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THRILLING TALES



ADVANCED CLASS:

MASTERMIND

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I felt myself roughly led, half-carried, from the dungeon where my unknown captors had placed me. The air within the black cloth hood that they had forced over my head was close, and I could see nothing. The only sound that I could hear, muffled by the layer of cloth, were the echoing footfalls of my guards as they dragged me towards some unknown destination.

Suddenly, I was forced to my knees on what felt like a stone floor.

"I trust you have not been mistreated?" A voice echoed in the chamber. It was a voice of authority--the silken tones of power. "I do not wish for my guests to suffer."

"Guests?" I scoffed, my voice sounding uncomfortably feeble to my own ears. "Do you always throw your 'guests' into cells and deny them food and water?"

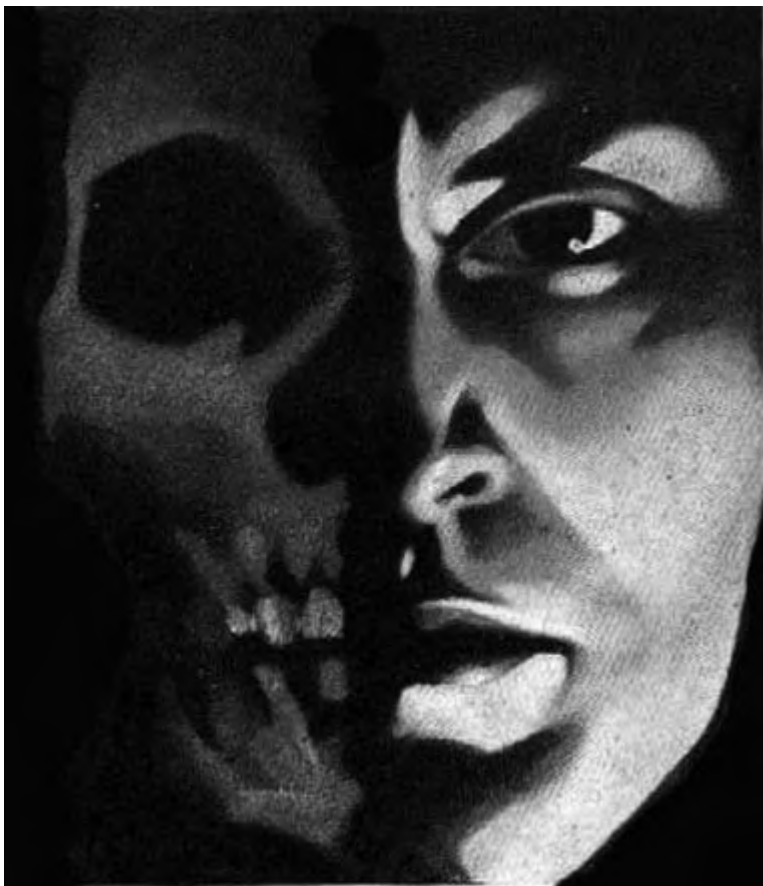
"On occasion," came the measured reply.

The hood was jerked from my head, flooding my eyes with sudden light. As I blinked to clear my

vision, the figure seated before me came into focus.

Green eyes glittered with a wicked intelligence, and a cruel, sensual mouth curled into a horrible, knowing smile. I felt the cold chill of hopelessness engulf me.

I was in the clutches of none other than the fiend known only as The Emperor of Crime.



The Mastermind is an archetype of the pulp genre. Examples include the insidious Dr. Fu Manchu, John Sunlight, Shiwan Khan and Doctor Death.

Every hero needs a good villain. King Arthur had Mordred...Sherlock Holmes had Doctor Moriarty. This Advanced Class fills that need.

A Mastermind stands head and shoulders above the average villain--they are the pinnacle of the criminal world. Often possessing abilities equal to or greater than the heroes they oppose, the Mastermind is often only defeated through their own hubris...and often escape to plague the heroes again and again.

In the heyday of the pulps, villains were so popular, that some became the “heroes” of their own magazines!

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Mastermind, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Attribute: Intelligence 15+

Skills: 6 ranks in any Knowledge skill, 6 ranks in Intimidate.

Feats: Iron Will

CLASS INFORMATION

Hit Die: The Mastermind gains 1d10 hit points per level. The character’s Constitution modifier applies.

Action Points: The Mastermind gains a number of action points equal to 6 + one-half his character level, rounded down, every time he attains a new level in this class.

Class Skills: The Mastermind’s class skills are as follows: Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Drive (Dex), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information(Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (underworld)(Int), Move Silently(Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Profession (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 7 + Int Modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following features pertain to the Mesmerist advanced class.

Minions: The Mastermind has loyal subordinates who follow his orders. The number of minions available to the Mastermind, and the NPC level of those minions, can be found on the table on the following page.

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	Minions, Ill-gotten gains	+2	+1
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3	Crime Network	+3	+2
3rd	+1	+1	+3	+3	Bonus feat	+4	+2
4th	+2	+1	+4	+4	Nefarious Influence	+4	+3
5th	+2	+1	+4	+4	Lair	+5	+3
6th	+3	+2	+5	+5	Bonus feat	+5	+3
7th	+3	+2	+5	+5	Devil’s Own Luck	+6	+4
8th	+4	+2	+6	+6	Halls of Power	+6	+4
9th	+4	+3	+6	+6	Bonus Feat	+6	+4
10th	+5	+3	+7	+7	Nine Lives	+7	+5

Minions are gained based on the sum of the Mastermind's total character level and his Charisma modifier, modified by the factors listed below:

Reknown feat: +3
 Infamy feat: +3
 Leadership Feat: +1
 Provides room, board, equipment +2
 Wealthy (16+ on Wealth): +1
 Rich (21+ on Wealth): +2

Ill-gotten gains: A Mastermind's criminal enterprises make them very wealthy over time. A Mastermind adds +2 to their Wealth score per level gained in the class.

Crime Network: Starting at 2nd level, the Mastermind has access to a network of criminals that can provide him with information or goods.

Mastermind's Total Level + Cha mod	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
9 or less	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	5	-	-	-	-	-
11	6	-	-	-	-	-
12	8	-	-	-	-	-
13	10	1	-	-	-	-
14	15	1	-	-	-	-
15	20	2	1	-	-	-
16	25	2	1	-	-	-
17	30	3	1	1	-	-
18	35	3	1	1	-	-
19	40	4	2	1	1	-
20	50	5	3	2	1	-
21	60	6	3	2	1	1
22	75	7	4	2	2	1
23	90	9	5	3	2	1
24	110	11	6	3	2	1
25	135	13	7	4	2	2
26	150	15	8	4	3	2
27	165	17	9	5	3	3
28	180	19	10	5	4	3
29	200	20	11	6	4	4
30	220	22	12	6	5	4
+1	+20	+2	+1	+1/2	+1/2	+1/2

Regardless of the Mastermind's total level and Cha mod, they cannot have any minions with a level greater than the Mastermind's level, minus one (so, for example, a 4th level character could not have any 4th level minions, even if their modified score was 17 or better). Minions can be of any class.

Minions that are lost are replaced with new ones by the next adventure.

Bonus feat: At 3rd, 6th and 9th level, the Mastermind gets a bonus feat, which must be taken from the following list. New feats appear in italics, and are described at the end of this document.

Brawl, Combat Expertise, Combat Martial Arts, Combat Reflexes, Confident, Deceptive, Dodge, Frightful Presence, Improved Brawl, Improved Combat Martial Arts, *Improved Critical*, Improved Initiative, *Infamy*, *Leadership*, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus.

The network can provide the Mastermind with nearly any commonly available item--the DC of the Wealth check for the item is halved (for example, the check to get a car with a normal purchase DC of 34 would be made at DC 17).

The GM is the arbiter of whether or not an item could be considered commonly available--for example, a Ford sedan most likely would be, whereas a Zeppelin would not.

In addition, the network provides the Mastermind with information, bestowing a +4 bonus to all Gather Information and Research checks.

Nefarious Influence: At 4th level, the Mastermind is capable of extending his power to influence others. He gains a +4 bonus to all Bluff, Diplomacy and Intimidate checks. In addition, opponents with fewer Hit Dice than the Mastermind's total class level suffer a -2 morale penalty to attack rolls against the Mastermind and a -2 morale penalty to all Will saves during the encounter.

Lair: At 5th level, the Mastermind gains the use of a Lair. The Lair is a secure location that acts as the Mastermind's headquarters during that adventure.

The location covers 1500 square feet per Mastermind level (so at 5th level, the lair is 7500 sq. ft.), arranged as the Mastermind desires. The Lair features a number of secret doors or escape passages equal to the Mastermind's level. The DC to find those secret doors and passages is 25.

The Lair also may feature cells to hold prisoners, torture chambers and/or death traps, as the Mastermind wishes (with the GM's approval).

The Mastermind gains a different lair each adventure.



Devil's Own Luck: It always seems as though things tend to go the Mastermind's way. At 7th level, the Mastermind may re-roll any failed roll, adding a +2 bonus, up to 3 times per adventure.

Halls of Power: At 8th level, the Mastermind's influence grows and expands to the highest levels of power. The Mastermind cannot be found guilty of any crime in a court of law. If brought to trial, the case will be thrown out on a technicality, or an escape will be arranged by contacts within the authorities themselves.

In addition, contacts will inform the Mastermind of any actions being taken against the Mastermind by PCs who share that information with the authorities.

Nine Lives: At 10th level, the Mastermind gains the ability to return from what was thought to be certain death.

If the Mastermind dies, make a Will save at DC 20. If the

save is made, the Mastermind survives somehow (thrown clear of the explosion, washing up on a desert island after been thrown overboard, coming to in a hospital when they've already been declared dead, etc.) and one "life" is removed from their total.

The Mastermind literally has 9 of these lives to spend. If the save is failed, the Mastermind loses a life and must continue to roll until the save is made (losing a life for each failure). If the Mastermind has no lives remaining, the death is permanent.

Gamemasters will find that they need to use the “Obscure death” method when using this ability-- keeping the final fate of the Mastermind a mystery.

Whenever possible, the situation should be described in such a way that verification is difficult if not impossible (a Mastermind who is shot can fall out a nearby window, for example).

NEW FEATS

Improved Critical

You know how to hit where it hurts with an attack.

Prerequisites: Base Attack Bonus 8+

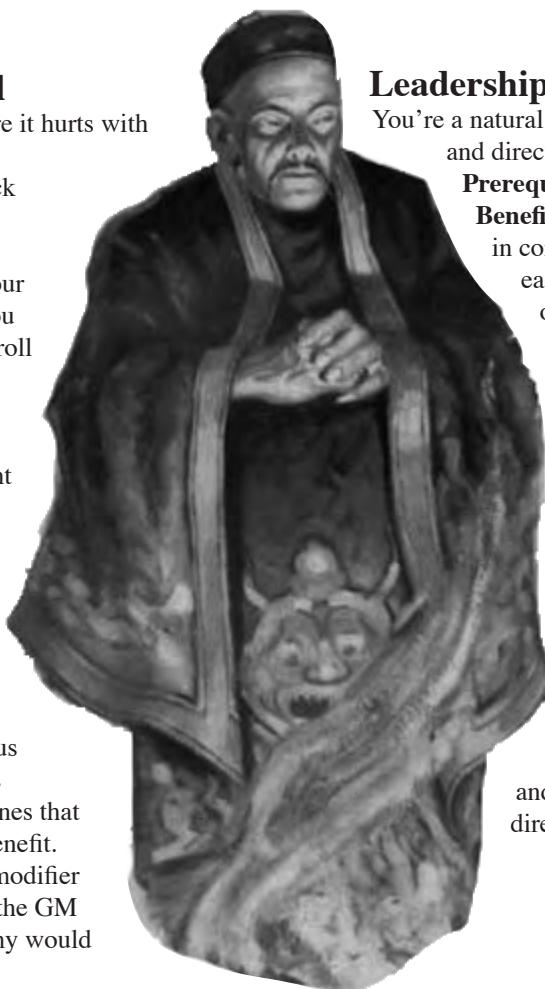
Benefit: Choose an attack. When using that attack, your threat range is doubled; you threaten a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

Special: You can take this feat multiple times. Each time it applies to a different attack.

Infamy

You have a particularly bad reputation. (whether deserved or not)

Benefit: You get a +3 bonus on Charisma-based checks whenever the GM determines that your infamy would be a benefit. However, you suffer a -3 modifier on such checks whenever the GM determines that your infamy would work against you.



Leadership

You're a natural leader, good at coordinating and directing the efforts of others.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+

Benefit: If you direct or lead others in combat (taking a free action each round to do so), everyone on your side gets a +1 bonus on all checks (including initiative). However, if you're incapable of taking a free action on any round, your side loses the bonus until you recover. Characters can only be under the direction of one leader at a time, and may choose to change their leader as a free action. Characters under the influence of a leader must be able to hear and understand that leader's directions.