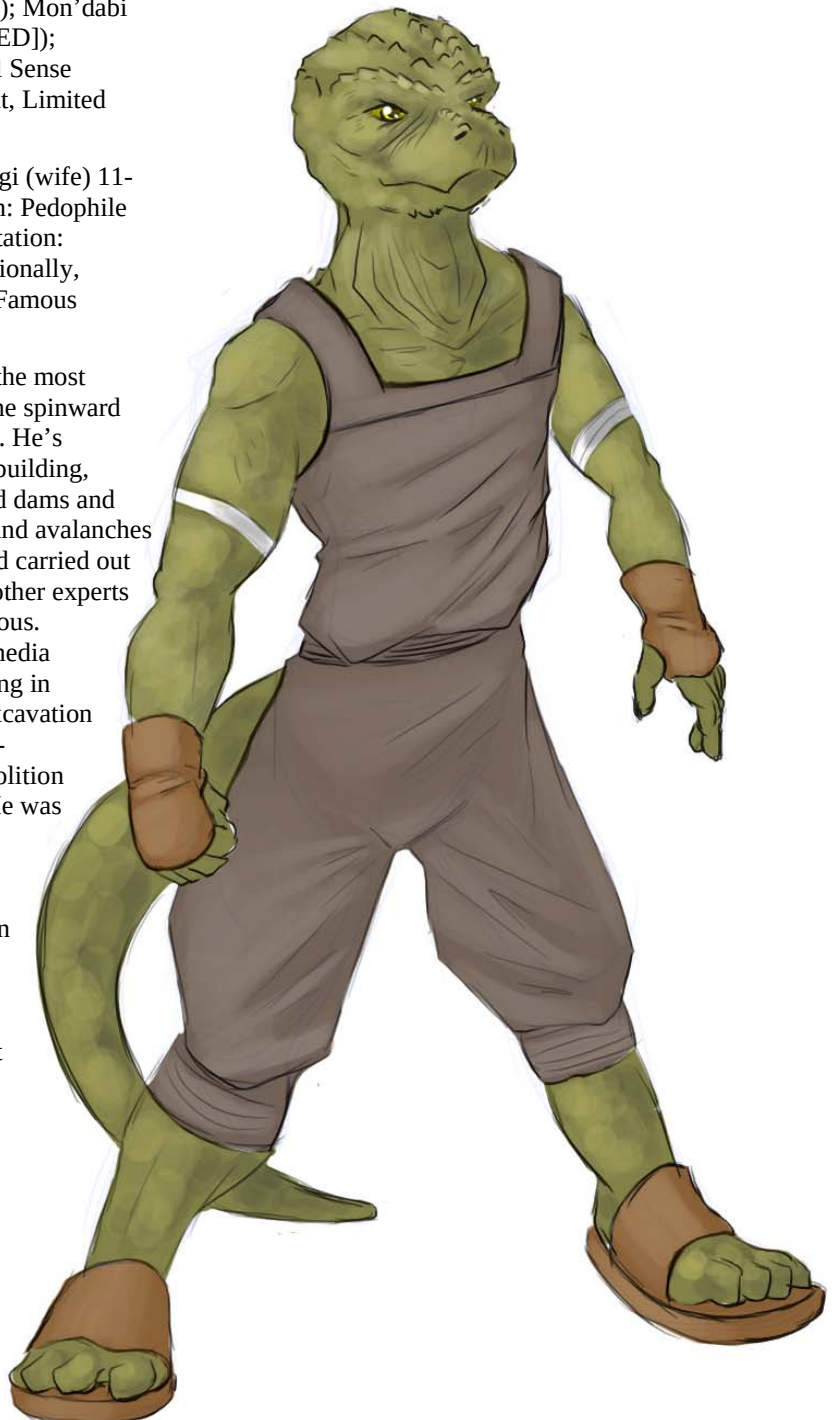
Notes: Shelako Gen'shir is one of the most successful demolitions experts in the spinward sectors of the Mon'dabi Federation. He's brought down many a condemned building, brought down numerous abandoned dams and dikes, helped to trigger landslides and avalanches under controlled circumstances, and carried out many other demolitions tasks that other experts consider too difficult or too dangerous.

Shelako has become a minor media figure in the Federation, participating in several documentaries involving excavation and demolition, including one well-distributed holofilm about the demolition of old Xenovore weapons plants. He was also featured in an installment of a series of hour-long biographical documentaries. He would be recognizable to just about anyone in the Mon'dabi Federation with an appropriate Knowledge Skill.

His one major weakness is a compulsive desire for prepubescent Mon'dabi females. Five years ago there was a minor scandal on Kdathar, where a civil suit was brought claiming that he'd "inappropriately touched" a colleague's young daughter. (He'd actually done a fair bit more than that.) He settled out of court, and the records were sealed; no criminal charges were brought at the behest of the

parents. While this incident was hushed up in the media, those who are aware of it note that, when he met his wife Zhelagi fifteen years ago, he was twenty-three years old and she was only ten.

The couple currently has three children: a fourteen year old son, Kezhanu; and twin eight year old girls, Henaku and Hoshima. (He has carefully kept his attraction for underage girls well away from his daughters, whom he affectionately and poetically refers to as "my lungs.") As of this scenario the kids are staying with their maternal grandparents while the parents enjoy a couples' vacation won through the Travel Network Sweepstakes Coalition.



DIGITAL HERO #45

ARTEMUS LOGAN

10 STR	13 DEX	11 CON
11 BODY	18 INT	12 EGO
8 PRE	10 COM	
2 PD	2 ED	3 SPD
4 REC	32 END	22 STUN

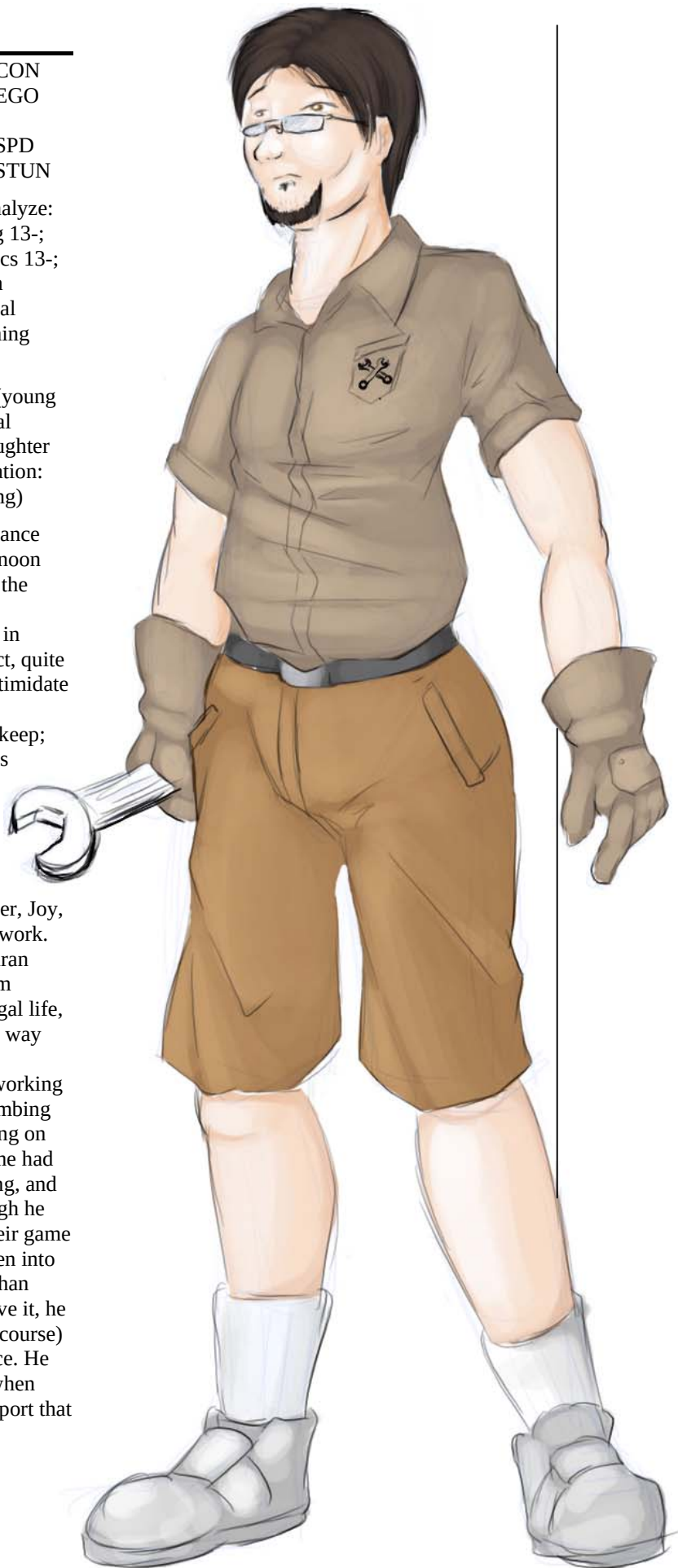
Abilities: +4 with Technology Skills; Analyze: Technology 13-; Computer Programming 13-; Electronics 13-; Inventor 13-; SS: Robotics 13-; Security Systems 13-; Systems Operation (Communications Systems, Environmental Systems, Medical Systems, Sensor Jamming Equipment) 13-

75+ Disadvantages: DNPC: Joy Logan (young daughter) 8- (Incompetent); Psychological Limitation: Highly Protective Of His Daughter (Common, Strong); Psychological Limitation: Social Anxiety Disorder (Common, Strong)

Notes: Art Logan supervises the maintenance robots at Serenity Resort during the afternoon shift (noon to 15PM). He's well liked by the other workers at the resort, though they recognize the near-phobic anxiety he has in dealing with other people; they are, in fact, quite protective of him should anyone try to intimidate him. He deals very well with his robots, however, and is very attentive to their upkeep; he's particularly concerned that the guests should have a pleasant stay, and hates to disappoint either them or his supervisors.

Art commutes to his job every day from the city of Montego Cay. He lives there with his eight-year-old daughter, Joy, who attends school while her father is at work. Joy's late mother, Javaya, was a Vayathuran show dancer who died two years ago from anaphylaxis. Art and Joy live a quiet, frugal life, each taking care of the other in their own way with a very deep love.

The afternoon of the blast, Art was working on an ongoing project to upgrade the plumbing systems in the cabins. (This has been going on for the past two months; Gérard Guillaume had nothing to do with its occurrence or timing, and was in fact unaware of it.) Partway through he encountered a group of kids paused in their game of Rigellian kickball, the ball having fallen into the crawl space of Caine's cabin; rather than program the maintenance robots to retrieve it, he got it himself, then suggested (gently, of course) that they should play in a more open space. He also supervised the maintenance robots when investigating the power surge, and can report that there was nothing unusual happening.



IRVING MALJEK

13 STR	13 DEX	13 CON
14 BODY	13 INT	11 EGO
13 PRE	14 COM	
5 PD	5 ED	4 SPD
6 REC	26 END	28 STUN

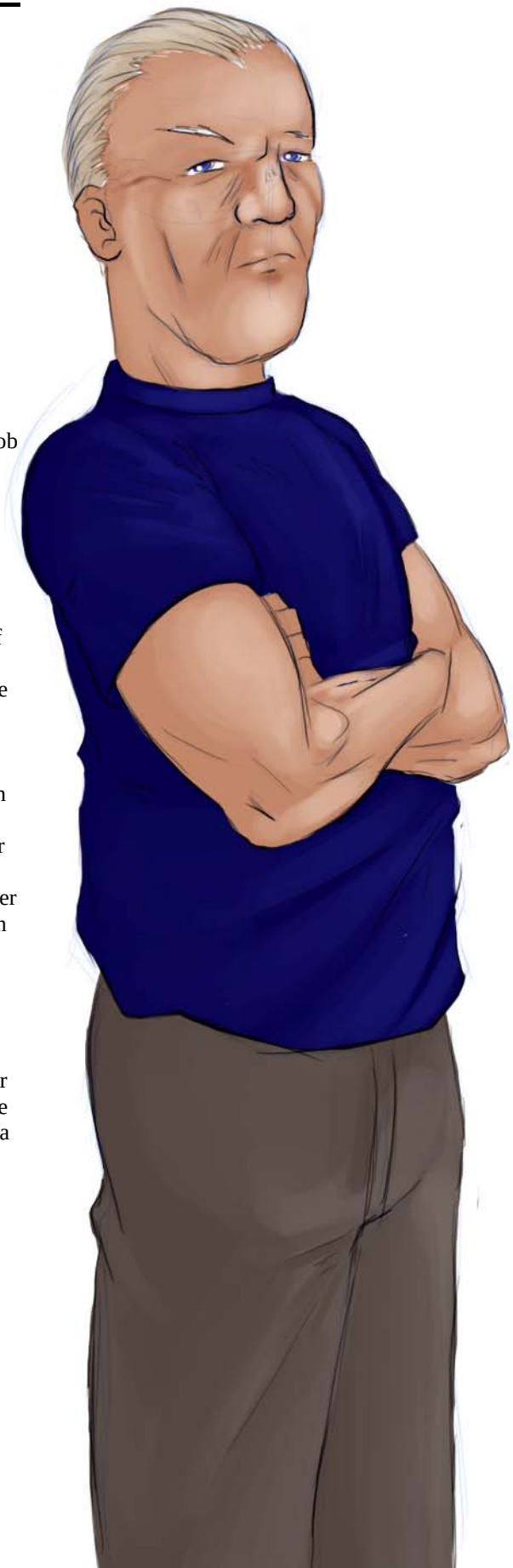
Abilities: Martial Arts: Commando Training (Boxing Cross, Escape, Judo Disarm, Karate “Chop,” Kung Fu Block); Breakfall 12-; Concealment 12-; Demolitions 12-; KS: Clone Mob 16-; Lockpicking 12-; Security Systems 12-; Sleight Of Hand 12-; Stealth 12-; WF: Human Small Arms, Human Advanced Small Arms

75+ Disadvantages: Age 40+; Distinctive Features: Clone Mobster (Easily Concealed, Noticed And Recognizable); Hunted: Clone Mob 8- (Mo Pow, NCI); Psychological Limitation: Hedonist (Common, Strong); Psychological Limitation: Mildly Paranoid (Common, Moderate)

Notes: Irving Maljek is a Clone Mob fluke: in 2625 he actually turned Crown’s Evidence against his brothers. He did this at the behest of Remus Caine, then a planetary detective on Minerva and now one of only a very few people who know of Irving’s permanent location here on Halcyon.

After giving Caine all the information he had on his brothers, Irving relocated to Halcyon and took up permanent residence at Montego Cay, working as the night security specialist for Serenity Resort. Now in his early fifties, Irving lives in fear that one of his brothers will discover his presence here, either accidentally or through some unofficial “leak.” Still, even though he *never* travels off world, his hedonistic nature keeps him in Sin City during most of his days off.

In appearance he looks like any other full member of the Clone Mob, but with a large scar creasing the right side of his head just above the ear, where one of his brothers grazed him with a flechette weapon.



SIGMUND MALLORY

15 STR	13 DEX	13 CON
10 BODY	13 INT	14 EGO
13 PRE	12 COM	
3 PD	3 ED	3 SPD
6 REC	26 END	25 STUN

Abilities: Cyber Legs (+3" Running); Cyber Eyes (Nightvision); +2 with Technology Skills; Analyze Sensor Data 12-; Analyze Technology 12-; Computer Programming 12-; Electronics 12-; Inventor 12-; PS: Technical Writer 12-; Research 12-; Systems Operation (Communications Systems, Sensor Systems) 12-

75+ Disadvantages: Physical Limitation: Limbs And Eyes Restrained As Cybernetic (Infrequently, Fully); Psychological Limitation: Post-Traumatic Stress (Uncommon, Total); Psychological Limitation: Yearns For Peace And Quiet (Very Common, Moderate)

Notes: Sigmund Mallory has a simple, quiet job: he writes technical manuals for starship sensor and communication systems. About a standard year ago, he was testing a new array of systems on a starship undergoing retrofitting when the ship's new power system exploded. Fortunately the ship was in an atmospheric drydock. The explosion killed thirty-seven people and seriously injured seventy others, but had it been in space the casualties would have been well into the hundreds. Sigmund was one of the seriously injured; he lost both arms, both legs, and the use of his eyes. He had been smart enough to have a very good accident recovery insurance policy, and his company paid for cybernetic replacements.

As a man who prefers a quiet, unassuming life, he never wanted anything fancy in his cybernetics. His limbs are stronger and faster than his natural ones were, and his eyes have enhanced night vision, but those mostly just help him do his job and household chores better.

Sigmund's has just finished his physical rehabilitation, learning to use his new limbs and eyes, and is taking a two-week vacation here (paid for by his insurance company) before returning to work. He just arrives on the day before the explosion, finally getting into his bungalow just after the dinner hour. He goes straight to bed, but when the explosion goes off he wakes up screaming and doesn't get to sleep again until the bomber is caught.

He will probably be considered a suspect only if a retrocognitive PC gets the impression of "mechanical hands" putting the bomb in place, since he's the only sentient being at Serenity Resort with mechanical hands (though they may also examine Frederick, the Foswell's robot butler). He should be quickly eliminated because of his extreme reaction to the noise, his lack of

motive, and the fact that the only thing he did between his arrival and the explosion was sleep.



KIRBY THOMPSON

10 STR	13 DEX	10 CON
8 BODY	18 INT	13 EGO
15 PRE	12 COM	
2 PD	2 ED	3 SPD
4 REC	20 END	18 STUN

Abilities: Adapted To Martian Environment (Life Support [Expanded Breathing: can breathe normally in thin atmospheres]); Low Gravity Training (Environmental Movement [Low-G]); +2 with restaurant-related Skills; Analyze Food 13-; Bureaucratics 12-; Deduction 13-; High Society 12-; KS: Ethnic Foods 17-; Oratory 12-; Paramedics 13-; PS: Restaurateur 13-; Sleight Of Hand 12-; Streetwise 12-; Survival (Urban) 13-

75+ Disadvantages: DNPC: family (see Minor NPCs below) 8- (Incompetent; group of four NPCs); Hunted by Jacob Silver 8- (More Pow, Limited Geography); Psychological Limitation: Seeks Sister's Freedom (Common, Strong)

Notes: The city of Olympus Mons isn't exactly known for having "mean streets," but inasmuch as it does have them that's where Kirby Thompson grew up. He had a vision for his life, however, and applied himself to the food service industry. He worked at nearly every type of restaurant during his early career, and put himself through both culinary school and business college. When he heard about the well-paying opening managing the Tiki Sun restaurant next to Serenity Resort, he jumped at the opportunity; when he was offered the job, he married his childhood sweetheart, Alyssa Reynolds, and shipped off.

Kirby's life has been mostly roses since then. The one big wrinkle has been the kidnaping of his sister, Kerensa, a cargo pilot whose regular route went between Adamant and Kalisha. Kirby has been able to establish that she's being held at the enclave of Jacob Silver on Venwordien IV (see *Worlds Of Empire*, pages 135-136), where she serves as a concubine and virtual slave. Kirby has arranged several projects to try to free her, but all he's gotten for his trouble so far is the enmity of Silver and his crew.

Though he has no clear motive, Kirby becomes a suspect because he was the last person to see Caine alive. His visit was to try to convince Caine to get behind a new rescue attempt for his

sister. (Caine refused, saying he was powerless to do anything from his position, but Kirby believed otherwise; hence the shouting match.)



Non-Suspect NPCs

These NPCs are not suspects in the case, but are (or could become) close enough in their involvement with this case that some statistics will be helpful.

HORTON “TREY” BAKER III

10 STR	13 DEX	9 CON
8 BODY	13 INT	11 EGO
13 PRE	16 COM	
2 PD	2 ED	3 SPD
4 REC	18 END	18 STUN

Abilities: Eta Telekinesis (Telekinesis [4 STR], Fine Manipulation, Invisible To Sight Group, Reduced Endurance [$\frac{1}{2}$ END], Limited Range [54”]); Mental Awareness; Acrobatics 12-; Bribery 12-; Combat Driving 12-; PS: Beachcomber 11-; Persuasion 12-; Seduction 12-; Sleight Of Hand 12-; TF: SCUBA, Snowboarding, Surfing, Windsurfing; Wealth (Wealthy)

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted: IPF 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching); Hunted: Mind Police 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching); Psychological Limitation: Wants A Normal Life (Very Common, Strong); Social Limitation: Legal Minor (Occasionally, Minor); Social Limitation: Minority (Very Frequently, Minor)

Notes: Horton Baker III, called “Trey” by family and friends, is the archetypical “poor little rich kid,” but with a twist: he’s also a high-powered telekinetic, and has the potential for becoming much more powerful. His telekinesis, his wealth, and his father’s influence as the Chief Financial Officer of New Monaco make him the object of many people’s envy, but they’re all impenetrable barriers to what he wants most: to have a normal, everyday life.

Though Trey lives with his parents in New Monaco, he likes to relax at Montego Cay. He especially loves to surf on the island’s gentle yet challenging waves (his Combat Driving skill applies mainly to handling his surfboard). He’s a mellow, relaxed individual, and has no problem helping authorities with their investigation.

Trey is the main reason Paul Richards has come to Montego Cay. Richards had noted the level of Trey’s telekinesis, and came to register him with the IPF. Trey used his father’s position and money to bribe Richards into registering him as a Beta-level telekinetic instead of Eta-level.



DWIGHT LOGAN

15 STR	18 DEX	17 CON
15 BODY	18 INT	11 EGO
13 PRE	16 COM	
3 PD	3 ED	3 SPD
6 REC	34 END	32 STUN

Abilities: Athletic Runner (+3" Running); Athletic Swimmer (+3" Swimming); Highly Perceptive (+2 with all PER); Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED); +2 with Wilderness Skills; Animal Handler (Birds, Insects And Anthropods, Primates, Raptors, Reptiles And Amphibians, Rodents, Weasels) 13-; Breakfall 13-; Deduction 13-; Instructor 13-; KS: Animal Species Of The Milky Way 16-; Navigation (Land) 13-; Paramedics 13-; PS: Environmentalist 13-; SS: Ecology 13-; SS: Zoology 17-; Shadowing 13-; Sleight Of Hand 13-; Stealth 13-; Survival (Mountains, Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical, Deserts) 13-; Tracking 13-

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Protective Of The Environment (Very Common, Strong); Reputation: master tracker 8-; Rivalry: Professional (Franklin Xancar, over environmental issues); Social Limitation: Famous (Frequently, Minor)

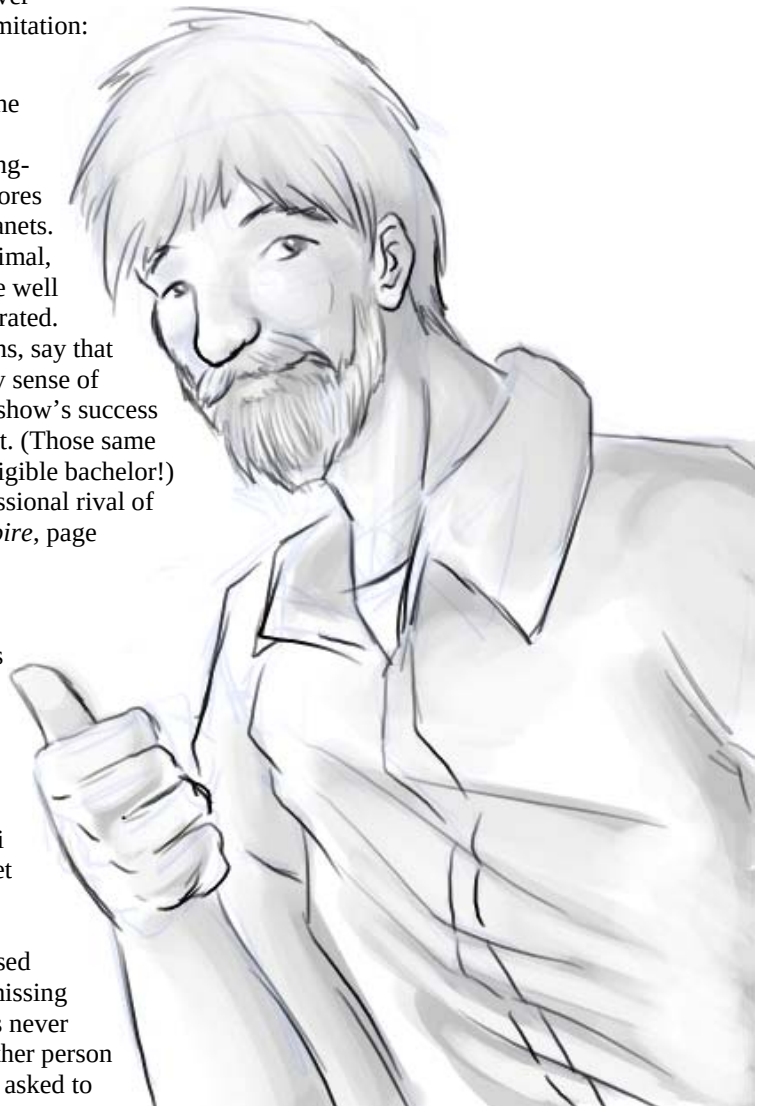
Notes: Dwight Logan is one of the Empire's more well-known environmentalists, thanks to a long-running holoshow where he explores the natural wildlife of various planets. His ability to track nearly any animal, including sentient beings, is quite well known though somewhat exaggerated. Some people, including many fans, say that his rugged good looks and quirky sense of humor are as responsible for his show's success as his skill as an environmentalist. (Those same qualities also make him a very eligible bachelor!)

Though Dwight was a professional rival of Franklin Xancar (*Worlds Of Empire*, page 22) during the latter's height of popularity, the two are actually good friends with a healthy respect for one another's abilities and opinions. Xancar's show is still in reruns, and Dwight struggles to teach people to respect wildlife rather than wantonly hunt it down. He has also corresponded with Dr. Thazi Araken, though the two never met face to face until they both came here by pure coincidence.

In a few cases Dwight has used his tracking ability to help find missing persons in wilderness areas. He's never tried to track a fugitive, or any other person deliberately trying to stay lost. If asked to

help track Lyle Allen, he'll agree, though he'll fall prey to his habits of giving instruction along the way and stopping to examine any unusual animal life (such as the exotic insects that inhabit the island).

Ostensibly, Dwight is at Serenity Resort for a vacation, though he's also taking some interest in the insect and aquatic life on and near the island, and is thinking of returning at a later date to do an episode of his show.



HOBILA MRAO

10 STR	13 DEX	9 CON
9 BODY	18 INT	13 EGO
18 PRE	14 COM	
2 PD	2 ED	3 SPD
4 REC	28 END	19 STUN

Abilities: Claws (HKA 1d6 [1½d6 with STR], Reduced Penetration); Nightvision; Lightsleep; Powerful Fex Legs (Running +3"); +2 with Interaction Skills; AK: Montego Cay 17-; Bribery 13-; Bureaucratics 13-; Conversation 13-; Deduction 13-; High Society 13-; KS: Resources On Halcyon 17-; Persuasion 13-; Research 13-; Seduction 13-; Sleight Of Hand 12-; Streetwise 13-; Systems Operation (Communications Systems) 13-; Trading 13-; PS: Concierge 13-; Fringe Benefit: Concierge; about thirty specific Contacts worldwide; Universal Connections 16-

75+ Disadvantages: DNPC: Shapil Mrao (daughter) 8- (Incompetent); Psychological Limitation: Always Polite (Common, Moderate); Psychological Limitation: Dedicated To Her Duty (Very Common, Strong)

Notes: Hobila Mrao is the lead concierge during the day shift at Serenity Resort. She knows the city and island of Montego Cay better than nearly anyone else, and knows the various resorts, businesses, professional contacts, and other places a visitor might want to use. She uses her gently charming manner, mellifluous voice, professional influence as a concierge, and occasionally even a little flirting to get what she's after.

If the PCs in this scenario are given any sort of official standing in the investigation, Hobila is assigned as their exclusive concierge. Should they need any sort of expertise or special equipment, she can scour the entire planet for what they seek and find it if it's there to find. She lives in the city of Montego Cay, but if the PCs want her on hand at the resort the management will arrange for her and her six-year-old daughter, Shapil, to live in one of the guest cottages for the duration. (Hobila's husband, Felim, is a Navy pilot currently on a seven-month tour of duty to Rohendra.)

For details on the *Universal Connections* Talent, see page 49 of *The Ultimate Skill*.



KALIPU

15 STR	18 DEX	13 CON
11 BODY	13 INT	11 EGO
13 PRE	12 COM	
3 PD	3 ED	4 SPD
6 REC	26 END	25 STUN

Abilities: Good Runner (+1" Running); Good Swimmer (+3" Swimming); Observant (+2 to all PER); Nightvision; Tail (Extra Limb, Inherent, Limited Manipulation); Bureaucratics 12-; Concealment 12-; Conversation 12-; KS: Halcyon Law 13-; Persuasion 13-; Stealth 13-; Streetwise 12-; Rank: Security Guard

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features: Uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable); Physical Limitation: Light-Sensitive Eyes (-2 Sight PER Rolls in bright light) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing); Psychological Limitation: Hates The Thorgon Empire (Common, Strong); Social Limitation: Color-Changing Skin (gives away current mood and attitude) (Frequently, Minor); Social Limitation: Harmful Secret (see text) (Occasionally, Minor); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Frequently, Major)

Notes: A Kalishari, Kalipu is one of the graveyard-shift security guards at Serenity Resort, working every night from midnight to 5AM. (His full Kalishari name would fill three lines of text here, but everyone just calls him Kalipu.) He's a very private individual, and mostly keeps to himself though he participates fully in all meetings and company activities.

What nobody else at Serenity Resort knows is that he's been trying to use his position to help set up a sort of "underground railroad" for political prisoners in the Thorgon Empire – mostly Kalishari, though others are welcome – to escape and enter the Terran Empire, currently a much freer state. This is not at all illegal on the Terran side of the border, but if he's found out it could cost him his job – to say nothing of the wrath of the Thorgons.

When the bomb goes off in this scenario, Kalipu is standing only a few yards away from the explosion, and is injured by fire and flying shrapnel. He's quickly taken to the Montego Cay infirmary, where it takes about a day for him to recover enough to go home. He's firmly of the belief that the bomb was meant for him and the Thorgons are responsible, though he doesn't volunteer a reason for them to want to kill him; he changes his mind about being the target when he finds out the bomb was built to be as contained within the cabin as possible.



RICHELLE SMITH

15 STR	18 DEX	13 CON
14 BODY	13 INT	13 EGO
18 PRE	14 COM	
3 PD	3 ED	3 SPD
6 REC	26 END	29 STUN

Abilities: Martial Arts: Krav Maga (Block, Choke Hold, Disarm, Escape, Grab, Kick, Punch); +2 with all PER; Bureaucratics 13-; Conversation 13-; Criminology 12-; Deduction 12-; Forgery 12-; KS: Con Games 11-; KS: Criminal Methodology 11-; KS: Halcyon Planetary Law 11-; KS: The Law Enforcement World 11-; Security Systems 12-; Streetwise 13-; Computer Link: Halcyon law enforcement database; Fringe Benefit: Planetary Police Powers; Rank: Regional Police Commander

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features: Uniform (Easily Concealed, Noticed And Recognizable); Psychological Limitation: Dedicated To Truth And Justice (Common, Total); Psychological Limitation: Lacking Self-Confidence (Common, Moderate); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Notes: Richelle Smith is the Director of Investigations for Montego Cay. In that capacity she deals with a fair number of would-be thieves, forgers, and con artists, along with an occasional child molester or domestic dispute, though in her seven years on the job she's never had to deal with a truly violent crime of any sort, let alone a homicide.

Despite the distance of an entire planet between herself and Remus Caine, she considers him her friend. Between this and her lack of experience she has little problem in letting the PCs handle the investigation. As an investigator she's competent enough for most problems she'd have to face on Montego Cay, particularly in dealing with con artists, but she feels way over her head here.

Richelle's family moved to Halcyon from the Carribean region of Earth when she was a little girl, and she still speaks with a hint of the lilt characteristic to that area's accent. She has a particularly dark complexion even for a Human from that part of Earth, and keeps her hair in long, tight braids which are tied back into a ponytail when she's on duty.



DIKRA THAL

15 STR	18 DEX	15 CON
14 BODY	18 INT	18 EGO
18 PRE	10 COM	
3 PD	7 ED	4 SPD
7 REC	36 END	31 STUN

Abilities: Athletic Runner (+3" Running); Denebian Skin (Armor [1 PD/1 ED]); Denebian Backplate (Armor [+2 PD/+2 ED], Activation Roll 11- [only protects the back]); +2 Overall; Analyze: Fire 13-; Breakfall 12-; Climbing 12-; Hoist 13-; Oratory 13-; PS: Firefighter (INT) 13-; Streetwise 13-; Survival (Urban) 13-; Tactics 13-; Teamwork 13-; WF: Axes, Whips; Fringe Benefit: Local Firefighter Commander

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Minimized Fear Response (Common, Total); Psychological Limitation: Protective Of Civilians (Very Common, Strong); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Notes: Dikra Thal, a Denebian, is the commander of the Montego Cay Firefighting Unit. He came here as a five-year firefighting veteran from the city of Vittoria on Polyphemus, and thought this would be a much more relaxing place to work. Indeed, the work as a firefighter here is fairly easy; in his seven years on the job here, including three at his current position, he's never seen more than a minor scorch on the exterior of a building.

Though his experience on Polyphemus gave him some minimal experience with arson investigations, he's not much use in this case and he knows it. He's primarily concerned with fighting fires, and he's very good at that job, but his investigatory skills are limited to relatively minor incidents. If the PCs have any sort of official sanction (as government employees, for example, or if working at Richelle Smith's behest), Dikra will gladly give them any information he has or can find out, however little that may be.

Dikra is a highly athletic individual, and a lifelong bachelor. He corresponds regularly with his brother, Urken, who is working as a "Genome Goucho" on Vinarcus (see *Worlds Of Empire*, page 109).



Minor NPCs

These NPCs play such a small role in the story that no statistics are given. Their very presence in the story is optional; they're here to present minor obstacles, distractions, red herrings, stray information, comic relief, background color, and similar story functions.

If some sort of statistics come up, the GM should assign something based on common and dramatic sense, keeping the characters as close as possible to Competent Normals (unless logic dictates otherwise, such as with the children) with the appropriate Racial and Professional Package Deals.

GUESTS

These are some sample characters who could be additional guests at Serenity Resort. The GM may use or omit any of them as he sees fit.

Dr. Thazi Araken: A middle-aged Jhinu botanist of some renown, Dr. Araken is visiting Montego Cay to study its native plant life, with an emphasis on its nocturnal stages. At the time of the explosion she was just over the hill beyond the resort, and saw a dark figure (Lyle Allen) running into the island's interior woods about three minutes after the blast. She may also report the same flying piece of debris as Leo Braverman (below). She has no other information and little expertise to offer, but she does have an array of night-oriented sensory equipment that she'd willingly (if reluctantly) lend the PCs if asked.

Nazida Dar'losh: The Administrative Secretary to the Mon'dabi Assistant Consul on Fexao. A hard-working individual, he is enjoying his first real vacation with his family since taking that job six years ago. He is highly supportive and protective of his family, which includes two grown sons as well as his wife and daughter.

Seloko Dar'losh: Nazida's wife, a soft-spoken and subservient female. She is indecisive by nature and emotionally dependent on her husband. Of the family she alone knows about Gen'shir's sex scandal, having seen it in the news, though she doesn't really believe that he was guilty.

Zhelasi Dar'losh: Nazida's and Seloko's daughter, age 10, a friendly and gregarious female with a curious mind and an independent spirit. She has a slight crush on Gen'shir as a media figure, but the two do not meet in person until after Caine's murder.

Uriel Drake: A Heavyworlder by genetic heritage, Uriel is a computer software engineer from the city of Thul, working in the anti-malware division of Butler's maintenance (see *Worlds Of Empire*, page 20), and is here on vacation. He's an *extremely* shy individual, and doesn't even come out to join the crowd of observers when the explosion occurs. However, if enough of the situation is described to him he'd probably be able to figure out that the killer probably used a software worm to not only plant the bomb but also arrange for some of the "red herring" suspects to be here.

Lord Cosmo Foswell: A notable – and filthy rich – interstellar media investor from Europa Nova, Cosmo owns homes on twelve planets across the Empire but is vacationing on Montego Cay as an exercise in "roughing it." He looks upon the "lower classes" with ennui, and considers the murder a horrible blotch on his relaxation. He has little to offer the investigation, and is around primarily to annoy the PCs – though if the "mechanical hands" issue comes up in regard to Frederick, he'll cooperate fully as long as the PCs promise to return the robot in good condition.

Lady Pippi Foswell: Cosmo's wife of two and a half years, she shares her husband's detachment from lesser beings. Unlike him, however, she sees Caine's murder as an exciting adventure, and hopes it can be solved before they leave "so I can see how it turns out." If Lord Cosmo doesn't annoy the PCs, she very well *should*.

Frederick: The Foswells' robot butler, a House Android (see *Spacer's Toolkit*, pages 32-33) with the Chauffeur Android Skill Set. He's dutiful, speaks in a cultured accent, and strictly follows his standing order to pay attention to nothing that he isn't told to pay attention to (such as the events surrounding the murder).

John Kaspar: The manifest officer of the cargo ship *Iacocca 23*, which makes regular runs to Halcyon. The crew of the *I-23* (as it's called for short) is on a three-week vacation here, though Kaspar and his family are the only ones to come to Montego Cay – most of the rest chose either New Monaco or Sin City, though the captain and executive officer are in Alpine. The *I-23* was the ship by which Gérard's package to himself arrived, though Kaspar would probably only remember the fact if asked about it directly.

ENTER THE FANBOYS (AND OTHER SPECIAL GUEST APPEARANCES)

As an option just for fun, the GM could also bring in the Fanboys (see *Digital Hero* #25, pages 27-36), particularly if the PCs have met them before. Exactly what they'd be doing at Serenity Resort, and what part they might play in the mystery, is left for the GM to decide. They could even be merely vacationing, just like most other people here!

By similar token, the members of Argos Exploration (*Star Hero*, pages 296-305) may be present for either color or various plot complications, including foreshadowing of future adventures. This would at least potentially allow the PCs to recruit Jennifer Degraff to use her telepathy. Gérard will react to this just as though there was a telepathic PC.

Other published NPCs, whether from the “sketchy” descriptions given in *Worlds Of Empire* or the more detailed character sheets from *Scourges Of The Galaxy* and elsewhere, may be included with the same guidelines.

Kolleen Kaspar: The thirteen-year-old daughter of John and Wendy, Kolleen has little interest in anything to do with planets; she's much more comfortable in space, where she's spent most of her life. She's developed a strong interest in hyperspace physics, and is a math whiz. She considers the death appropriately tragic, but isn't very helpful and has little interest in the investigation.

Mark Kaspar: The ten-year-old son of John and Wendy, John is only now starting to come out of his “bratty little brother” phase where his greatest joy comes from spoiling Kolleen's day. He's recently developed an interest in crime-solving, and while he might come up with something helpful (especially if the PCs are stumped for a piece of important evidence) his amateurish shenanigans are more likely to get in the way.

Wendy Kaspar: John's wife, she serves as a nurse aboard the *Iacocca 23* as well as mother to his two children. When the explosion occurs she helps care for the wounded until the local medics arrive.

Cyrus Macy: A native of Emerald, Cyrus is an environmentalist, visiting Halcyon to evaluate it as a possible destination for fellow Vertans (see *Worlds Of Empire*, page 8) who may wish to escape the relatively bustling life of that planet for something more peaceful. His report is mostly positive, despite the murder. He has met and befriended Dr. Araken, but other than perhaps pointing them in her direction for information has nothing to offer them – though if they have need of his help for anything he'd be glad to give it.

Lazmél Nureila: A noted Rigellian composer, Lazmel is best known for his holofilm soundtracks even though most of his work is in concert music. He came to Serenity Resort to find inspiration for his next soundtrack, the spy comedy *The Girl From Montego Cay*, but has also been inspired to write a string septet. At the time of the explosion he was up late in his cabin, putting finishing touches on the second movement. (He was injured by flying glass along the left side of his body, and rushed to the Montego Cay infirmary, where he was treated.)

Kori Nureila: Lazmel's wife of twenty-three years, Kori is a supportive spouse who sometimes also acts as his agent and personal manager as well as the attentive mother to two of his three children. Though a competent singer even by Rigellian standards, her true genius lies in mathematics, particularly in the field of accounting. She has little to offer the investigation directly, but is very concerned with finding out who injured her husband.

Sholanti Nureila: The youngest of the Nureila children, twelve-year-old Sholanti is the only one present at the resort. She's an active, athletic, and playful girl with a talent for gymnastics and a good sense for people.

Alyssa Thompson: Wife to Kirby Thompson (qv), she lives in the on-site employee housing complex where she raises the couple's three children and works part-time as a housekeeper. She's an intelligent woman of simple tastes, and follows political issues as a hobby.

Bradley Thompson: The oldest of the three Thompson children at fifteen, Bradley divides his time between schooling, part-time work as a junior lifeguard, and unofficial entertainer for young females. His remarkable good looks make him a particularly popular attraction in the last category.

Leo Thompson: The middle Thompson child at the age of twelve, Leo is an athletic youth with considerable talent at kickball – he is, in fact, the instigator of the kickball game on the day before the explosion, and the owner of the ball itself. He's motivated to keep his grades up because he hopes to become a college kickball star as an eventual gateway to professional fame.

Penelope Thompson: At nine years old Penny is the youngest Thompson child. Her current life ambition is to become a veterinarian, though she has no small talent as a detective. She still has a cute face, and will probably always have a certain amount of “cuteness” to her appearance. She's also highly observant and has a good memory; while she seems like the least likely candidate to give a good account of events, hers is generally the most complete and accurate, at least among the children present – especially more than her brothers, who pay too much attention to kickball and girls.

Larim Wimpala: The youngest son of a Rigellian pack-lizard rancher based just north of Veyrouth right here on Halcyon, Larim is at Montego Cay for his honeymoon. He's scheduled to return to work there the day after the explosion, and is rather anxious to get back to those responsibilities.

Sureth Wimpala: Larim's beautiful bride, also a Rigellian. She works as a concierge at one of the hotels in Veyrouth, and has dozens of contacts in that city – though few, if any, that would be of any use in this investigation. (Hobila Mrao knows her by name as one of her direct Contacts, and may use her as a source of information.)

The GM may also populate the resort with other NPCs of his own, including DNPCs as well as any NPCs who have been involved in previous adventures (or planned for adventures yet to come), as long as their presence at Serenity Resort can seem reasonably logical. This also includes published NPCs (see sidebar).

The group of kids playing kickball on the day before the explosion should include Zhelasi Dar'losh, Kolleen and Mark Kaspar, Shoranti Nureila, Leo and Penelope Thompson, and any other children of appropriate age (including DNPCs) the GM wants to have present.

STAFF

These are some of the employees of Serenity Resort, or other branches of the Halcyon Corporation, whose skills or information might be useful to the PCs' investigation.

Leo Braverman: With Kalipu (above), Leo is one of the graveyard-shift security guards at Serenity Resort. His swimming skill, impressive even for a Selkie-variant Human, along with his unusually sharp night vision makes him ideally suited for the job. At the time of the explosion he's standing at the edge of the beach to the west of the complex; he reports seeing a large piece of debris flying over his head and into the inlet. If asked, he also remembers an incident three nights before the blast in which he found Gérard Guillaume coming out of the crawlspace below his own cabin, with the explanation that the guest had thought he'd heard a cat in distress.

Kalakato Tenkitu: The Tkaki bartender at the Shar'kim Kez, Tenkitu (that's his given name) is a friendly, jovial, hard-working, and *extremely* observant individual. With amazingly little effort he remembers the name of everyone he meets, recognizes their voices, memorizes their favorite drinks and salads, recalls conversations word-for-word, and notes everyone's comings and going. He can provide the PCs with accurate descriptions of nearly anything happening in or near his establishment during his shift, though to get that information the PCs will have to put up with his penchant for puns. Among his recollections is a conversation between Zhelasi Dar'losh and her father; Nazida was warning her to keep distance between herself and Shelako Gen'shir.

Adonis Terhane: Eldest grandson of Burton Terhane, Adonis administers Sin City, serving all the traditional functions of a mayor. For a man in his mid-forties, he's incredibly good-looking, and he's not ashamed to partake of his city's many hedonistic wonders. He's connected to the case only through his occasional affair with Ryoko Caine, and will appear only if the PCs go talk to him, or if they pursue Ryoko to the point of missing important clues pointing elsewhere.

Zuba nim Irakan: The gregarious Se-Lag in charge of the aquatic rental shop, Zuba comes across as being not very bright, but this is an unintentional illusion. He's actually quite smart; he's just slow on the uptake, and not very observant. He handles the shop competently, and his cheerful demeanor makes him well-liked by staff and guests alike.

Dr. Lamira Shelsi: Dr. Shelsi was a ten-year veteran of a major medical examiner's office on Vardel IV when she suffered a nervous breakdown. She was prescribed a year of relaxation at Montego Cay, but six months after arriving she applied for and got a position at the Halcyon Medical Examiner's Office in Belhaph (where she also lives). Since then, she's thrived in the relaxed pace of her position, and has become the planet's Chief Medical Examiner. A Jhinu, she's published several papers over her six years here, mostly on deaths by congenital diseases and accidental trauma (the types she sees most frequently). Her autopsy of Remus Caine (assuming a qualified PC doesn't take over the job, citing Dr. Shelsi's potential lack of objectivity) is thorough but has no information to help the investigation.

Radeyah Yalman: A waitress at the Tiki Sun restaurant next to Serenity Resort, Radeyah is the youngest daughter of a third-generation Navy man with strong ancestral roots to the Turkey region of Earth. She hopes to go into the hospitality industry, and is working her way through Belhaph University. She also closely follows drama and documentary holoprograms about forensic science, though she's taken only one general class in the topic.

Firebirds

In case the GM needs statistics for a Firebird, either for this scenario or something in the future, here's a character sheet.

Firebird

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
6	SIZE	30	5.25"×1.5", 6.4 ton, KB -6
45	STR	5	Lift 12.8tons; 9d6
15	DEX	15	OCV 5/DCV 1
25	BODY	9	
6	DEF	12	
3	SPD	5	Phases: 4, 8, 12

Total Characteristic Cost: 74

Movement: Ground: 6" / 12"
Flight: 15" / 480"
Gliding: 5" / 10"

Cost	Powers	END
50	<i>Flying Vehicle:</i> Flight 15", 32× Noncombat	0
-2	<i>Non-Swimming Vehicle:</i> Swimming -2" (0" Total)	0
2	<i>Emergency Parachutes:</i> Gliding 5", Trigger (Zero Phase Action, Requires a Turn to Reset, Character Does Not Control Activation of Personal Trigger, Engine Failure or Similar Calamity, +¼); OAF Bulky (-1½), 1 Recoverable Continuing Charge Lasting Until Vehicle Hits Ground or 'Chute is Fouled (-¾), Limited Movement (Cannot Gain Altitude, and Must Move at Least 10" Downward for Every 1" Forward, -½)	[1 rc]
117	<i>Firehoses:</i> Extra Limbs (4) plus Stretching 30", Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½); Cannot Do Damage (Can Only Spray Water Blasts, -½), Limited Body Parts (Extra Limbs Only, -¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼)	0
50	<i>Water Lines:</i> Multipower, 99-point Reserve, OAF Bulky (-1½)	0
4u	1) <i>Extinguishing Fires:</i> Dispel 11d6, All Fire Powers Simultaneously (+2); OAF Bulky (-1½)	10
3u	2) <i>Weapon:</i> EB 7d6, Double Knockback (+¾), Area Of Effect (24" Line, +1); OAF Bulky (-1½), Reduced Penetration (-¼)	10
8	<i>Water Tank (1,000 Gallons):</i> Endurance Reserve (150 END, 5 REC) Reserve: OAF Bulky (-1½); REC: Limited Recovery (must be refilled with water, -2)	0
10	<i>Secure Air Packs:</i> Life Support (Safe in Intense Heat; Self-Contained Breathing), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 6 Hours (+0), Usable Simultaneously (up to 8 people at once,	

never "gives" power to itself, +1); OAF Bulky (-1½) [1 cc]

- 4 *Heat Scanner:* Infrared Perception (Sight Group), Discriminatory; OAF Bulky (-1½) 0
- 2 *Nightvision Systems:* Nightvision; OIF Bulky (-1) 0
- 10 *Communication System:* High Range Radio Perception (Radio Group), Telescopic +6, Affected as Sight, Hearing, and Radio Groups (-½) 0
- 5 *Global Positioning System:* Detect Exact Position on Planet With GPS Satellite System 16- (Radio Group); OIF Bulky (-1) 0
- 12 *Emergency Lights and Siren:* Sight and Hearing Groups Images 1" Radius, +6 to PER Rolls, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½); OAF Bulky (-1½), Set Effect (-1), No Range (-½) 0

Skills

- 15 Paramedics 14-
- 6 PS: Firefighting 14-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 298

Total Cost: 372

Val Disadvantages

- 0 None

Total Disadvantage Points: 372

Description: One of the most commonly-used models of fire equipment in the Terran Empire, the Krono-Dynamics Firebird is a flying truck capable of handling most moderate-sized building fires. It's particularly useful in both dense urban areas where ground-level traffic can be thick, and in remote rural areas where buildings are sparse and roads often twist through uneven terrain.

Clocked at a maximum flying speed of over 530 miles per hour (860 kph), the Firebird is able to get to the scene of a fire in outstanding time compared to its ground-based counterparts. Its water-tank storage and firehoses are only moderate, but except in dense urban areas they're usually sufficient and even in those cases they can "hold the line" against a large fire while heavier equipment is en route by ground. Its infrared heat scanner and global-positioning system help its crew to quickly find a raging fire.

Mysteries in Roleplaying: General Concerns

In plotting a mystery scenario for a role-playing game, the GM can make use of most books on the topic of writing mystery stories. Most of the general plotting concerns are the same, since role-playing games are supposed to simulate the adventures we read about in books and comics, and see in movies and television programs.

There are some significant differences, however. These differences stem primarily from the differences in medium. Each medium of fiction and drama has its own strengths and weaknesses in what it can and cannot do, and role-playing games are no exception.

Many of the difficulties in translating fictional scenarios into the role-playing medium are discussed in *Dark Champions* and other *HERO System* genre books, under the heading “Dealing With Disconnects.” Two difficulties worth particular attention in murder mysteries are dealing with solo heroes and splitting up the party. While these “disconnects” are covered adequately in those books, a few others are worth attention here.

FINDING THE SOLUTION, BUT NOT TOO SOON

Despite many warnings in role-playing game books (including but not limited to those devoted to the *HERO System*), the most challenging part to creating a mystery scenario for a role-playing game is not the various powers present in much literature. Certainly there are problems to be faced when a character has some special ability such as Telepathy or Retrocognition, but a bit of careful planning can usually deal with such things fairly well.

The most difficult part, regardless of the scenario’s genre, is not planning around the characters, but planning around the players. With them, Murphy’s Law frequently reigns: if you rely on them taking a while to make a mental connection, they’ll get it right away, while depending on them quickly figuring out important clues on their own results in their brains suddenly taking on the approximate consistency of steel-reinforced concrete.

This stems from the most significant difference between plotting for role-playing games and plotting for conventional fiction: a large number of performers – that is, the players – are not told the outcome before the performance. The writer of a novel, comic book, movie, television episode, or any other presentation can control the actions of all the characters, but in an RPG setting the players have control of the protagonists. They are, by the very nature of the medium, outside the GM’s control.

Fortunately the solution is not particularly difficult. It simply means that the GM, when planning a scenario, has to plan around that fact, and there are several ways to do it.

Just the Facts, Ma’am

One approach is to abandon the classic “whodunit” type of mystery, with its maze of subtle clues and interpersonal relationships, and leave the scenario as a forensic procedural. This type of mystery has become more popular recently, with the advent of the *CSI* franchise and other forensic-based crime dramas, and so may be more timely and familiar to the players anyway.

Planning this type of scenario is fairly simple: decide what happened, and what forensic evidence is available, and let the PCs follow procedure to find the evidence and follow it where it leads. If the PCs are reasonably competent at their work, they’ll eventually uncover the culprit and find the evidence they need to prove his guilt.

To keep things interesting, you can plant false leads in the form of evidence that processes quickly, and leave the more accurate leads for longer-processing evidence. For example, in a modern-day *Dark Champions* game a paper receipt with the name of a potential suspect can be followed before investigators are even done processing the crime scene; running fingerprints through AFIS or checking the victim’s telephone and bank records may take a few hours; complete autopsy results typically have to wait until the day after a homicide; and DNA evidence can take anywhere from a day or two (if the lab is relatively free and the process used is PCR) to several weeks (for an RFLP test). Thus the PCs can be kept busy playing “the elimination game,” checking alibis and narrowing down the suspect field until only one person could have done it.

Might I Offer a Suggestion?

To help keep the PCs on track, the GM can also have an NPC on hand who knows a few things about investigative techniques from a theoretical standpoint even if they’re not qualified to perform those techniques themselves. This should be handled with some care, since it can make the PCs (to say nothing of the players) feel stupid, but it does have its place.

The key to this technique is to give the NPC limited knowledge of the technique; it’s not something he can do *for* the PCs, but just an idea he has. For example, a layman could suggest to an investigator, “Couldn’t you get, like, mitochondrial DNA from the hair strand even without a root?” but he wouldn’t be in a position to gather the hair and perform the test himself. (He might even be on the wrong track, but unwittingly lead the PCs to the correct one; in

this example, the hair could be synthetic, yielding no DNA of any sort but providing a completely different lead.) In this scenario, Radeyah Yalman, Hobila Mrao, and (to a lesser extent) Mark Kaspar can serve different parts of this function if needed.

Another possibility is to give different parts of the solution-finding to different NPCs, letting them serve as “expert consultants” in different aspects of the investigation. That way, even if the PCs aren’t the ones to come up with the correct interpretations of the clues, they are at least the one who brought all pieces of the puzzle together to create the overall picture. In this scenario Lyle Allen, Uriel Drake, Dr. Lamira Shelsi, and Richelle Smith are useful as experts in various fields.

Facts Like the Layers of an Onion

The most satisfying approach for players – though the most difficult from the standpoint of planning for the GM – is to keep the clues subtle at first, and let each set of clues lead to a gradually more obvious solution. False leads should, when followed, be fairly easy to identify as such.

This isn’t to say that you can’t have plenty in the way of deliberate false leads. A clever criminal can plant evidence to lead investigators along the wrong path, or even to specifically frame someone else; in fact, this happens much more often in fiction (including role-playing scenarios) than in real life. Usually this succeeds for a short time, though if the investigators are competent enough the evidence ends up pointing even more strongly to the correct suspect. This is, in fact, the approach used in this scenario.

As a last-ditch event, you could have the actual culprit skip town (or whatever jurisdiction you’re working in) and leave behind what amounts to a confession. Though this can leave the PCs frustrated and the players somewhat disappointed, they can know that their efforts were at least not entirely in vain: their investigation eventually did root out the villain, even if he did get away, and they can now devote their energies toward tracking him down and capturing him.

TELL, DON’T SHOW

In literature and drama, the usual maxim is to “show, don’t tell” – in other words, to give the key action in the direct narrative, or in scenes that are actually performed. When the story is a murder mystery, this means letting scenes prior to the murder play out as either incidents witnessed by the detective, or as flashbacks.

In a role-playing game the goal is to involve the players. Scenes between two or more NPCs need to either include a direct role for one or more PCs, or be told after the fact.

As an example from this scenario, suppose a key scene prior to Caine’s murder was an argument between him and Maljek just in the latter’s office, with the door ajar and voices raised in anger. In a literary or dramatic mystery story, this could be played out with the detective standing just outside, hearing at least part of the discussion. While you might be able to play out the argument between the pair and let one or more PCs eavesdrop (especially if you can do the two characters’ voices well enough that they can distinguish between the two without being told), it’s more likely that they’ll hear about the argument second hand, most likely from another one of the suspects.

What the recounting provides that simply playing out the scene does not is direct PC involvement. If a conversation is being recounted, the PCs can ask questions of the witness, take immediate action to investigate various ideas, and otherwise be active in the scene. If it’s just played out for them to witness, they’re just being passive observers.

The recounting of a scene shouldn’t be presented as merely a narrative given by an NPC for the PCs to hear. There should always be active conversation. Leave holes in the narrative for the PCs to fill in with clarifying questions. If the players don’t come up with those questions during the narrative, you can prompt them to pipe up by having the NPC ask questions (Such as, “What’s the name of the bartender again?” or, “Do you know what it’s like to have your daughter attacked like that?”).

Another key difference of role-playing games from literary and dramatic mysteries is that conversations will generally not be recounted word-for-word. In literature one often gets direct quotes of an entire conversation, while in drama, especially film and television, such scenes are generally played as flashbacks; in a game, more realistic conversations with witnesses are expected. A witness may remember some key phrases or statements, and occasionally one has a good enough memory to accurately recount the conversation, but usually it’s given in general terms. (In this scenario, Kalakato Tenkitu is an exception because of his eidetic memory, but he’s an unusual case.)

