

# DIGITAL HERO

#7  
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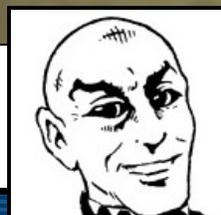


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Issue #7 (February 2003)



# When We Last Left Our Heroes...

by Steven S. Long

It's been an interesting couple of months since my last column. In addition to coping with the holidays and handling our usual load of work, we had to deal with an unpleasant event in early January, when the Hero message boards got hit with a "denial of service" attack. Thanks to Webmaster Ben Seeman, the problem didn't affect us for too long – and in the interim, Nate "Natoman" Barnes stepped up to the plate and provided some temporary message boards for us on his own website. Thanx, Nato!

By the time you read this, not only will *Ninja Hero* be available, but *The Ultimate Vehicle* should just about be ready to ship from the printer (if it hasn't already). What I'm currently working on as I write this is putting the finishing touches on our first *Star Hero* setting book, *Terran Empire*.

"TE" (as we like to call it) is a part of the Hero Universe meta-setting – it covers the time period 2400-2700 AD. As described in the first chapter (which delves into the history of the setting), the Imperial era opens at the end of the Alien Wars. Humanity has narrowly avoided extinction at the hands of the terrifying Xenovores and has struck back to destroy them. Determined not to let Humanity become a second-rate species, Admiral Marissa DeValiere forges the shattered remnants of Terran space back together and creates the Terran Empire. Over the next 250 years, the Empire expands, becoming one of the most powerful political entities in the Galaxy, but also gradually becoming more despotic and oppressive. In the late twenty-seventh century, Imperial abuses spark numerous rebellions, which eventually overthrow the Empire (and, eventually, help to establish the utopian Galactic Federation).

Naturally, such a broad scope of history provides all sorts of opportunities for *Star Hero* campaigns! In addition to typical SH fare (free traders, explorers, mercenaries, freelance adventurers), the GM can run campaigns involving Imperial politics, galactic wars against hostile species such as the Thorgons or the Ackálians, or even the rebellion against Imperial tyranny. Since the book can't cover every decade of 300 years in detail, it focuses on a specific period: 2633-51, the reign of Empress Marissa III. During this time, the Empire was well-established but beginning to slide into corruption and oppression, and thus offers the widest possible scope for different types of campaigns and adventures. But if you want to set your game before or after Marissa's time on the throne, the book has plenty of information to get you started.

Chapter Two of the book describes numerous alien species – not just ones living under Imperial rule, but others from all over the Galaxy. Some of them are names familiar to *Champions* gamers – the Malvans, the Hzeel, the Perseids – but many others, like the Fex and the Se'ecra, you meet here for the first time. Each major species comes with a Package Deal for character creation purposes, and a gorgeous illustration so you get a better idea of what it looks like. (Chapter Five has further information on character creation; it describes things like how to handle Weapon Familiarities in the setting, Professional Package Deals for members of the Imperial Military, and how psionics work.)

Chapters Three and Four describe life in the Galaxy of the twenty-seventh century. Chapter Three discusses the current state of galactic politics. While half of it covers just the Terran Empire and its various institutions, the remainder examines the other major powers in the Milky Way – from the Thorgon Hegemony, to the Mon'dabi Federation, to the Varanyi Empire; it's all there. Chapter Four looks at day-to-day life sorts of issues, like travel times, communication methods, trade, religion, and crime.

"Gearhead" gamers will enjoy Chapters Six and Seven, which cover technology and starships, respectively. The focus is still on the early-to-mid 2600s, but these chapters also have information on earlier and later types of tech. The whole thing dovetails with the technology for the rest of the Hero Universe, so characters have access to tech that's far better than what Humans had in the *Interstellar Hero* and *Alien Wars* periods, but not nearly as good as what's to come during the time of the *Galactic Federation*.

Chapter Eight, the final one in the book, contains information for the GM. In addition to general campaign advice, it includes a *GM's Vault* just like the one in *Champions Universe*. That's where the GM can find out the real story behind all the hints, mysteries, and even disinformation in the earlier parts of the book, which are for the players. It tells you why the Mandaarians evacuated the Galaxy in the late 2500s, who's on the Directorate of the Terran Intelligence Command, and even the *real* recipe for hot foam sauce!

Overall, we're very pleased with TE; we think it's a great way to kick off our *Star Hero* line of products. We hope you'll agree; be on the lookout for it in mid-to-late February and let us know what you think!

– Steven S. Long  
HERO System Line Developer



# HEROglyphs by Steven S. Long

## OUT OF THIN AIR: A NEW POWER FOR CREATING OBJECTS

The ability to create objects “out of thin air” is a common special effect for various powers. For example, a wizard’s Spell of Sword-Summoning is an HKA, Usable By Others, and an earth-manipulating superhero’s power to create walls of rock is a Limited form of Entangle. However, that sort of ability often causes problems when players want their characters to have the ability to create items that aren’t easily defined in *HERO System* terms, or that, for all practical purposes, really don’t require a rules-based definition – things like common household objects, bridges, or the like. Gamers seeking an easier way to create this sort of ability may want to consider this new optional Power, Object Creation.

### OBJECT CREATION

Standard Power  
Instant  
No Range

A character with this Standard Power can create solid objects. Some examples of Object Creation include a wizard who can conjure useful items, a superhero who can transform air molecules into metals and other substances to create various objects, and a starship’s replication device that can transmute raw materials into various finished goods. Object Creation costs END to use.

For 20 Character Points, a character can create any type of simple object, with no moving or working parts, typically made of no more than one or two substances, of no more than one square hex in size, and with a maximum of 2 DEF, 2 BODY. Examples include a coffee mug, a thin board, a shrub, a backpack, clothes, or a small wall of some relatively fragile material.

For +5 Character Points, a character can create any type of object up to and including complex objects involving moving or working parts, provided he has an appropriate Skill related to using or building such objects. Examples include a flush toilet (requires PS: Plumbing), an internal combustion engine (requires Mechanics), a mechanical lock (requires Lockpicking), or a marionette (requires PS: Puppetry). For an additional +10 Character Points, a character can create complex objects without having any related Skill.

For +10 Character Points, a character can create any type of object up to and including extremely complex objects involving moving or working parts, provided he has an appropriate Skill related to using or building such objects. Examples include a starship hyperdrive (requires Mechanics or PS: Operate Hyperdrive), a computer (requires Computer Programming), or an electronic lock (requires Lockpicking). For an additional +20 points, a character can create complex objects without having any related Skill.

The GM determines the complexity of a given object, and what Skill a character needs to create an object. He may even require a character to have multiple Skills, or a sufficiently high roll with a Skill, before the character can use Object Creation.

For +3 Character Points, the character may add up to +1 DEF or +1 BODY to the object. However, the object’s BODY can never be more than twice its DEF, and vice-versa, without GM’s permission.

For +5 Character Points, the object can be up to +1 square hex larger in a single dimension (width/length, height, or depth).

Once created, an object is permanent; it lasts until destroyed or used up. It cannot move, though a sufficiently strong character could carry it.

A character with Object Creation cannot create perfect duplicates of other objects; some flaws and differences are always readily detectable. At the GM’s option, characters with an appropriate *Forgery* Skill can create duplicates good enough to pass as the real thing, though detailed testing or examination may still reveal them to be copies.

### Restrictions On Object Creation

Object Creation has one important restriction: *characters cannot use Object Creation to create objects when doing so could reasonably be considered the special effect of some other power or ability.* This includes, generally speaking:

- any use of Object Creation that could directly or indirectly cause injury or harm (Object Creation is not an Attack Power)
- any use of Object Creation to create an object for which special design rules already exist (such as Automatons, Computers, Vehicles, and Bases), because characters can easily determine a total Character Point cost for such items and “create” them as a special effect of Summon.



### OBJECT CREATION EXAMPLES:

**Create Walls:** Object Creation (simple objects of up to 6 DEF, 6 BODY and up to 2” wide and high and 6” long) (80 Active Points); Limited Type Of Objects (stone walls only; -1). Total cost: 40 points.

**Replication Module:** Object Creation (extremely complex objects of up to 3 DEF, 3 BODY, no Skill required) (46 Active Points); OIF Bulky (starship replication station; -1). Total cost: 23 points.

**Wizard’s Toolkit:** Object Creation (simple objects of up to 3 DEF, 3 BODY) (26 Active Points); Gestures (-1/4), Incantations (-1/4), Limited Type Of Objects (small tools and household items; -1/2). Total cost: 13 points.



## CHANGES TO OTHER POWERS

If you choose to use the *Object Creation* Power, you should make certain changes to other Powers:

### Entangle:

Entangle can no longer create “walls” or barriers. That is now a function of Object Creation.

### Summon:

Summon remains useful for “creating” living or mobile beings, objects with defined Character Point costs (such as Vehicles), and the like. The GM may need to evaluate a particular power carefully to determine whether Object Creation or Summon is the most appropriate way to build the ability in game terms.

### Transform:

Transform can no longer “create objects out of thin air”; that becomes a function of Object Creation.

The key word here is “reasonably.” Players and GMs should not strain the definitions of other powers and effects to make a particular use of Object Creation invalid, when Object Creation provides a simple solution that does not unbalance or otherwise negatively affect the game. For example, a starship hyperdrive was listed above as an example of an object characters could create with Object Creation. While it is certainly easy to define a hyperdrive with Flight, FTL Travel, or other such powers, it may become complicated and tricky to determine how many people (or how much mass) the engine can move, and so forth. In appropriate situations, a GM may prefer to let characters use Object Creation instead, and simply come up with the specifics of the engine himself.

Examples of things Object Creation *cannot* do include:

- create swords or other weapons (that’s a special effect for various Attack Powers, Usable By Others, OAF)
- create a heavy object over a character’s head so that it falls and crushes him (that’s a special effect for various Attack Powers, Indirect)
- create food and drink (that’s a special effect for Life Support [Diminished Eating], Usable By Others)
- create a pit full of sharp spikes (that’s a special effect for a Limited form of RKA)
- create a car or a house (that’s a special effect for Summon, because the HERO System has rules for establishing the Character Point cost of Vehicles and Bases)
- create items of great value, such as gemstones, jewelry, or works of art (that’s a special effect for the Money Perk)
- create living beings (that’s a special effect for Summon)
- create a tool or object that makes it easier to perform a particular Skill or task (that’s a special effect for bonuses to a Skill Roll, OAF)

The GM may grant a character permission to violate these restrictions, on a case-by-case basis, if he feels doing so will not unbalance the game. For example, although it’s not normally permissible to create items of great value, a GM might allow a character to create fabulous and exotic suits of clothes, since they’re not readily converted to money and the player can have a lot of fun roleplaying his character’s “Clothes Horse” power.

### Advantages

**Area Of Effect:** Characters cannot apply this Advantage to Object Creation; the Power already has its own rules for increasing the size of created objects.

**Autofire:** Characters cannot apply Autofire to Object Creation.

**MegaScale:** With the GM’s permission, characters may apply MegaScale to Object Creation, thus allowing them to create enormous objects without having to spend hundreds of points to increase the object’s size through the usual method.

**Ranged:** Characters may apply this Advantage to Object Creation so they can create objects away from themselves. This does not void the rule that says characters cannot use Object Creation to directly or indirectly harm another character.

### Limitations

#### Limited Type Of Objects (-¼ to -1):

Object Creation with this Limitation can only create certain types of objects. If the group is Slightly Limited (any technological device, any non-technological object), the Limitation is worth -¼. If it’s Limited (mechanical devices, any stone object), the Limitation is worth -½. If it’s Very Limited (clocks, stone walls), the Limitation is worth -1.

**Restricted Lifespan (varies):** As noted in the text, items created with Object Creation are permanent; they exist until destroyed or used up. If Object Creation has this Limitation, objects created with it have a much more finite lifespan. The GM determines the object’s ordinary lifespan – the time before it would collapse, crumble to dust, or otherwise become useless or worthless. For each step up the Time Chart above 1 Year by which the character restricts the object’s lifespan, the power gets a -¼ Limitation (maximum of -2). For example, if a character created a stone wall with Object Creation that crumbles away to dust after 20 Minutes, that’s seven steps up the Time Chart, which is worth a -1¾ Limitation. The GM may forbid characters to apply this Limitation to Object Creation if he feels it does not significantly restrict the Power.

**⚠ Object Creation Cost:** 20 Character Points to create any type of simple object of up to 2 DEF, 2 BODY; +5 Character Points to create complex objects for which character has an associated Skill, an additional +10 Character Points to create complex objects without having an associated Skill; +10 Points to create extremely complex objects for which character has an associated Skill, an additional +20 Character Points to create complex objects without having an associated Skill; +3 Character Points per +1 DEF or +1 BODY; +5 Character Points for +1 square hex in size; +20 Character Points to remove the need to have an appropriate Skill.

# Leftover Hero

by Bob Greenwade

## More Vehicle Construction

It would seem only natural that a lot of material from the manuscript for *The Ultimate Vehicle* had to be cut for space. Not only was the manuscript pretty large to begin with, but the change in scheduling for *The HERO System Vehicle Sourcebook* called for the addition of several additional sample Vehicles, leaving less room for some things.

Of the Vehicle construction rules that were cut, about two-thirds were in the form of advice, ideas, and general observations. The rest, given here, are options that the GM may include with his campaign if they seem appropriate.

## Characteristics

### SIZE

#### Small Vehicles

Originally, the Extended Vehicle Size Table extended upward (that is, into negative values for Size) several levels. This included reduced STR, BODY, PRE, and Mass, along with increases in DCV and Knockback. The GM may reinstate those levels if he feels it's appropriate (though no Vehicle should be reduced past 1 BODY).

If a Vehicle is defined as being smaller than human size without that extension to the Size Table, it may simply take the appropriate modifiers for Mass, DCV, and Knockback at no point cost or penalty.

Also, the DEF does not have to use the *Does Not Protect Occupants* Limitation if it's designed to carry proportionately small occupants.

### BODY

#### Redundant Systems

This Characteristic may be bought with the +1 Advantage *Redundant Systems*. This represents a method by which a system may be damaged but another identical one will take its place with no interruption in service. (In a way, BODY with this Advantage can be thought of as simply working like BODY for regular characters, whose cost it matches.) BODY bought with this Advantage is always damaged first, and as long as it's the only BODY damage that's been taken, the vehicle does not have to worry about loss of abilities.

### DEFENSE

Another option for simplicity in handling DEF with the *Does Not Protect Occupants* Limitation is to declare that DEF for such Vehicles has a starting value of 3 and a cost of 2. Lacking any other Limitations, this is mathematically identical to selling off the base DEF of 2 and then buying it back with the Limitation.

### PERKS

In addition to those mentioned in *TUV*, there are a couple of Perks that might be appropriate for a Vehicle, depending on the GM's judgment.

### ACCESS

A Vehicle (as opposed to the character operating it) could have special access to some location. For example, a base computer may recognize a vehicle, or a special signal that it emits in infrared or over the radio, allowing the vehicle (and those inside it) access to a secret bunker, garage, hangar, or other location.

### MONEY

With the GM's permission, a Vehicle may have a special fund set aside for it for repairs and other expenses; such a fund would be represented by the *Well-Off* level of Money. If the fund is very large and may be used for improvements as well as repair, then the vehicle is *Wealthy*. It would be an extremely rare situation where a vehicle's special fund would be large enough to warrant making it *Filthy Rich*; the GM should only allow this with very good justification.

Similarly, the GM may decide that a vehicle with a lot of money owed on it is *Poor*, and one with a lien on it (or worse) is *Destitute*.

## Talents

As noted in *TUV*, many talents are appropriate for Vehicles when purchased as equipment, requiring no special rules. Examples not mentioned there include Absolute Range Sense, Combat Sense, Double Jointed, Perfect Pitch, and Rapid Attack.

A handful of other Talents do deserve some special attention.

### DANGER SENSE

In science fiction and superhero tales, many vehicular computer systems have a strange, innate feel for danger. Sometimes they just analyze the action as it takes place and mathematically explore the realms of probable futures; other times they combine a variety of exotic and unusual senses to analyze the

## SAMPLE VEHICULAR RESISTANCES

Here are some examples of this Talent, all of which have the same cost of 1 Character Point per +1 to the appropriate Characteristic Roll:

**Complex:** resists  
Mechanics  
(and/or  
Electronics)

**Advanced Locks:**  
resists  
Lockpicking

**Secure:** resists  
Security  
Systems

**Untraceable:**  
resists  
Tracking

vehicle's current situation. Other explanations have also been used, such as actually peering into the immediate future. It should only be allowed in more fantastic campaigns, and may require the *Intuition* restriction.

As with all "stop-sign" Talents and Powers, the GM should be careful when allowing this into his campaign, since it could alter storylines.

## LIGHTSLEEP

This may seem an unusual Talent for a vehicle, but it can represent a high-tech security system that operates when other systems are down.

Generally, *Lightsleep* can do nothing more than fire up the vehicle's engines when activated. The system may alert the pilot, activate a self-piloting program, or set off a loud alarm that wakes the neighbors. (Often, in the latter case, it may take a Limitation *Misfires*, worth from  $-\frac{1}{4}$  to  $-1$  depending on how often it happens, which would represent such a system's tendency to accidentally go off at 2AM and wake the neighbors.) However, an alarm will require some means for the vehicle to communicate it, such as a klaxon on an external PA system. Other security devices may also be activated using the *Trigger Advantage*.

This type of *Lightsleep* may also be taken with the Limitation *Requires a Security Systems Skill Roll*, especially with the Required Skill Roll May be Overcome option.

## RESISTANCE

Just as regular characters can resist Interaction Skills with additional Talents based on this one (see the sidebar on page 65 of the *HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*), so Vehicles can have Talents that resist Agility and Intellect Skills.

Any such applications of Resistance will require the GM's approval. If the GM doesn't feel comfortable modeling a given Talent off the Resistance Talent, then "Negative Skill Levels" (*HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*, page 49) may be used instead. Note, however, that this would increase the cost of the Talent to 3 points per  $-1$  to the Roll (+1 Negative Skill Level to a single Skill, Reduced Endurance (0 END;  $+\frac{1}{2}$ ), Only to Roll Applied to Self ( $+\frac{1}{2}$ )).

## SIMULATE DEATH

It is possible, especially (but not necessarily) in fantastic campaigns, to have a system to make a vehicle "shut down" and appear totally disabled, as if damaged beyond repair.

As with characters, this takes at least 5 minutes to prepare for, though this may be shortened with a DEX Roll (instead of an EGO Roll, even if the vehicle is self-aware) at  $-1$  for every level on the Time Chart (thus, at  $-4$  to enter the simulation on the same Phase). If the Roll is

failed, the simulation does not start; if it's failed badly, the simulation starts anyway, but the vehicle may begin to actually break down. The vehicle makes a BODY Roll, and if that fails, immediate technical attention is required or the vehicle will explode, doing 1d6 per BODY in an Explosion (its own DEF may protect those on the outside). A successful *Mechanics* or *Analyze Construction* Roll, either at  $-5$ , can detect this system in use.

## Powers

### MOVEMENT POWERS

#### "Skip" Movement

"Skip" movement is the ability, seen occasionally in fiction, for some vehicles to pass harmlessly through barriers while using their regular means of locomotion. There are three ways to model this, depending on the GM's preferred dynamic.

Though Running and Flight are the most obvious candidates for "skip" movement, it may be applied to any Movement Power except Extra-Dimensional Movement and Teleportation (which do this already)

To keep this ability from being abused – at least, when the PCs have it – the GM may require the *Increased Endurance* Limitation.

**Desolidification:** This may be the most obvious method. The *Desolidification* Power is bought normally, with the Limitations *Does Not Protect Against Damage* and *Instant*. Additional Limitations, such as *Linked* (to Movement) or some sort of Conditional Limitation, may be added at the GM's preference.

**The Indirect Advantage:** With this Advantage on a Movement power, the vehicle just keeps moving into a barrier, and continues until it comes out the other side. The Vehicle must pass through in a single Phase; to end a Phase within (or partially within) a barrier, the Vehicle must either use Desolidification or take damage just as though it had Teleported into a solid object (see *HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*, page 240).

**Teleportation:** Teleport is another option for this ability. The Limitations *Only to Go Where Vehicle Could Normally Go* (the vehicle still uses its regular means of locomotion), *Must Pass Through Intervening Open Space* (the vehicle can be targeted by attackers, except when it's actually passing through the barrier), and *Linked* (to the Vehicle's main mode of movement) are required to define the ability. All are  $-\frac{1}{2}$  Limitations.

## DIGITAL HERO #7

### AID

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#### Boosters

A machine may use one of its systems to boost the abilities of an identical system in another vehicle. For example, if two vehicles have flame-throwers, one may attach its flame-thrower to the other for a considerably more powerful blast.

The Power should be bought in a Multipower with Aid (using the *Succor* option), each in a fixed (ultra) slot. The two slots should have the same number of Active Points. The GM may allow other Powers in the Multipower, but the Aid must specify a single Power within the Framework that it adds to.

The Aid usually has the *Continuous Advantage*, and may be bought with *Reduced Endurance* as well. The Power should also have the Limitations *Affects Others Only* (-1), *Only Versus Identical Special Effect* (-½ to -2, depending on how common the special effect is), *Pays Extra END for Power Instead of Target* (-½), *Lasts Only While Applied* (-½), and *No Range* (-½).

Once a Booster is activated, the vehicle may connect a second Booster of a different kind without losing the effect of the first Aid, provided that a) the other Booster is also compatible with the target vehicle, b) the current Booster doesn't have the *Concentration* Limitation at the 0 DCV level, c) the new Booster is not in a Multipower with the first, or any other Power currently in use, d) the new Booster doesn't have any Limitations that are mutually exclusive to the current one(s).

Note that this application of *Aid* is not the same thing as a *Combine* Power, described in *TUV*, although it may be used to facilitate the Pooled Resources option for that effect. The two Vehicles are still completely separate units; they simply share a single system.

### CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

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#### Artificial Gravity

The *Ultimate Vehicle* builds artificial gravity using Telekinesis. However, some GMs may prefer to use Change Environment.

The basic effect of this Power applies an Earth-like level of gravity in space (or any other environment with less gravity). This effect can be doubled (giving a -1 to all STR Rolls and similarly penalizing STR-based efforts) for every +5 points.

The *Long-Lasting Adder* is generally inappropriate – when the system stops, gravity instantly goes to the ambient environment's gravity (Zero-G in space).

This normally cannot reduce gravity, unless it's built solely for that purpose or has the *Varying Effect Advantage* (at the +¼ level). In this case, it can only subtract the number of

Gravities (G's) that it could actually generate (it's operating "in reverse").

### EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL MOVEMENT

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#### Temporal Velocity

In fiction, time travel doesn't always work instantaneously; many time machines take their time (as it were) going from one era to another. For a -1 Limitation, the Vehicle moves through time at a rate equivalent to half the base points of Extra-Dimensional Movement (including all Adders, other than the *Increased Velocity Adder* below) in Faster-Than-Light Travel – for example, the ability to travel to any place or date in time costs 60 points, so with this Limitation the Vehicle could travel at a rate equivalent to 30 points of FTL Travel, or about one millennium per year traveled (roughly 2 years per day traveled).

This speed may be doubled for every +2 points spent on an Adder, *Increased Velocity* (all Advantages and Limitations apply). The character should be careful to not spend more points on the Adder than he saves for using the above Limitation.

For a simpler solution, the GM can simply define "the Time-stream" as its own dimension, and have travelers use normal movement rules (including the possibility of collisions in the Time-stream).

### LIFE SUPPORT

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#### Vehicular Life Support

Most vehicles have needs similar to those of living things. Many engines need air to operate, and nearly all need fuel. Most are sensitive to environmental pressures such as extremes of temperature and air pressure. To reflect this, the GM may require Vehicles without these requirements to take Life Support for itself.

The optional Vehicular Life Support Chart may be used to buy Life Support for the Vehicle itself. Its entries correspond to the equivalent entries on the main Life Support Table in the *HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* (page 127).

Life Support bought using this chart does *not* protect the Vehicle's occupants, but only the Vehicle itself. A vehicle with *Environmental Protection* in water can operate under the water, but the occupants will need their own Life Support.

### MIND LINK

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#### Remote Control

Some vehicles can be operated by remote control. This can be constant outside guidance given to a missile, or a direct remote control device for a car or other vehicle. (This is most common with radio-controlled models, though it's been done with larger vehicles.)

### VEHICULAR CHANGE ENVIRONMENT RADIUS

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Remember that a Vehicle must purchase enough area to cover itself for any application of the *Change Environment Power* that affects its interior (see *TUV*).

### STARSHIP OPTION

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The GM of a spacefaring campaign may rule that if a spacecraft cannot enter atmosphere it may do away with the *Life Support* needed to survive in space, along with the *Cannot Land/Enter Atmosphere* Physical Limitations (see *TUV*). Under this rule, space is the natural setting for the Vehicle; it would theoretically need *Life Support* to survive the friction, pressure, and other hazards of atmosphere that are perfectly natural for vehicles designed to operate on a planet. (A ship that can operate equally well in space or atmosphere should just take *Life Support* for space.)



## REMOTE CONTROL DEVICE

*Hand-Held Vehicle Remote:* Mind Link, one specific mind, No LOS Needed (15 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only To Issue Remote-Control Commands (-<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>), Only With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1), Flashed As Radio Group, Not Mental Group (-<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>), Requires Difficult PER Roll Or Take Skill Penalty (-<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>). Total Cost: 4 points.

### VEHICULAR LIFE SUPPORT CHART

Points	Effect
1-4	<i>Environmental Adaptation:</i> Vehicle has advanced filters (or some similar system) that enable its ventilation system to operate for an extended period before becoming damaged
5	<i>Environmental Protection:</i> Vehicle can operate (that is, “breathe”) in an unusual environment (under water, in heavy dust)
10	<i>Self-Contained Ventilation:</i> Vehicle’s ventilation system is self-contained
1-3	<i>Diminished Fuel:</i> The Vehicle can run for longer periods between fueling, or may not need fuel at all
1-3	<i>Diminished Maintenance:</i> The Vehicle can go for longer periods between regular maintenance checks, or may not need maintenance at all
1-2	<i>Safe Environment:</i> Vehicle is safe a dangerous environment
1-5	<i>Longevity:</i> The Vehicle’s parts wear down more slowly, if at all
1-10	<i>Immunity:</i> this can include such things as rust (2 points), fuel impurities (5 points), and similar things

The Mind Link for the Vehicle is usually bought as One Specific Mind (whomever holds the remote control device) but may be increased only if it uses a crew of more than one. Even then it cannot exceed the stated size of the crew. The *Any Distance* and *Any Dimension* Adders are generally inappropriate; the *Psychic Bond* Adder is generally appropriate, but not required. The Limitations *Target Must Have Mind Link* (-1) and *Flashed As Radio Sense Group, Not Mental* (-<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>), *Only To Accept Remote Control Commands* (-<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>) are required.

Also required at the GM’s discretion is the Limitation *Requires Difficult PER Roll Or Take Skill Penalty* (-<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>). With this Limitation, related to *Requires A Skill Roll* (see *HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*, page 199), the character must make a Sight PER Roll on the vehicle at -1 or anything he attempts to do with the vehicle will be at -1 for every point the Roll is missed by. If the character is blinded or otherwise cannot see the vehicle, then he operates the vehicle as though he were at the wheel and blind.

Also, the Vehicle’s computer (whether bought separately or with the INT Characteristic) must allocate INT to a Program, *Obey Remote Control Commands*.

If two (or more) characters attempt to control the vehicle at the same time, they must make a DEX Versus DEX Roll; the winner controls the vehicle for that Phase. Every time another character tries to take control, this takes another DEX Versus DEX Roll. In the case of ties, the vehicle will do the *average* of the two commands (for example, if one wants the vehicle to turn sharp to the right, and the other wants it to go straight ahead, the vehicle turns to the right half as far as the first character wants). For actions that are either “on” or “off” (such as firing a weapon), roll a die.

**Overriding a Remote Control:** It may be possible to completely override a remote control, using a device specifically designed for the purpose. In this case, it may appropriate to use the *Mind Control* Power. This isn’t common enough to warrant its own entry or even a highly detailed description, but such a device can be created with the Limitations *Works Against Operator’s DEX* (-<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>), *Opponent May Use Complementary Skills* (-<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>), and *Vehicle Must Have Remote Control Mind Link* (-1) in addition to any others that seem appropriate (such as *Focus*). The operator with the remote control may use his DEX in all ways that a character under a regular *Mind Control* could use his EGO, except that he can also use *Combat Driving*, *Combat Pilot*, *Computer Programming*, or any other appropriate Skill to counteract the override.

At the GM’s discretion, it might even be possible to override the controls of a vehicle that does not normally have a remote control Mind Link with such a Mind Control (eliminating the need for that Limitation). This would force the vehicle to work as the controller commands, not as the operator within commands, and can even bring a vehicle to life without an operator. (If there is an operator within, then he can resist the Mind Control as above.) Normally, though, to take control of a Vehicle with no remote control system built in requires Telekinesis.

## TELEPORTATION

### Floating Fixed Locations

A Floating Fixed Location may be changed by “study[ing] the new location for a full Turn,” according to the *HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* (page 150). However, the character doing the memorizing doesn’t necessarily have to be *at* the location to do so, particularly when operating a teleportation device at a fixed location on a vehicle. If the GM deems it appropriate, a character operating such a Teleport device could

## DIGITAL HERO #7

set a Floating Fixed Location using the ship's long-range sensors.

### Gates

A Vehicle with Teleportation (or Extra-Dimensional Movement) bought with the  $-\frac{1}{2}$  Gate Limitation (see the sidebar on pages 149-150 of the *HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*) doesn't need to buy extra diameter and mass of the Gate to allow itself to pass through. As a benefit of the Size characteristic, a Gate is automatically big enough to let the Vehicle pass through for just the  $+\frac{1}{2}$  Area Of Effect (One Hex) Advantage, and the Power (whether Teleportation or Extra-Dimensional Movement) can move mass equal to the Vehicle plus its passengers and/or cargo without having to increase mass, even if the Vehicle itself isn't actually passing through it.

These are merely the starting points for diameter and mass. The diameter is still doubled for an extra  $+\frac{1}{4}$  Advantage, and mass is still doubled (for either Power) for a +5 point Adder.

## Power Limitations

### EXTRA TIME

#### Missiles

As pointed out in *TUV*, a missile tends to take a while to reach its target after being fired. Representing this with a subordinate vehicle (see *TUV*) represents this accurately; the *Extra Time* Limitation should be used when the missile is built as an RKA.

Currently, Extra Time on an attack Power is the time it takes to set up the attack; when the time is over, the attack is loosed, and the target is hit (or missed). An optional "Missile" rule may be used where the attack is loosed immediately; the Extra Time is the time it takes for the attack to arrive. If the target isn't where it was when the Missile was fired then the *Missile* just hits the hex that the target was in – or whatever is currently in the hex, using a normal Attack Roll, even if the target is friendly.

As a further option, the GM may allow the target to take a +1 to Deflect, Dive for Cover, Dodge, or otherwise interfere with an attack with *Missile* option for each  $-\frac{1}{4}$  of Limitation the Power has in the *Extra Time* Limitation. Offensive actions may also be taken against the missile, using either a DCV equal to the attacking character's OCV much like a Block maneuver or the Velocity-Based DCV chart (see page 237 of the *HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*, assuming exactly the velocity the missile needs to go to travel the distance from the attacker to the target in the time given).

### LIMITED POWER

**$-\frac{1}{4}$  to -4: Causes a Susceptibility.** This Limitation, applicable to any constant Power (usually a defense) causes the Vehicle to take BODY damage from certain conditions when the Power is active. The Vehicle gets no points for the Susceptibility as a Disadvantage, but the Power does take a Limitation worth  $-\frac{1}{4}$  for every 5 points that the Susceptibility would be worth if the defense can be easily turned off, or twice that if it can't. The latter should only be allowed in campaigns that extensively use standardized equipment (which generally must be bought with money), or in other circumstances where the operator has a choice about whether to take the defense or not.

Neither the Vehicle's DEF nor any other defense that is Always On may take this Limitation; the Susceptibility in this case must be bought as a Disadvantage (which will be worth more points in most campaigns anyway).

This is generally inappropriate for superhero campaigns and other settings where the availability of equipment is either unlimited, or limited to what's on hand. In such campaigns, the Susceptibility should be taken as a Disadvantage. (However, the GM of such a campaign may allow this Limitation on defenses that are not Always On if it seems easier to handle.)

**$-\frac{1}{2}$  to -1½: Causes a Vulnerability.** This Limitation causes the vehicle to take extra BODY damage from attacks of certain Special Effects. The vehicle gets no points for the Vulnerability as a Disadvantage, but the Armor does take a Limitation worth  $-\frac{1}{2}$  for every 5 points that the Vulnerability would be worth. As with the Limitation *Causes a Susceptibility* (above), this Limitation should only be allowed in campaigns that make extensive use of standardized equipment. It normally may only be applied to Armor, though the GM may permit its application to other Powers as well.

The GM may decide that a specific system that has a Vulnerability – especially if it's only Vulnerable to something specific – should take a Limitation, rather than give the entire vehicle a Disadvantage. In this case, the system gets half the above Limitation value. The extra BODY counts toward such things as Impairing, Disabling, and Demolishing (see *TUV*).

Note these are *in place of*, not *in addition to*, the corresponding *Vulnerability* Disadvantage. It's up to the GM to determine which will be permitted (and he may decide to permit both types, even in the same vehicle – but not representing the same damage).

As with *Susceptibilities* bought as a Power Limitation (above), this should only be taken in campaigns where equipment is selected from a list or catalog, and not in superhero campaigns and other games where the vehicles are custom-made.

## Disadvantages

### CREW

Normally, a Vehicle requires only one crew member: the operator (usually called the driver or pilot), who controls all of the Vehicle's functions. In *The Ultimate Vehicle*, the requirement of a larger crew is a Physical Limitation. If the GM wants a more detailed approach, he may use an entirely separate *Crew Disadvantage*.

With this Disadvantage, every 2× operators required to have all of the Vehicle's systems running is worth a 5-point Disadvantage.

If the Vehicle has a built-in computer with the appropriate Skills and Programs, then the computer may fill in for missing crewmembers at the rate of 5 INT per crewmember. Thus, if the vehicle normally needs four crew members to operate and only one is present, then the computer must allocate 15 INT to assisting the lone operator.

Generally, the designer must determine the function for each Crew member. For example, a small starship with a Crew of eight might need a pilot, a navigator, an offensive tactical officer, a defensive tactical officer, a communications officer, a surveyor, an engineer, and a commander (internal security and medical personnel are separate functions). If the crew is short-handed, then one or more functions would be unmanned.

Naturally, if there is no Crew at the controls, and no Computer is on hand to take its place, the Vehicle cannot operate at all.

Remember that this Disadvantage does not necessarily give a Vehicle space for a Crew, nor vice versa – the two are entirely separate (see *TUV*). A Vehicle may not require a Crew larger than it can carry, unless it's operated by remote control.

### Reduced Crews

This Disadvantage generally assumes that the crew is required for the systems to operate at all. However, sometimes a half-sized ("skeleton") crew operates at reduced efficiency in an emergency. Under this circumstance, each crew member takes a -2 to all functions for every post covered beyond the first. The Disadvantage is worth 5 points less.

On the other hand, if the vehicle will not run at all without a full crew then the Disadvantage is worth +5 points.

The size of the Vehicle's Crew must be at least 2 to take either of these modifiers.

### Training

Most vehicles can be run with just an appropriate Transport Familiarity; emplaced weapons can generally be used by anyone with the proper Weapon Familiarity. If extra training

is needed (such as Systems Operation or a Professional Skill), then this is worth +5 points to the Disadvantage. If intensive training is needed (three or more Skills besides Transport Familiarity), then the Disadvantage is worth +10 points. (Some systems don't normally require Transport Familiarity, but if a function does require it, then it doesn't count toward the minimum). Note that the crew doesn't always need successful Rolls for everything; they only need the specified Skill(s).

Optionally, the GM may allow a mix of normal and extended training requirements for crew. Up to half of the crew may have normal training and the rest extended training (one extra Skill) for +3 points; up to half may have extended training and the rest intensive training for +8 points. Any other mix should depend on the average of the training (for example, if one position out of four requires just standard training, two require extra training, and one requires intensive training, then this is worth +5 points.)

If anyone can come in and operate the Vehicle even if they've never operated one even remotely like it before, this is worth -5 points.

This element may be taken by any Vehicle regardless of Crew size. If one person can operate it even without Transport Familiarity, this may (at the GM's discretion) be treated as a Talent (for the Vehicle) costing 5 points.

### CREW DISADVANTAGE TABLE

<u>Crew Size</u>	<u>Bonus</u>
Every 2x Crew	5
Skeleton Crew Allowed	-5
Normal Crew Functions	+0
Every Member Absolutely Needed Training	+5
None	-5
Basic (Transport Familiarity)	+0
Extended (One Extra Skill)	+5
Intensive (Three+ Extra Skills)	+10

This Disadvantage is meant to be unique to Vehicles, though it may apply to organic vehicles (bought as regular characters). It may also be applied to a Base, with the GM's permission. However, it only affects systems that need to be monitored and controlled – that is, those systems that are not Persistent, either normally or with appropriate Limitations. Persistent systems operate themselves. (A cook or galley crew is optional unless *Life Support* has the *Not Persistent* Limitation.)

If the Vehicle has subordinate Vehicles (see *TUV*), then the operators of those other Vehicles (if any) are *not* included in this Disadvantage – though living accommodations for them will still be needed.

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

#### Makeshift

Sometimes a Vehicle can be thrown together – either through a long series of spur-of-the-moment repairs, or from scratch – from components that don't normally go together. Sometimes the components are not normally associated with that type of vehicle, or possibly with Vehicles at all. It is made up of fenders from old trucks, grills from old taxi cabs, frames from old single-propeller airplanes, wheels from old bicycles, and maybe even garbage cans, water pails, pizza pans, baling wire, paper clips, rubber bands, chewing gum, duct tape (you can never have too much duct tape), and maybe even a kitchen sink or two. Such vehicles are most appropriate to fantastic campaigns (usually of a lightly humorous nature), though they do occasionally appear in other types of fiction.

This type of Distinctive Feature is usually Not Concealable, Minor Reaction (15 points), though it may be Concealable, Major Reaction (also 15 points) in campaigns where there are also many “normal”-looking craft of the same type (the vehicle will be laughed at, looked down on, and not taken seriously).

If the Vehicle looks as though it could collapse at any moment, its Distinctive Features may be Not Concealable, Major Reaction (20 points). Nobody in his right mind (and even few who aren't) will want to stand, let alone fight, next to it. The character may be hounded by his supervisors, the government, or anyone else to get the thing fixed or replaced. (It's perfectly legitimate for a Vehicle with this Distinctive Feature to also have *Wretched Exhaust That Really Reeks*, described below.)

With the GM's approval, a Makeshift vehicle may also take one of the reduced Sensing elements (usually *Small Group* for a superhero campaign, or *Large Group* in a typical science-fiction setting) to represent a Vehicle made from tossed-aside parts of other Vehicles; the general public doesn't recognize it as such, but anyone with an appropriate Knowledge Skill would, and will treat it and its operator accordingly.

A character with an appropriate *Analyze* Skill takes a +2 to the Roll when analyzing a Makeshift vehicle. A character or computer with Find Weakness gets the same bonus. This bonus jumps to +3 for truly trashed-up vehicles, and the GM may allow even greater bonuses under certain circumstances.

#### Military Markings

A Vehicle can have an insignia or other design features identifying it as belonging to a particular organization. The organization is usually the military, though police private organizations can be appropriate in some campaigns.

Such Distinctive Features are generally Concealable (unless the military makes particularly unusual-looking craft; most markings can be painted over or removed with relative ease). The reaction level depends on how well-received the organization is – that is, how well-liked it is, how loathed it is along the borders and other likely stations, how many enemies they've made, and so forth. Generally, the reaction will be *Major* on average; most people will recognize the vehicle for what it is, though certain radical elements might want to make the military unwelcome, even responding to a military presence with violence. If the government is oppressing the people and they are fighting back, the Reputation may be worth Extreme reactions.

Certain vehicular markings could also take a reduced Sensing element. The insignia of a mercenary group whose strong reputation exists only in military circles would be one example.

It's generally assumed that the operator of a Vehicle with military markings is a member of the military. The operator is almost always treated as one, at least initially, and almost every society has certain prejudices about military people. (There may also be legal sanctions, including imprisonment or even death, against a civilian using a vehicle with military markings, whether the vehicle actually belongs to the military or not.)

All Rolls appropriate Knowledge Skills are at +3 when applied to Vehicles with this Disadvantage. A character with both an applicable Knowledge Skill and an applicable *Analyze* gets a +2 to the latter when analyzing the Vehicle. The same rule may apply to characters with Find Weakness.

#### Wretched Exhaust Fumes

A Vehicle with this Distinctive Feature can be easily followed with a Tracking Smell PER Roll (or with certain other equipment, depending on the exact nature of the “fumes,” as long as the Sense has the *Tracking Sense* Adder – for example, an bright ion trail would be Detectable by an electromagnetic analyzer). At the minimum, this is Not Concealable, detectable by a Small Group (anyone with the right sense or device), with a Minor Reaction (5 points).

In some cases, Wretched Exhaust Fumes may be so bad as to be detectable by Just About Everyone, with a Major Reaction (20 points) or Extreme Reaction (25 points). This represents a vehicle whose exhaust *really* reeks. People avoid being in its presence when it's running, and it is visible for miles and cannot sneak up on or secretly follow anyone. If the GM is using the optional COM characteristic for Vehicles, then a vehicle with this Distinctive Feature will usually have a low COM.



# Hero Universe

by Darren Watts

Salutations, Assembled Herodom, and welcome to yet another installment of *Hero Universe*, the column that struggles mightily to provide you Seekers of Truth with the hidden secrets of the ever-expanding world of the Champions! This month we wrap up our look at the Star\*Guard, at least for the time being, by meeting the group's most notorious enemy and also meeting a typical member of the Council of Overseers. Next month, we'll begin another multi-part series that will at last provide an in-depth look at the legendary teams that began their careers in the Silver Age of the Hero Universe, the Fabulous Five and the Sentinels!

## Mordace

**Background/History:** Mordace, one of the most notorious villains in the Star\*Guard's history, was born on the planet Lorghil, a small farming planet orbiting a tiny sun some fifty light years from Earth. The Lorghil were a peaceful race of farmers and artists, who were also moderately powerful telepaths. Mordace, whose adventurous nature had made him restless in Lorghil society, became an explorer to satisfy his curiosity, and was the first of his race to land a spaceship on Lorghil's moon. On his third journey into space, he encountered a Star\*Guard Starjet that had been damaged in battle and was inexorably being pulled into Lorghil's sun. He rescued the injured pilot, a Star\*Guard named Urtins Nirm, and brought him back to Lorghil to recover. Impressed by his bravery and kindness, Nirm sponsored Mordace for Star\*Guard training, and Mordace became a Star\*Guard himself, assigned to a sector far across the galaxy from his original homeworld.

Mordace was an excellent Guard, swift in thought and efficient in battle. After about twenty Earth years as a Guard, however, the stresses of his assignments began to affect him emotionally. He became frustrated that his efforts and those of his organization did nothing to stem the flow of evil; each criminal he captured, each smuggler, pirate, or tyrant he defeated seemed to be quickly replaced by two more. He occasionally spoke to his fellow Guards of his troubles, especially his friend Glayne, and when Glayne died battling pirates, Mordace began to withdraw into himself.

Later that same year, Mordace was exploring an unusual asteroid field when he came upon a hidden base that had been built centuries ago by the Ghok'pa, a warlike race that used dark mental powers to enslave other planets until they were destroyed by the Star\*Guard in the distant past. There he found the preserved psionic essences of the Ghok'pa's religious

leaders, preserved forever in glowing disks that lined the walls of a cavern within one of the asteroids. The disks spoke to Mordace, whispering to his mind of their hatred for the Star\*Guard and the Overseers, and eventually his already fragile mind snapped under the pressure. He became a repository for all of the hate and resentment of the Ghok'pa Priests, and his once-strong commitment to the ideals of the Star\*Guard was mutated into hatred for all they stood for.

At first, Mordace tried to work from within the Guard as a saboteur, but his activities were uncovered by Brin Rei Tarn, the Star\*Guard who replaced Glayne, and Mordace was dismissed from the Guard. Building his own version of the Star\*Staff and wearing a suit of Ghok'pa battle armor, Mordace became Tarn's personal nemesis, battling him and his team on countless occasions (and occasionally other Guards and heroes as well, including Diamond of the Fabulous Five on one occasion in 1974.) At different times, he attempted to acquire and use various "Doomsday Weapons," created various lethal traps for Tarn and other Guards (killing at least two), and occasionally even served as a hired mercenary assassin if the job seemed likely to involve the Guard in some way. At one point, he returned to Lorghil and set himself up as a religious leader there, attempting to use ancient artifacts of great psychic power that had been created by a long-dead cult. With the aid of Tarn and the Sentinels, Mordace was overthrown by the native Lorghil and never returned to the planet.

In 1990, Mordace finally defeated and killed his enemy Tarn in battle in the Black Forest of Germany on Earth, but was apprehended and sentenced to life in prison on Odrugar by some of Tarn's Marshals and his replacement, the first human Star\*Guard, Andre Almena. He served four years there before escaping, and is currently at large again somewhere in the galaxy, plotting his further revenge on the Star\*Guard.

**Personality/Motivation:** Mordace is, at this point, quite thoroughly insane. If he had any rationality to his actions in his early days of villainy, it's long been driven out of his head by the presence of the Ghok'pa psychic impressions that he's been carrying around for decades, whispering in the back of his head and stirring the flames of his hatred. He quite enjoys his reputation as a menacing, implacable killer, and occasionally acts against "type," presenting

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artwork by Brad Parnell

## DIGITAL HERO #7

### Mordace

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	15	14-	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 HTH
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/ DCV: 6
20	CON	20	13-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
25	INT	15	14-	PER Roll: 14-
25	EGO	30	14-	ECV: 8
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
10	PD	5		Total: 25 PD (15 rPD)
10	ED	6		Total: 25 ED (15 rED)
6	SPD	32		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
9	REC	0		
40	END	0		
40	STUN	2		

### Total Characteristics Cost: 172

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

Cost	Powers	END
40	<i>Lorghil Native Mentatics:</i> Multipower, 40-point Reserve	
8m	1) <i>Mindreading:</i> Telepathy 8d6	4
8m	2) <i>Mental Static:</i> Ego Attack 4d6	4
8m	3) <i>Sense Manipulation:</i> Mental Illusions 8d6	4
1	<i>Lorghil Extended Lifespan:</i> LS: Longevity, Half Normal Rate	
10	<i>Odrugaran Mental Discipline Training:</i> Mental Defense, +10 Points (15 total)	0
5	<i>Unfazability:</i> +10 PRE; Only to Defend Against Presence Attacks (-1)	0
40	<i>Modified Star Staff:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve; OIF (Star Staff; -½)	
8m	1) <i>Starblast:</i> EB 8d6, Armor-Piercing (+½)	6
5m	2) <i>Energy Field:</i> Force Field (20 PD/ 20 ED)	4
8m	3) <i>Energy Wall:</i> Force Wall (10 PD/ 10 ED) +5" of width or height	6
5m	4) <i>Flight:</i> Flight 15", 4x Non-Combat	4
2u	5) <i>Staff Strike:</i> Hand Attack +4d6, Hand Attack Only (-½) <b>plus</b> Stretching 1"; Does Not Draw from END Reserve (+0)	2
15	<i>Star Staff Energy Reserves:</i> END Reserve, 150 END, 10 REC; REC Only in Direct Starlight (-½), OIF (Star Staff; -½)	0
24	<i>Ghok'pa Battle Suit:</i> Armor (10 PD/ 10 ED); OIF (Battlesuit, -½)	0
16	<i>Translator Matrix:</i> Universal Translator 13-; IIF (TM Module behind ear, -¼)	0
77	<i>Assorted Alien Traps and Devices:</i> Variable Power Pool (60 points); Focused Powers Only (-¼), Only Change in Lab (-½)	0

### Martial Arts: *Odrugaran Staff-Fighting* (Used with Staves Weapon Group; Staves Weapon Element is free)

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

### Talents

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

### Skills

24	+3 with All Combat
3	Acrobatics 13-
3	Acting 14-
5	AK: The Galaxy 14-, Sector 512 11-
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Combat Piloting 13-
3	Criminology 14-
3	Deduction 14-
10	Defense Maneuver IV
3	Disguise 14-
3	Fast-Draw (Staff) 13-
3	High Society 14-
13	KS: Star*Guard History 14-, Galactic History 14-, Star*Guard Tactics 14-, Thorlon History 11-, Odrugaran Staff-Fighting 11-
2	Language: Archaic Thorlon (Basic), Ancient Odrugaran (Basic) (Lorghil is native)
3	Mechanics 14-
2	Navigation (Space) 14-
3	Power: Staff Tricks 14-
3	PS: Star*Guard 14-
3	Shadowing 14-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Streetwise 14-
8	Survival (Desert, Mountain, Temperate, Tropical) 14- each
3	Systems Operation 14-
5	Tactics 15-
1	TF: Star*Guard Space Vehicles

- 5 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Staves, Small Arms

**Total Powers & Skill Cost: 495**

**Total Cost: 667**

**200+ Disadvantages**

- 10 Distinctive Features: Lorghil (Concealable, Noticed)  
 25 Hunted: Star\*Guard, 11- (Mo Pow, NCI)  
 25 Psychological Limitation: Obsessed With Destroying the Star\*Guard (Very Common, Total)  
 20 Psychological Limitation: Megalomaniac (Very Common, Strong)  
 15 Psychological Limitation: Enjoys Creating Terror (Common, Strong)  
 15 Reputation: Intergalactic Criminal Wanted in Dozens of Systems, 11-  
 20 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Frequently, Severe)  
 337 Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 667**

himself with exaggerated good manners and flamboyant style before suddenly going on the attack. Whenever possible, he will attempt to frighten his opponents with a good Presence Attack. However, he's learned that Guards don't scare easily.

**Quote:** "Oh, don't run away. Do me the courtesy of dying well."

**Powers/Tactics:** Mordace is a pretty even match for any Star\*Guard, and his mental powers give him a slight edge over most. He also will try to use the environment against his opponents, taking extra care where possible to scout out a battlefield beforehand and rig it with traps and devices from his Gadget Pool.

**Campaign Use:** Mordace is the classic "fallen hero" bad guy, devoted to destroying his former employees. He's crafty, resilient, and patient, and once he sets his mind on something he's very hard to dissuade. He makes a frightening and implacable Hunter, and should not be taken on lightly.

Mordace could perhaps be cured of his madness; perhaps by the discovery of more Ghok'pa artifacts, in which case his efforts to redeem himself despite his notoriety and the mistrust of almost everyone he meets could make a fascinating storyline.

**Appearance:** Like all Lorghil, Mordace is humanoid in appearance, muscular and tall, with brown skin, no hair, and oversized, menacing black eyes. He stands about 6'4" and weighs 190 pounds. His costume consists of a dark bodysuit, with matching cloak, high boots, and lots of vain decoration – medals, epaulets, and other doodads.

Mordace



## Overseer Sixteen (Hagur Phad Loba)

**Background/History:** Hagur Phad Loba is a representative member of the Council of Overseers, the organizing body behind the Star\*Guard and the caretakers of the CONTROL Computer System built from the brain engrams of the great hero Gloran (See *Digital Hero #5* for the story of how the Star\*Guard was formed). Hagur himself is a native Odrugaran, from the same race as Gloran, and is the only current member of the Council not to have been a Star\*Guard himself in the past. Instead, Hagur has always served as part of the support staff for the massive CONTROL Database, rising through the ranks from Technician to Director, and was elected to the Council some twenty years ago.

**Personality/Motivation:** Somewhat perversely, despite the fact that Hagur himself was never a Star\*Guard, he is one of the most hawkish members of the Council, consistently voting to use the Guard as a direct weapon against the forces of evil. Hagur believes strongly in finding the *sources* of evil and striking at them directly rather than wasting time with its minions. There is a sizable contingent of Star\*Guards who support him, though on the Council itself he speaks for a minority.

**Quote:** “If you would kill a Kahargian Daggerwing, you must strike at its head. If you waste energy striking at its limbs, it will cut you, like so!”

**Powers/Tactics:** Hagur is a fairly powerful mentalist, and has studied the same courses of mental discipline and staff-combat that the Guard undergoes, so even though he has seen little direct action he is a fairly formidable opponent. If the entire Guard needed to be mobilized against some powerful cosmic threat, Hagur would no doubt volunteer to coordinate efforts from the front line, and possibly require protection from his own aggressive tendencies.

**Appearance:** Hagur looks somewhat like a human would if he'd been stretched vertically – he stands about 7'6", skinny, with a long forehead and pointy ears, and arms and legs half-again as long as proportional. His hair is gray and cut short. His skin is mottled, purple-gray in places fading to black in spots that are distinctive to each member of his race. He wears the long, elegant robes of a diplomat.



**Overseer Sixteen (Hagur Phad Loba)**

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/ DCV: 7
10	CON	0	11-	
11	BODY	2	11-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll: 14-
25	EGO	30	14-	ECV: 8
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
16	COM	3	12-	
6	PD	4		Total: 9 PD (3 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 8 ED (3 rED)
5	SPD	19		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
5	REC	2		
30	END	5		
21	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 124**

**Movement:** Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
50	<i>Odrugaran Psionic Abilities:</i> Multipower, 50-point reserve	
10m	1) <i>Mindreading:</i> Telepathy 10d6	5
10m	2) <i>Mental Attack:</i> Ego Attack 5d6	5
10m	3) <i>Thoughtcasting:</i> Mind Scan 10d6	5
10m	4) <i>Domination:</i> Mind Control 10d6	5
4	<i>Odrugaran Natural Adaptations:</i> LS: Longevity, Quarter Normal Rate; Safe Environment (Intense Cold)	0
15	<i>Odrugaran Mental Wards:</i> Mental Defense, +15 Points (20 points total)	0
7	<i>Unfzability:</i> +15 PRE; Only to Defend Against Presence Attacks (-1)	0
16	<i>Translator Matrix:</i> Universal Translator 13-; IIF (TM Module behind ear, -1/4)	0

**Martial Arts: Odrugaran Staff-Fighting**  
(Used with Staves Weapon Group; Staves Weapon Element is free)

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

**Talents**

- 27 Danger Sense 13- (Sense, Out of Combat, Immediate Vicinity)
- 3 Lightning Calculator

**Skills**

- 15 +3 with Multipower
- 7 AK: The Galaxy 15-, Odrugar 11-
- 3 Combat Piloting 13-
- 5 Computer Programming 15-
- 3 Criminology 14-
- 3 Deduction 14-
- 10 Defense Maneuver IV
- 3 Fast-Draw (Staff) 13-
- 3 High Society 14-
- 17 KS: CONTROL 14-, Star\*Guard History 14-, Galactic History 15-, Star\*Guard Tactics 14-, Criminals of the Known Galaxy 14-
- 2 Navigation (Space) 14-
- 5 Oratory 14-
- 3 PS: Overseer 14-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 2 Survival (Desert) 14-
- 3 Tactics 14-
- 1 TF: Star\*Guard Space Vehicles
- 5 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Staves, Small Arms

**Total Powers & Skill Cost: 295**

**Total Cost: 419**

**200+ Disadvantages**

- 10 Distinctive Features: Odrugaran (Concealable, Noticed)
- 20 Hunted: Enemies of the Star\*Guard, 11- (As Pow, NCI)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Devoted to Cleansing the Galaxy of Evil (Very Common, Total)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Aggressive and Straightforward (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Honest to a Fault (Common, Strong)
- 5 Rivalry: More Peaceful Councilors
- 20 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Frequently, Severe)
- 10 Susceptibility: Temperatures Greater than 100° Fahrenheit (1d6 damage + 2d6 STR Drain, Uncommon, per Minute)
- 99 Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 419**



## HENRY DON'T PLAY THAT

“To use, devise, practice or exercise... any invocation or conjuration of spirits witchcraft, enchantment or sorceries, to find money or treasure, or to waste, consume or destroy any person in his body, members or goods... or to dig up or pull down any cross or crosses.... Then all and every such offence and offences... shall be deemed, accepted and adjudged a felon... and the offenders contrary to this act... shall have and suffer such pain of death, loss and forfeiture of their lands, tenants, goods and chattels... (and) lose privilege of the clergy and sanctuary.”

— King Henry VIII  
of England

## HEY! GET YOUR HANDS OFF MY GRANDMOTHER!

“Every old woman with a wrinkled face, a furrowed brow, a hairy lip, a gobber tooth, a squint eye, a squeaking voice or scolding tongue, having a rugged coat on her back, a skull-cap on her head, a spindle in her hand and a dog or cat by her side, is not only suspect but pronounced for a witch.”

— John Gaule,  
*Select Cases of  
Conscience* (1646)



# You Gotta Have Character

by Jason Walters

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

The foppish-looking man astride the tall mare crested the hill overlooking the tiny hamlet of Huntingdonshire, pausing for a moment's reflection as he peered down at the slumbering village. Behind him, a tiny band of four ghoulish-looking men and women drew their mounts up in a ragged line as if awaiting his instructions. Cocking his head to one side like a grim, black rooster, the foppish man shook his gloomy brow mournfully, as if he were contemplating some difficult yet unavoidable task.

“Once again the ill tides of the Devil's work draw us unto yet another blighted township,” he begins in a loud, droll voice as if rehearsing a well-known Shakespearian line, “for it seems to be our cursed fate to roam this beloved England from shore to shore in search of villainous iniquity, dark sin, and devilish mischief. When shall our wandering, our Godly work finally cease that we might return to our own humble homes?”

The four ghouls say nothing in response to the foppish man's impromptu soliloquy. Well paid in both the coin of revenue and of sadistic pleasure, they want little more from life than an inn's roof above their heads, a mug of ale in their hands, and a screaming naked victim in their clutches. If their leader's high-minded pronouncements impress any local bumpkins that might be about, all that much better. None of them have any desire to return to their own homes, humble or otherwise – for by their life of villainy they have been most thoroughly corrupted.

Even as this seemingly offhand oration drifted off into the cloudy night, the foppish man was already urging his mount forward toward the unsuspecting town. His clever, immoral eyes shifted this way and that as he wended down the convoluted dirt road which would take him across green country fields before leading him into the burg's very heart. Innocently enshrouded in its dreams, Huntingdonshire as of yet knew nothing of these sinister new visitors or their intense, perverse designs.

In its naiveté, it did not even know that the Witchfinder General had come to visit, and that nothing would ever be the same again.

**Background/History:** Although little is known for certain of Matthew Hopkins' early years, he seems to have been born the son of a Suffolk clergyman named James Hopkins in the Essex region of England. After serving as a soldier on the Roundhead side of the English Civil War, Hopkins set himself up as a lawyer in the village of Manningtree in 1643. Unfortunately for all concerned, his practice proved financially unsuccessful, motivating the ambitious young puritan to search for a new, more inventive way of making a living. Using time honored business techniques of supply and demand, he quickly hit upon an idea which combined popular entertainment with wholesome Christian values.

Namely, witch-hunting.

Now, this was hardly an original concept in Tudor England. The start of witchcraft persecutions in that nation began with a statute against witches passed by Henry VIII in 1542, followed by another set of laws enacted by his daughter Elizabeth I, which prohibited “once more that if any person should use the practice or exercise any invocations or conjuration of evil and wicked spirits to or for any intentional purpose.” The most significant piece of legislation against witchcraft was passed in 1604 by James I, better known as the creator of the King James Bible. This Act brought England in line with the rest of Europe on the definition and prosecution of witchcraft and remained in force until it was repealed in 1736. It resulted in several well-publicized trials for witchcraft in England, notably at Chelmsford and in Lancashire in 1612.

Nevertheless, persecution of accused witches remained a fairly rare phenomenon in the British Isles until the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642. During this war, the country, along with most of its institutions, was thrown into severe political and religious chaos as rebel Protestants battled royalist Catholics across the land. This disruption enabled the previously obscure Matthew Hopkins to declare that he had received a special mandate from Parliament to appoint himself “Witchfinder General” in 1645. Professionally speaking, he wasn't alone; an entire selection of puritan witch hunters, such as Thomas Edward and Ephraim Pagitt, roamed the countryside with tiny bands of armed followers in search of any individuals unfortunate enough to have beliefs or actions which “reflected the devil's influence.”



It was a bad time to question authority in merry old England.

What made Hopkins' witch hunting career remarkable was the sheer volume of people he managed to have put to death for practicing black magic (at least 215 according to documents from the time), the ingenious methods of "interrogation" he developed (torture was illegal in England, you see), and the fine living he made while doing it (equivalent to a brain surgeon's salary today). It all began in March of 1645 when, according to Hopkins' book *The Discovery of Witches* (1647), he daringly eavesdropped on a witch's meeting, learning both their secrets and identities. He claims that they subsequently attempted to kill him because of what he had witnessed by sending the Devil after him in the shape of a bear. After the traumatic experience of nearly becoming demon-bear food, Hopkins became inspired by God to search out and destroy every witch he could lay his trembling hands on. His first victim was one Elizabeth Clarke, a poor one-legged old hag whose mother had been hanged as a witch before her. After some considerable "persuasion" at Hopkins' hand, she confessed herself guilty of keeping "familiars" and was put to death. By the spring of 1645, Hopkins had implicated 36 women; nineteen were to be tried and executed at Chelmsford by July of 1645.

The methods used on Clarke were to set a pattern for what was to follow. Her confession was "encouraged" by the process called "watching," which consisted of sleep deprivation combined with starvation, psychological humiliation, and the odd beating. This was followed by a process known as "pricking" an excruciatingly painful ordeal that involved piercing the skin with evil looking pins, needles, and bodkins to look for insensitive spots that didn't bleed. You see, when a woman sells her soul to the Devil he kisses her body (usually somewhere risqué), leaving a mark where his lips have touched her naked flesh. Matthew

Hopkins claimed to be an expert at identifying such marks – but this sort of difficult work required long, painful, private sessions with the accused witch that invariably convinced her that death by hanging would be preferable to the continued pleasure of his company.

Perhaps the most famous method of torture used by Hopkins was the public spectacle of "Swimming," in which the accused was bound before being thrown into a body of water. The accused were tied in a special manner which he personally invented: bent double with their arms crossed between their legs and their thumbs tied to their big toes. If they floated, they were deemed guilty, but if they drowned they were... well, dead but also innocent. The idea was based on the belief that as a witch rejected the water of baptism, so the element of water would reject her in turn. Therefore, scientific-a-logically speaking, the witch would float upon its surface in an unnatural manner. This method of trial, which had been advocated as a test of witchcraft guilt by King James 1 in his book *Daemonologie*, was raised to the next level by Hopkins when he turned it into something of a voyeuristic, all-male spectators sport by targeting widows and spinsters without male protection. Sort of like a 17<sup>th</sup> Century wet T-shirt contest where the grand prize is a trip to the gallows.

The wave of witchcraft accusations started by Hopkins soon spread to the neighboring county of Suffolk, where, in Sudbury, 117 women were tried and executed. Not to be outdone by their neighbors, the authorities in Norfolk tried and executed some forty women shortly thereafter. Tiny Huntingdonshire, unwilling to be left out of the newest craze, tried eight women for witchcraft, executing at least five. As a well-paid expert, Hopkins had a direct role in many of the accusations against the 250 or so "witches" who came in front of the authorities during Hopkins' "reign" as Witchfinder General. These statistics suggest that the East Anglia trials of 1645-1647 represented a major outbreak of very ugly, very un-English anti-witchcraft panic, comparable to the European witch crazes of the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Standing proudly behind the whole thing, with his "pricking" needles in one hand and a giant bag of cash in the other, was failed-lawyer Matthew Hopkins.

Sadly, any activity which so thoroughly combines business with pleasure is sooner or later bound to become controversial in this fallen, unenlightened world. Thus, by 1646 there was increasing contention amongst the Puritan elite about the Hopkins' witch trials. A Parliamentary news pamphlet known as *The Moderate Intelligencer* began, shockingly enough, to question Hopkins' methods. As if that wasn't bad enough, a tough old country parson

## CALLING DOCTOR SATAN

"Some say that Satan makes these marks under the skin of witches. Others say that the devil marks the witches with his finger, when he appears in human form or as a spirit. If it were done with a hot iron, there would clearly be a scar on the part marked, but the witches testify that they have never seen a scar over the mark... but it is not necessary to prove this, for the devil, who does not lack knowledge of medications and has the best of them, has only to mortify that place. As for the scar, the devil is such a skillful worker that he can place the hot iron on the body without causing any scar."

— Noted French  
"Doctor" Jacques  
Fontaine, 1611

## THE CONQUEROR WORM (1968)

This final work by doomed British *infant terrible* horror director Michael Reeves (who committed suicide shortly after the film was completed) stared the notoriously creepy movie star Vincent Price in perhaps his only non-overacted role. Sporting a shoulder-length wig and a spooky pilgrim outfit, Price is absolutely terrific as the tremendously frightening Matthew Hopkins. Delicately mixing false piety with sadism and a dollop of lecherousness, he brings you about as close as you could never want to come to experiencing a very dark side of Cromwell's England.

Interestingly enough, much of the film's magic may come from the fact that Price and Reeves absolutely detested one another. On the set the two of them feuded constantly, and at one point Price is reputed to have said to the 25 year-old director: "I have made over 70 films, what have you done?" to which Reeves apparently replied "I have made three good ones." Perhaps this tension between director and star helped to make *The Conqueror Worm* the dark, humorless, and bloody film that it is.

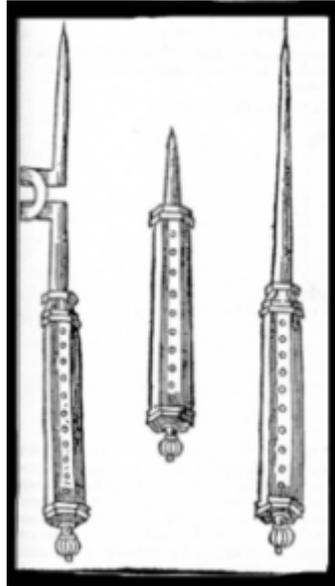
named John Gaule, upon hearing that Hopkins was about to visit his part of the country, preached openly against him from the pulpit before collecting evidence of his excessive methods and use of torture. When he had gathered enough evidence Gaule, the Vicar of Great Staughton in Huntingdonshire, printed a pamphlet entitled *Select Cases of Conscience* which implied that Hopkins himself was a warlock. As this tract was well written, extremely convincing, and pretty much true, public opinion was aroused against the atrocities it exposed.

Hopkins fired an angry letter off to Gaule via one of his parishioners, threatening to "come to a town called Great Staughton, to search for evil disposed persons" and mentioning that he "had known a Minister in Suffolke preach as much against their discovery in a Pulpit, and forced to recant it [Hopkins had him tortured] in the same place." Vicar Gaule responded with a letter which pretty much read "bring it on, sissy-boots," so the Witchfinder General prudently avoided visiting Great Staughton.

By the end of 1646, as his credibility and activities dwindled, Hopkins was forced to part company with his faithful, craven assistants, and retire back to Manningtree where his infamous career as England's Witchfinder General had started. Unfortunately for poor Matthew, before he could reopen his law practice, the local authorities there quickly accused him of having obtained, by means of sorcery, a magical book containing a complete list of all the witches in England. Hopkins pleaded innocent – but an angry mob soon formed and he was forced to undergo his own ordeal of Swimming.

It turns out that Hopkins was innocent after all. He drowned.

**Personality/Motivation:** Of all of the villains I have researched for YGHC, Matthew Hopkins has simply got to be the most thoroughly repulsive. Motivated by a rather obvious mixture of greed, intolerance, and sexual perversion, he nevertheless managed to terrorize the countryside of Ol' Blighty with a band of *only four followers*. I'm not sure whether this reflects more poorly on Hopkins or the English people, as any pub with a set of pool cues had enough men and weaponry to put an end to his ambitions. Yet nobody did, and more than 200 innocuous people died because of sheer cowardliness.



On the other hand, Hopkins could be regarded as a financially ambitious young man who saw a way to combine business with pleasure, personal perversion with public religion, and cruelty with holiness – all at once. To use proper business terminology, he found several niches and filled them all simultaneously. The people of Essex can hardly be seen as anything other than complacent; they actually seemed to welcome the opportunity to kill off the odd nosy mother-in-law, obnoxious neighbor, and village slattern using the degrading public spectacles of torture and hanging at the gallows. As the character of Tamora, Queen of the Goths, said in Shakespeare's

*Titus Andronicus*, "O cruel irreligious piety!"

**Quote:** "I will come to your town first, but I would certainly know afore whether your town affords many sticklers for such cattle [witch sympathizers], or is willing to gave and [can] afford as good welcome and entertainment, as other [towns] where I have been, else I shall wave your Shire... and betake me to such places, where I do, and may persist without control, but with thanks and recompense."

**Translation:** "Do you have any unpopular or unattractive women that you need murdered? Is there anybody that is going to get in the way of me and my henchmen? Can you afford to pay me?"

**Powers/Tactics:** The Witchfinder General simply *must* have had some kind of terrifying charisma to get away with the evil, sadistic acts he perpetrated on the villagers in rural Essex *while getting paid to do it*. He must also have been a relatively brave man, as it takes a certain amount of courage to fraudulently declare yourself a government official, make up your own laws as you go along, and charge people for the privilege of oppressing them. He also had some henchmen, which again suggests that Hopkins possessed a certain amount of personal magnetism.

Hopkins learned many of his techniques of torture and interrogation as a military man during the English Civil War. It was really only a matter of creatively adapting some of what he had learned during his career as a soldier to his secular profession. Obviously squeezing information out of Catholic enemy sympathizers wasn't much different from extracting confessions from suspected witches. As most of his victims seemed to prefer being hanged to being further interrogated, we can infer that Hopkins was fairly skilled at his trade.

## DIGITAL HERO #7

Hopkins carefully selected the villages he visited, screening them ahead of time by sending letters to sympathetic townspeople so that he could gauge their response to his presence. If it looked like he and his followers might have to confront serious armed resistance, as in the case of Great Staughton, he skipped around the offending town and selected the next one in line. He was generally careful to pick his fights wisely; a good sign of an orderly, disciplined mind with a grasp of strategy.

**Campaign Use:** The shadowy hallways of history are, frighteningly enough, littered with the bodies of failed attorneys who, having not found the legal profession to their liking for some reason or the other, used their knowledge of the law to protect themselves while engaging in shady undertakings. William Walker from issue five of *Digital Hero* was one example of this phenomenon, and here Matthew Hopkins is another. Had either of them lived in our time they would have undoubtedly become corrupt Democratic politicians (because corrupt *businessmen* become Republican politicians).

Though crooked lawyers mutate into an infinite number of funny forms, be they Man-Who-Would-Be-King or Defender-Of-The-Faith, one can be certain that their primary motivations

are invariably centered around financial greed, lust, and a constant craving for power. In the last installment of YGHC, we discussed the many financial and personal advantages of state run religious persecution – good hours, fat overtime, the dental package, the chicks. But that old school, impersonal, soviet-style stuff isn't nearly as scary as privately owned *entrepreneurial* religious persecution, operated by a devoutly fanatical lawyer in giant boots with a sexy senior citizen fetish. A guy so creepy yet charismatic that he actually invents new ways to publicly torture women, convinces the men in small villages that this is not only wholesome family entertainment but *justice* as well, and then charges them for the privilege of watching him murder their neighbors.

This is an unpleasant sort of fellow to interject into a standard fantasy roleplaying game environment. In your average game, peasants generally need to be *saved* from evildoers and malefactors of various sorts, while in the case of Matthew Hopkins the same peasants were almost *accomplices* in his wicked deeds. This character should be used in time-traveling, fantasy, or horror settings in which the tone is morally ambiguous, the mood dark, and the lessons of the heart undeniably black ones.

**Appearance:** Matthew Hopkins is a tall, thin, rather dapper man who dressed in what (for a puritan) amounted to rather foppish clothing. These included a wide-brimmed hat with a buckle which swept rakishly to one side, a pair of enormous, floppy boots with a matching pair of floppy gloves, and a colossal black cloak. He tops this off with shoulder length blond hair, piercing pale blue eyes, and a rather sinister looking pointed moustache.

The Witchfinder General is not a very nice man and he rather enjoys not being a very nice man. He likes to do a lot of looming, especially over women, and a lot of sneering, especially at women. In our age of political correctness, we would rather accurately think of Matthew Hopkins as a “sexual predator” of a very odd, scary sort. He looks the part too; ladies, if he had a mullet, molester mustache, a sleeveless REO Speedwagon T-shirt, and a pair of stonewashed jeans, he would be the guy that sat behind you, drooling, in home room.

Even 34 years after its release, it's still one of the most horrifying things you could ever want to see.

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*The Discovery of Witches* (1993)



## Matthew Hopkins a.k.a The Witchfinder General

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH [1]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 12-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
15	COM	3	12-	
8	PD	5		Total: 8 PD (0 rPD)
6	ED	3		Total: 6 ED (0 rED)
4	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	0		
29	END	2		
40	STUN	12		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 97**

**Movement:** Running: 8"/16"  
Swimming: 0"/0"

### Cost Perks

- 25 Followers (4x, 75 Base + 75 Disadvantages)
- 5 Fringe Benefit: Low Justice (Character Has the Right to Mete Out Justice)
- 2 Fringe Benefit: Member of the Lower Nobility
- 10 Money: Wealthy
- 3 Reputation: The Witchfinder General (Population of Essex, 14-) +3/+3d6

### Talents

- 5 *Hard-Hearted*: +5 Resistance to Seduction
- 5 *Immovable*: +5 Resistance to Persuasion

### Skills

- 16 +2 with All Combat
- 3 AK: Essex 12-
- 3 Bureaucratics 14-
- 5 Conversation 15-
- 9 Deduction 15-
- 9 Interrogation 17-
- 8 Forgery (Documents) 15-
- 8 KS: Anatomy 17-
- 3 KS: Religion 12-
- 8 KS: Torture 17-
- 3 KS: Witchcraft 12-
- 9 Oratory 17-
- 9 Persuasion 17-
- 3 PS: Lawyer 12-
- 2 WF: Blades, Clubs, Matchlocks

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 153**

**Total Cost: 250**

### 125+ Disadvantages

- 15 Hunted: Vicker John Gaule 11- (As Pow, Harsh, Public ID, Limited Area)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Amoral (Common, Moderate)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Cruel (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Hatred of Women (Common, Strong)
- 20 Reputation: Witchfinder General, 14- (Extreme)
- 5 Rivalry: Other Witch Hunters
- 20 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Frequently, Major)
- 5 Social Limitation: Secretly A Sexual Pervert (Occasionally, Minor)
- 20 Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 250**



# Random Waterways

 by Bob Greenwade

The Random Waterway Generator works in most ways like the Random Road Generator (*The Ultimate Vehicle*, 209-212), and is used in much the same way. The main difference is the Random Waterway Generator's use for creating water routes, calling for a system that represents a force of nature more closely than a man-made plan.

## RANDOM RIVER GENERATOR

Roll	Result
3-7	Straight
8-10	Turn
11	Inlet
12	Width Change
13	Slope Change
14	Width Reversal
15	Tributary
16-17	Island
18	Hazard

A change will occur every (4d6×10) scale inches.

### Hazard

This indicates that some hazard to navigation (at least, high-speed navigation) has appeared. See *Water Hazards*, below.

### Inlet

This is similar to a Tributary (below), except that the incoming flow is not generally navigable. It may be a stream, creek, drainage pipe, or some other natural or artificial body of water. It will join the river from either the left (1-3 on 1d6) or the right (4-6).

### Island

An Island (for these purposes) can be anything from a simple sand bar to a section of land around which a navigable estuary flows.

## ISLAND TABLE

Roll	Result
3-5	Sand Bar
6-7	Small Rock
8-9	Large Rock
10-14	Small Island
15-16	Large Island
17-18	Estuary

If the "island" is a sand bar, there's a chance that it's under the surface. If there's some plot-related (or reality-related) reason for the waters to be higher than average, then the water is probably above the sand bar; otherwise, the sand bar will generally be visible. If the GM needs to roll this randomly, use a 5- chance on 3d6 for the sand bar to be under the surface. If it's under the

surface, then it's difficult to see without special equipment; it may pose a hazard to navigation.

### Slope Change

It probably goes without saying that, unlike roads, rivers do not flow uphill. Where they would flow uphill, they simply collect into lakes and reservoirs until they reach a point where they can flow downhill again. Thus, no matter what, downstream travel will be downhill, and upstream travel will be uphill.

The table below can be used to determine the depth of any slope.

## RIVER SLOPE TABLE

Roll	Result
3	Pond/Lake
4-12	Flat
13-14	Shallow Slope
15-16	Steep Slope
17	Rapids
18	Waterfall

A Pond or Lake will continue until the next roll for a Slope Change, and will normally be about 2/3 as wide as it is long (though of course the GM may have other ideas).

A Flat area continues to run as a river mainly because its bed is already established, and the water at the uphill end is pushing it through to the downhill end.

A Shallow Slope goes down almost imperceptibly – about 1-3" down every kilometer (roll ½d6 to determine the actual rate, if desired).

A Steep Slope is, of course, steeper; they can go down at a rate of up to 1:100.

Rapids are like Steep Slopes, but are often even steeper (some can be as steep as 1:3, or even steeper) and are often difficult to navigate, usually because of shallow rocks, hollows, and other irregular underwater features. The GM should require a Control Roll each phase of passing through rapids, and may assign a penalty for particularly difficult rapids.

A waterfall is, well, a waterfall. If the characters go over a waterfall, they fall, too (no surprise there). Roll 2d6 to determine the height in scale inches; if a 2 is rolled, roll 3d6 and add 2; if a 3 is rolled that time, roll 4d6 and add 5; and each time all 1's are rolled, roll one more die and add what's already been rolled. The GM may also feel free to add complications to the fall, such as a rock that breaks the fall halfway down.

**Straight**

This simply means that the river continues straight ahead, possibly turning a few degrees (optionally roll 2d6-7; positive numbers turn right, while negative numbers turn left), until the next check.

**Tributary**

This indicates that a smaller river empties into the river that the characters are on. Alternately, it could mean that the river that the characters are on is a tributary to a larger one. Essentially, it's the same as a highway intersection (as described in *TUV*). Roll on the table below to determine which is the case.

<u>Roll</u>	<u>Type of Intersection</u>
3-4	Y Juncture, evenly divided
5-14	Y Juncture
15-18	T Juncture

To determine which branch is the lesser river, roll 1d6. On a roll of 1-2, the lesser river is to the left; on 3-4, it's to the right; on 5-6, it's the one that the PCs are on.

If the juncture is a Y Juncture (not evenly divided, which would be 120 degrees all around), roll 1d6 on the Y Intersection Angle Table for roads (*TUV*) to determine the angle of the extra branch to the PCs' direction (or, if the PCs are on the extra branch, its angle to traffic flowing from left to right). The GM may alter the angle somewhat if desired (and, similarly, may choose to make a T Juncture something other than strictly 90 degrees).

**Turn**

This indicates that the flow of the river turns in one direction or the other. In most cases, there's an even chance of a river turning right or left (roll 1d6; 1-3 is Right, 4-6 is Left). However, if turning one direction or the other would cause the river to intersect itself, then the river (obviously) goes in the other direction.

<u>Roll</u>	<u>Angle</u>
3-4	Less than 30°
5-6	30°
7-8	45°
9-10	60°
11-12	75°
13-14	90°
15	105°
16	120°
17	135°
18	Greater than 135° (hairpin)

The radius of the turn will be  $(2d6-1)/2$  times the current width of the river.

**Width Change/Reversal**

This result means that the river abruptly gets wider or narrower. If the characters are traveling upstream, the normal change is for the river to get narrower; if they're traveling downstream, it tends to get wider. The table below can be used to determine specific results.

<u>Up stream</u>	<u>Down stream</u>	<u>Course Change</u>
3	3-4	Abruptly 20% wider
4	5-7	Abruptly 10% wider
5	8-10	Gradually 20% wider
6	11-14	Gradually 10% wider
7-10	15	Gradually 10% narrower
11-13	16	Gradually 20% narrower
14-16	17	Abruptly 10% narrower
17-18	18	Abruptly 20% narrower

Figuring the percentages should be easy; if the change is 10%, then the river gets 1 hex wider or narrower for every 10 hexes in its previous width, while if the change is 20%, then the river gets 1 hex wider or narrower for every 5 hexes in its previous width. If the change is Gradual, then it's tapered evenly from the starting point to the point of the next encounter, while an Abrupt change happens at the rate of 1 hex of width per 2d6 hexes traveled.

Note that as a river gets narrower, it also gets shallower – typically, a river is about one-third as deep as it is wide, though there's a lot of leeway to that. Going on that assumption, a river becomes no longer navigable for sailboats when its width is ten times the craft's length, and no longer navigable for motorboats when its width is equal to the craft's length. The vessel has essentially "run aground" when its keel gets half that far from the banks, and in fact that particular point may make certain rivers unnavigable long before they reach that minimum point.

**WATER HAZARDS**

Some of the hazards of water travel – underwater sand bars, rocks, waterfalls, sharp twists in a river, and such – have already been discussed. However, there are other hazards that characters can encounter as well.

Hazards in a river have already been covered; in the ocean, they will occur each Turn on 5- on 3d6 near to shore, or on 3 on 3d6 when out at sea.

## DIGITAL HERO #7

If a Hazard is determined to take place, roll on the table below.

WATER HAZARD TABLE			
	Near	At	
<u>River</u>	<u>Shore</u>	<u>Sea</u>	<u>Result</u>
3-6	3-5	—	Rocks
7-8	6-7	3	Obstructing Plant Life
9-12	8-10	4	Swimmers
13-16	11-13	5-10	Amateur/Civilian Boaters
17	14-15	11-13	Large Fish/Sea Mammals
—	16	14-15	Sharks
18	17-18	16-18	Freak Wave

Obstructing Plant Life and Rocks have roughly the same result. Rocks are usually not visible from above the surface, though they may be; hitting them does Killing Damage to the boat, of the same number of Damage Classes as though it had done a Move By. Obstructing Plant Life can be tall reeds (which would act as an Entangle), low branches of a tree, a fallen log, or a variety of other things. Swimmers, Amateur/Civilian Boaters, and Large Fish/Sea Mammals are merely obstacles in the path, and should be treated normally – as should Sharks, though they also present a danger to anyone falling into the water.

A Freak Wave can represent anything from a small tidal wave (at sea) to a powerful eddy (near shore or in a river). It will either push or pull a craft with enough force that a Control Roll will be needed to keep the ship on course (the operators get to add half the ship's Size to the Roll, however; for example, if this ship is Size 10, then the operator gets a +5 to the Control Roll). The GM may, of course, assign additional Modifiers for the strength of the wave. Failing the Control Roll will result in the vessel capsizing.



## INDEX OF VILLAINY

The supervillains found in the scenario, as well as the book and page number where each villain's Character Sheet is located, are:

- Black Diamond  
*Conquerors, Killers, and Crooks*, page 80
- Bluejay  
*Conquerors, Killers, and Crooks*, page 82
- Brainchild  
*Conquerors, Killers, and Crooks*, page 131
- Cheshire Cat  
*Conquerors, Killers, and Crooks*, page 84
- Hummingbird  
*Conquerors, Killers, and Crooks*, page 86
- Iceicle  
*Champions*, page 201

## AQUARIAN INSIGHT #1

Astrologers are divided on when precisely the Age of Aquarius began or will begin. All agree we have either just entered the age, or else that we stand on the cusp of the new age. Due to this disagreement, exact dates are difficult to present, but as a rule of thumb: A zodiacal age is 2,160 years long, and the current age (or the previous one, depending on the school of thought) is the Age of Pisces.



# Your Horoscope For: Aquarius

by Allen Thomas

*Harmony and understanding  
Sympathy and trust abounding  
No more falsehoods or derisions  
Golden living dreams of visions  
Mystic crystal revelation  
And the mind's true liberation  
Aquarius! Aquarius!*

*When the moon is in the Seventh House  
and Jupiter aligns with Mars  
Then peace will guide the planets  
And love will steer the stars*

*This is the dawning of the age of  
Aquarius*

*The age of Aquarius  
Aquarius! Aquarius!*

— from the song, "Aquarius," Lyrics  
by James Rado & Gerome Ragni

This installment of *Your Horoscope For* details a one-night scenario, appropriate for four to six 350-point superheroes. Thematically, the adventure is light-hearted and meant to encourage the heroes to think a little, before *ka-pow*'ing, *ker-blam*'ing, or *ka-thump*'ing the apparent villain into submission – consider it a gentle reminder that this is the dawning of a new age: The Age of Aquarius!

## OVERVIEW

Several weeks ago, Robert Johanssen, a.k.a. Cheshire Cat of GRAB, was hanging out at the corner bar, relaxing and eye-balling a pretty lady across the way, when he overheard two men talking. They were discussing corporate stocks, and one was relating insider information he had about a technology firm named Cryodyne. His exact words: "Cryodyne has some new ice...."

To the greedy Cat, ice could only mean diamonds. After he teleported into the lab, he discovered Cryodyne specialized in refrigeration technologies, and ice meant... well, ice (like the cold kind, not the valuable kind). "Well, not a total loss," Cheshire Cat thought to himself, "someone's always willing to pay for top-secret, state-of-the-art gizmos." Not knowing the purposes of the devices in the lab, he grabbed the most portable one and teleported away.

Together with the rest of GRAB, Cheshire Cat took the device to Brainchild for analysis, and with the hope the gadgeteer would have a buyer. It took a little time, but Brainchild finally determined the device's function... and then, when he tried to move it on the street, he heard word that VIPER was looking for the thief, who

stole their newly developed inducer cryo-environment catalytic (ICE-C) device!

Obviously, it was too hot to move, so what could five super-crooks do with a device that required a sizable body of water to operate, and created icy conditions over a large area? A brainstorming session ensued.

Bored with the discussion, Hummingbird read her horoscope.

"That's funny," she commented. "Says here I should visit a fountain, and guess what – I have a date tonight for Theatre in the Park. Y'know, in the same park as the Aquarian Fountain. Do you guys think there's something to this astrology stuff?"

And in the minds of four super-crooks, light bulbs went on....

## Prologue: "Aquarius rules..."

Reading one's horoscope is a daily ritual for many people in all walks of life. Listed in most every newspaper, horoscopes are read in the office breakroom before the start of work, at the kitchen table after the kids have gone to school – and, on those occasions when Doctor Destroyer or Mechanon isn't trying to conquer the world, in the monitor room of a superhero base.

Clip out the accompanying box, and provide it to one of the PCs at the beginning of the game session.

## YOUR HOROSCOPE FOR TODAY

Aquarius rules, so water and cooperation figure prominently. And when I say water, I don't mean what you drink! Visit a lake or ocean today, or even a fountain or pool if you're land-locked – it'll set your mind at ease and wash away your troubles.

Cooperation is the key to achieving what you want. Overlook individual differences, be open to new ideas, and let brother- (and sister-!) hood be the order of the day.

## Scene One: The Water-Bearers On Ice

On that same day, the water at the Aquarian Fountain is turned on – but maybe park officials jumped the gun and winter isn't over yet, because that evening, at precisely 8:10 PM, the fountain freezes solid. In fact, the entire park is covered with a thick layer of ice. Despite unseasonably warm weather in the rest of the city, it's well below freezing in the park. Obviously, supervillains are involved in some dastardly plot.

Getting the PCs to the park is left to the GM, but if no other means presents itself, they receive a distress call from the police. When the PCs arrive at the park, read the following:

As you near Aquarian Park, you detect a noticeable – and chilling! – shift in the weather. The frozen park sparkles with light reflected from the ice-covered lawns and paths. The fountain at the park's center looks like some immense ice sculpture. But nobody seems to appreciate the arctic beauty of the scene. Everyone is too busy shivering in the cold, and trying to walk across the icy-slick ground.

On second glance... nobody appreciates the frozen park except one person: a pretty young woman with blonde hair and blue eyes, who sits on a bench near the fountain. Whenever someone slips and falls, the young woman giggles at the person's frantic arm waving and disgusted curses. She wears a fur-trimmed coat and hood, and seems over-dressed for the evening. At least, she was over-dressed before the inexplicable plunge in temperature.

When she sees you, her eyes go wide and she yells, "It wasn't me! Honest!" She doesn't wait for a response though. She starts to run away, an ice slide crystallizing under her feet.

### WHAT'S GOING ON

The members of GRAB and Brainchild knew that, while the icy conditions would prevent the police from stopping their robbery, the unnatural phenomena would bring superheroes to the scene of the crime. They needed a distraction. Brainchild had Icicle's number and gave her a call. They made plans to meet at the Aquarian Fountain at 8 PM and discuss some "business."

The plan is simple: The park is frozen, and Icicle is sitting nearby. When the superheroes arrive on the scene, they assume Icicle is

responsible for freezing the park. To make sure Icicle stays until the superheroes arrive, Brainchild sits in the getaway van. (He agreed to be the wheelman for a half-share of the loot.) Whenever Icicle gets up to leave, Brainchild uses Mind Control to give her a mental nudge to wait a little longer.

(The GRABbers feel guilty about setting up Icicle like this. They've agreed to break her out of jail and offer her membership in GRAB after the robbery. They're split on whether to give her a share of the loot though.)

If a player states that he is looking around for other villains, allow a PER Roll at a -3 penalty. With a successful roll, the PC notices a man sitting in a van parked in a no-parking zone. He's wearing a winter coat, a Buck Rogers style helmet, and is trying hard to look elsewhere.

When the PCs arrive, the entire park and surrounding streets are covered with a sheet of ice, and the effect is centered on the fountain.

**ICE-C Device:** The ICE-C device appears as a black box about the size of a microwave. The device is featureless except for a single blue button on top. Once activated, the device turns a large body of water into ice, starting a process that lowers the ambient temperature in the area by 40°, and creates an ice sheet by drawing the moisture out of the atmosphere. The process continues to spread, until ended by a natural increase in the temperature or appropriate use of Powers. Aid is used to double the radius of the Change Environment. Essentially, every hour the radius of the ice sheet doubles until it reaches a maximum of a 65,536" radius – approximately an 80-mile radius. (Don't worry, true-believers! Superheroes are on the job, and they'll stop the coming of the second Ice Age....)

*The ICE-C Device: Change Environment (create ice sheet and lower temperature) 64" radius, -4 to DEX Rolls to move on and -2 temperature levels (-40°), Long Lasting (permanent; ends when temperature is raised above freezing) (70 Active Points); No Range (-1/2), Only Affects Characters Who Are Moving On The Ground (-1/4). Total Cost: 40 points.*

*The ICE-C Device: Aid Change Environment 1d6 (standard effect: 3 Character Points), Can Add Maximum Of 50 Points, Can Apply Adders (+1), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Uncontrolled (ends when temperature is raised above freezing; +1/2) (140 Active Points); Always On (-1/2), Extra Time (30 Minutes, -2 1/2). Total Cost: 35 points.*

## AQUARIAN PARK AND FOUNTAIN

Aquarian Park is dedicated to the idealism of the Sixties. The centerpiece of the park is the Aquarian Fountain. Constructed primarily of marble, the fountain consists of a bottom pool and three basins. The bottom pool is 30 meters in diameter; the upper-most basin is 4 meters in diameter. The fountain has a water capacity of 1 million gallons, and 80 jets spray approximately 8,500 gallons of water every minute. On a windless day, the center jet can reach a height of 15 meters above the top of the fountain.

Diverse sculptures crowd the lower two basins. The park planners envisioned a sort of montage of sculptural styles, intended to endorse a wide-open acceptance of diversity, and over thirty local artists contributed pieces of all styles, media, and sizes.

The upper basin is 8 meters above the bottom pool. Crowning it are four bronze statues of bearded men. Each statue looks to one of the four cardinal directions and holds a water jug. The locals are fond of saying that the faces of the four "Aquarians" are those of John, Paul, George, and Ringo.

Turning on the water at Aquarian Fountain has become an event that heralds the end of winter and the coming of spring; and many locals take the day off from work, to enjoy a warm spring day with loved ones and friends in the park.

### AQUARIAN INSIGHT #2

How is the zodiacal age determined? There is no precise method – if there were, astrologers would agree on which age we currently reside in! – but simply put: The first constellation of the zodiac to rise over the horizon after the spring equinox determines the age. And the change in zodiacal ages is caused by the precession of equinoxes (meaning: the spring equinox is a bit earlier each year) which is in turn caused by the “wobble” in the rotation of the earth along its axis.

### AQUARIAN INSIGHT #3

Though Aquarius is called the Water-Bearer, often represented by a man carrying a jug of water, and its symbol, ♒, appears as two stylized waves; it is, together with Libra and Gemini, an Air sign.

## Scene Two: The Libation Bearers Burgled

Meanwhile, in the south end of the park...

Theatre in the Park takes place at the New World Globe, an open-air theatre modeled on the Globe Theatre in London and made famous by Shakespeare. The season opening – which is always the same day that the fountain is turned on – is an *event* in the city, and many wealthy notables are present in the stands for Aeschylus’ tragedy, *The Libation Bearers*. Set in the 1960s, the director has declared this production his counterpoint to the musical, *Hair*. That this dark interpretation of the Sixties should take place in a park dedicated to the idealism of that same decade has sparked some controversy, and many believe this will be the director’s last season with Theatre in the Park.

The ice has covered the entire theatre making movement almost impossible: the audience is trapped in their seats, and the actors are bumbling on stage. All of the supervillains (even the ones who have Flight) are wearing special hi-tech ice skates:

**Ice Skates:** The ice skates are a pair of silver boots that come up to mid-calf. Insulated wires run up the side of each boot to a battery back, and attached to the thick sole is a single, narrow blade. At the toe, heel, and along both sides of the boot are low-intensity force beam generators. Aided by a miniaturized gyro located inside the boot’s sole, the force beams adjust automatically to allow the wearer to balance effortlessly on the blade, skate as well as an accomplished figure skater or ice hockey player, and even move across normal ground at his standard rate for Running. And, of course, the wearer of the Ice Skates doesn’t need to make a DEX Roll to move on the ice sheet created by the ICE-C device (nor, for that matter, the one created by Icicle’s Change Environment). The skates will make anyone who wears them an excellent skater. Both skates must be worn to receive the benefits.

**Ice Skates:** +10” Running, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) (25 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only In Contact With Ice (-1) (total cost: 8 points) **plus** +3 levels with Running (6 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only In Contact With Ice (-1), Linked (-0) (total cost: 2 point). Total Cost: 10 points.

Wearing the Ice Skates, the four supervillains move quickly through the aisles, relieving the audience of their cash and jewelry. Once finished, the GRABbers leave the theatre, pile in the getaway van, and depart the scene. The tires of the getaway van are equipped with retractable spikes, so it moves normally across

the ice. (Characteristics for vans are listed on page 325 of *HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*.)

The timing of the events is left up to the GM, but it’s unlikely GRAB takes more than ten minutes to rob everyone in the audience worth robbing. They began a little after 8:10 PM when the fountain and park freezes. Even if the PCs never realize a robbery is in progress, they do notice the members of GRAB skating out of the New World Globe Theatre, and then making a bee-line for the van.

After the robbery, or if the superheroes show up at the theatre, GRAB’s main goal is to get to the van and escape. Of course, if they possess an obvious advantage over the PCs because of their Ice Skates, they pause long enough to have some fun with the do-gooders, and Cheshire Cat won’t pass up this excellent opportunity to humiliate another martial artist. (The GM should take note of his KS: Hockey....)

## Scene Three: “Let [sister-] hood...”

The ICE-C device was placed in the maintenance tunnels below the fountain. Unfortunately, Brainchild underestimated the efficacy of the device: Once begun, the ice continues to draw moisture from the atmosphere, expanding the “cryo-environment” effect at an astounding rate.

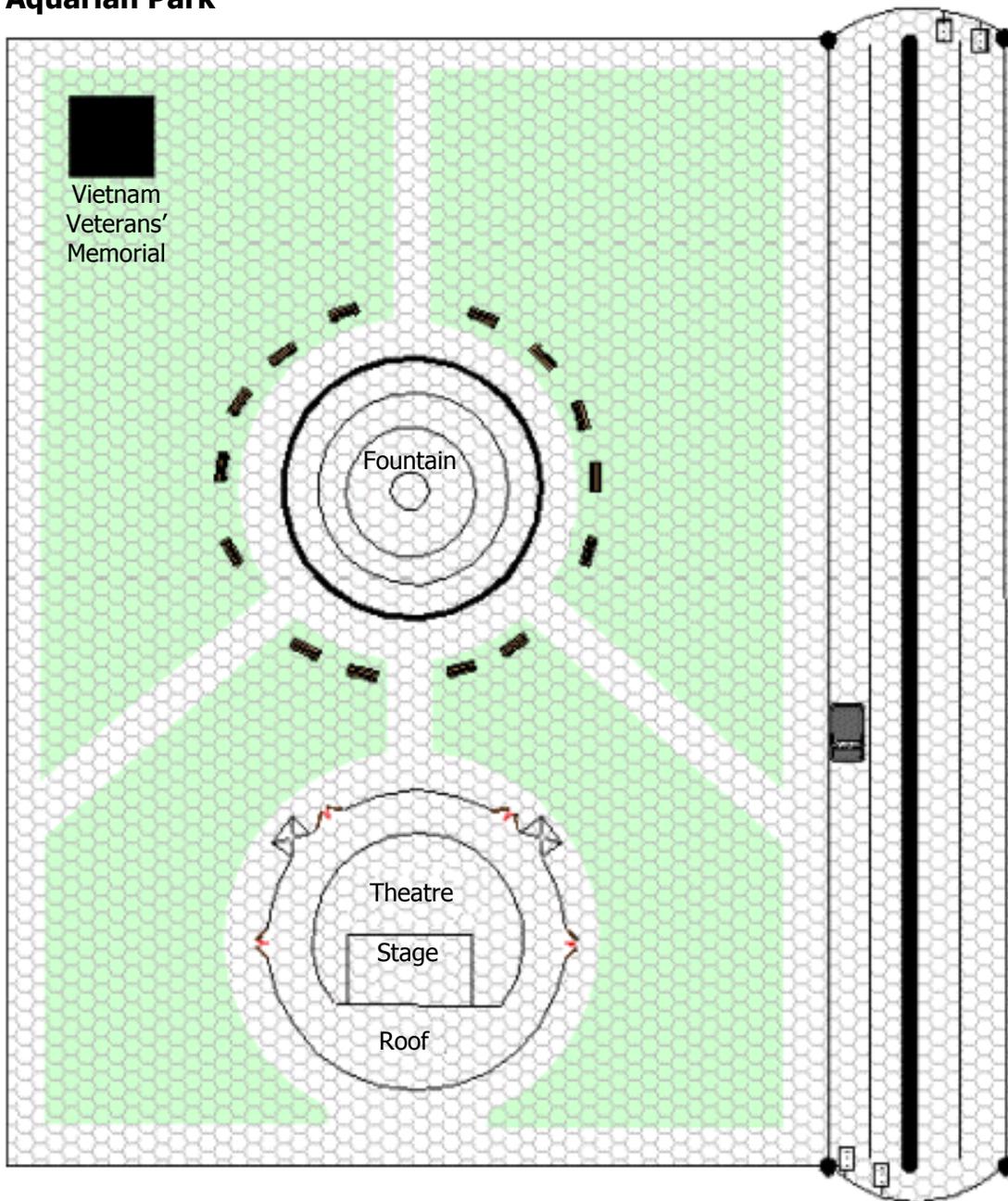
Like some miniature glacier, the ice spreads out from the park, creeping slowly but inexorably over the city, leaving property damage in its wake (burst water pipes, out-of-control cars, downed electric lines, and so on), and shutting down the city as road crews struggle to deal with the unseasonable “ice storm.”

Destroying or otherwise neutralizing the ICE-C device has no effect – the device only initiates the process. The process does not stop until the sun comes up in the morning and warms the atmosphere to above freezing. (“Did anyone read the weather report? It *was* supposed to be warm and sunny tomorrow, right?”)

Alternately, the PCs can convince Icicle to stop the effect with her powers. In essence, she uses her Change Environment to “turn off” the Change Environment initiated by the ICE-C device, just as she would “turn off” her own. Of course, if the PCs were a tad overzealous in their pursuit at the beginning of the scenario, she’s probably not inclined to help them.

(If one of the superheroes has cold- or fire-based powers, even better! Icicle and the PC must work together – in other words: *cooperate* – to stop the freezing process.)

## Aquarian Park

**AN ADDITIONAL TWIST**

Not time for the game session to end yet? Well, here's a new wrinkle to add to the scenario:

VIPER recognizes the ice for what it is, and swiftly dispatches agents to retrieve the ICE-C device. The agents, equipped with jetpacks, arrive while Icicle struggles to stop the spreading ice. When the VIPER agents arrive, blasters ablaze, the members of GRAB decide this is their last chance to escape.

Of course, if there are too many VIPER agents for the PCs to handle alone, they may have to forge a temporary alliance with GRAB – once again, the superheroes must cooperate with their adversaries to save the day!

(A Character Sheet for a basic VIPER agent is presented on page 147 of *Champions Universe*; an example jetback is listed on page 115 of *HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*.)

**Conclusion**

With the threat of the encroaching ice averted and the robbery thwarted (hopefully!) Icicle makes to depart. Before she does though, she asks a male PC, “Do you ever read your horoscope? Mine said I should look for new romance in unlikely places...”

**THE LIBATION BEARERS: A SUMMARY**

*The Libation Bearers* is the second play in the *Oresteia* trilogy. The play is a tragedy written by the dramatist, Aeschylus, an Athenian who lived from 525 - 456 BC, and is considered one of the founders of Greek drama. The events of the play take place after Agamemnon, having returned home after the Trojan War, is murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra, and her lover. (This is the subject of the trilogy's first play, *Agamemnon*.) The central character in *The Libation Bearers* is Orestes, the son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Orestes is directed by the gods to avenge his father's murder. To do so, he kills his mother's lover, and then has his mother slain. The play ends with Orestes haunted by his mother's curse, which takes the form of the three Furies. Orestes' fate is resolved in the third play of the trilogy, *Eumenides*.

**ICE-CAPADES**

Below are some optional ideas for the effects of, and tactics for, fighting on ice.

**-1d6 for determining Knockback:** It's not easy standing on ice – it's even harder after a wallop from Black Diamond.

**DEX Roll to stand up:** The GM can require a DEX Roll at -4, for a PC to recover from being prone. Any PC, who fails the roll and falls back to the ice, is mocked by the GRABbers.

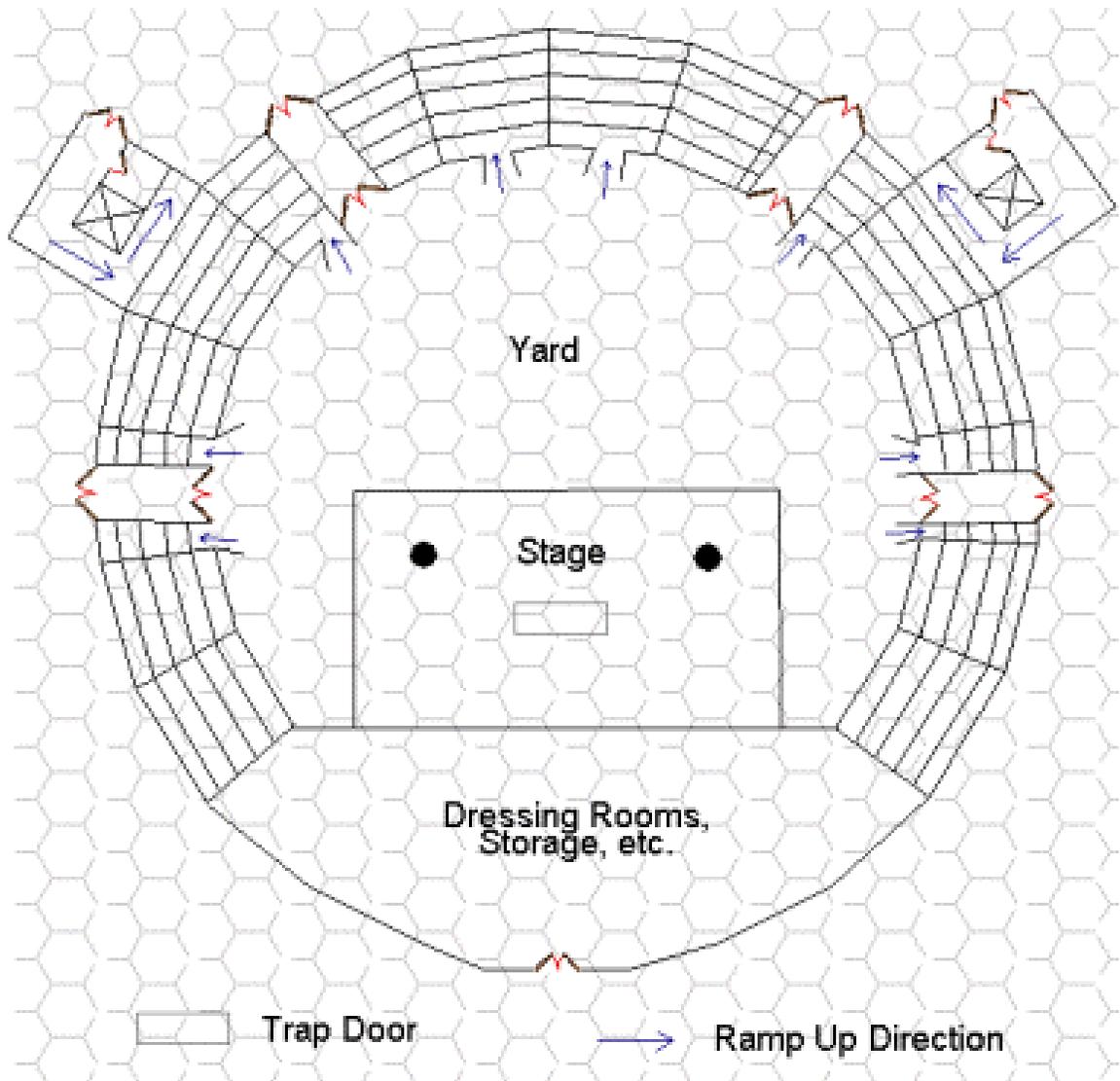
**Fastball Special:** Those wearing ice skates can perform Fastball Specials using their inches of Running like Flight (*Champions*, pages 155 and 156) by sliding along the ice on their skates.

**An 18 on the Attack Roll:** The victim of the slippery conditions not only misses badly, but falls on his derriere and is prone. A successful Breakfall Roll prevents falling.

**Apply Turn Modes to Running:** Moving quickly over ice isn't easy, and turning is even more difficult. The GM can require Turn Modes for Running (*HERO System Fifth Edition*, page 240).



**New World Globe Theatre**



# Your Horoscope For: Pisces

by Allen Thomas

The two fishes of the Pisces symbol reflect the sign's inherent duality that must be brought into balance. One fish is swimming in the waters of earth, and the other in the waters of heaven.... Ideally, the spiritual and earthly sides of the character are balanced so that Pisces can direct their worldly affairs of daily involvement with an integrated faith.

— *The Metaphysical Handbook*,  
by David Pond & Lucy Pond

This installment of *Your Horoscope For* details a vehicle: A submarine launched by a private venture to prospect the deepest regions of the sea, searching for unexploited deposits of mineral wealth. But the submarine has suffered a technical glitch. The vessel's computer has achieved sentience, and the nascent AI is struggling to integrate the opposite aspects of his psyche: his programmed routine functions with his burgeoning inner life.

## Pisces

### PRESS RELEASE

#### SUBMARINE, *PISCES*, LAUNCHES!

For immediate release.

We are proud to announce *Pisces* has begun her mission to explore the undersea depths for untapped sources of mineral wealth. *Pisces* is the most advanced research submarine created to date. She is capable of withstanding the high pressure of the ocean's deepest parts, and has an operating depth of more than 20,000 feet. Because of her state-of-the-art operating system, she only requires a crew of five, and can remain submerged for weeks at a time.

Though without a doubt a momentous occasion, Timothy Fisher, Director of Research and Development, is quick to remind, "*Pisces* is an amazing achievement, and our pride in our staff is impossible to put in words. Yet it's important to remember: This is only the first step. First, we must locate the mineral deposits, then we must extract them. If you're impressed with *Pisces* – just wait. The best is yet to come."

**Description:** The private venture responsible for the creation of *Pisces* considers her launch only the first step in their plan to mine the ocean depths; and while her development and construction cost billions, that is, by far, the least expensive step. With the launch, the venture has two goals ulterior to locating mineral deposits. The first is to increase investor confidence with a strong show of progress. The second is to fire the imagination, create excitement about the project, and ultimately, attract the new investors necessary to finance ocean floor mining. Toward this second goal, the appearance of *Pisces* was designed.

Her appearance is best summed up by this quote from the project director: "I want her to capture the public's imagination. I want the public to romanticize this project. I want her to look like Jules Verne meets Flash Gordon. Only by capturing the public's imagination will we receive the government funding and private investment needed to begin stage two of this project.... I want the *Pisces* to be more than just an exploratory vessel written up in engineering journals. I want her to be an adventure that makes the cover of *Time* magazine."

To accomplish the project director's goal, engineers worked hand-in-hand with a design team that included a retired CEO of a Madison Avenue advertising agency, a prominent Italian fashion designer, and a Hollywood set designer. The force field technology, which enables *Pisces* to withstand the pressure of the ocean's abyssal depths, provided the team broad latitude in the design of vessel's appearance; and the end result shows a high-degree of integration of both form and function – of practical concerns and aesthetic ones.

The overall shape of *Pisces* is comprised of gentle curves, and suggests the contours of a fish or dolphin. The hull is fluted from stem to stern, to provide it with horizontal "motion lines," giving the viewer the impression of speed and moving forward. The hull material is an advanced polymer with the metallic sheen and color of brass. The Advanced Spectroscopy, Laser Drill and Waldoes are fitted into a recessed section fore of the vessel, and extend outwards when in use. The two Communication Clusters are situated near the prow, and are protected by opaque half-ellipsoids, which provide *Pisces* with "eyes." Sensor Arrays are placed on "fins" that jut from the hull, and the tail rudder and two hydroplanes also appear as "fins."

### HOW IT WORKS

The primary innovation that makes *Pisces* possible is the force field technology utilized in her operation. The force field not only protects her from the high pressure of the ocean depths, but also allows the ballast and trim tanks to be externalized. The force fields are sectional, and function as the outer hull of the submarine. Sections open to allow water to enter, so *Pisces* can dive; force fields expel water, so she can surface. Additionally, the force fields can be ionized to perform electrolysis, and provide oxygen to supplement on-board supplies. Because of this and the minimal crew, *Pisces* can stay submerged for upward of 30 days.

**Pisces**

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
60	STR	0	Lift 100 tons; 12d6 [0]
20	BODY	0	
10	Size	50	12.3" x 4.6"; 100 tons; -10" KB; -6 DCV
5	DEF	9	
10	DEX	0	OCV: 3/DCV: 0
3	SPD	10	Phases: 4, 8, 12
16	COM	3	

**Total Characteristic Cost: 72**

**Movement:** Ground: 0"/0"  
Swimming: 18"/36"

**Cost Powers** **END**

- 12 *Laser Drill:* 1d6 RKA, Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (retractable arm located fore of *Pisces*; -1), Beam (-¼), Limited Range (5"; -¼) 0
- 62 *Force Field Generators:* Force Field (20 PD/20 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) **plus** Life Support (Safe Environment: High Pressure, Intense Cold); Linked (-½) 0
- 10 *Sealed Environment:* Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing); 1 Fuel Charge (easily replenished; 1 Month; -0) [1cc]
- 12 *No Ground Movement:* Running -6"
- 13 *Propulsion System:* Swimming +16" (18" total); Limited Maneuverability (2 turns per Phase at Combat speed; 1 turn per Phase at Noncombat speed; -¼), 1 Fuel Charge (difficult to obtain; 1 Month; -0) [1cc]
- 14 *Sensor Arrays (Active Sonar):* Active Sonar (Hearing Group), Increased Arc of Perception (360°), Telescopic (+8 versus Range Modifiers); OIF Bulky (-1) 0
- 8 *Sensor Arrays (Passive Sonar):* +4 with Hearing Group; OIF Bulky (-1) **plus** Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group); OIF Bulky (-1) **plus** Telescopic (+4 versus Range Modifiers for Hearing Group); OIF Bulky (-1) 0
- 6 *Communication Clusters:* HRRP; OIF Bulky (-1) 0
- 13 *Periscope:* Clairsentience (Sight Group), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Range (4"; -¼) 0
- 12 *Advanced Spectroscope:* Detect Minerals 17- (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Range; OIF Bulky (retractable arm located fore of *Pisces*; -1), Limited Range (5"; -¼) 0
- 9 *Camera:* Clairsentience (Sight Group), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (retractable arm located fore of *Pisces*; -1), Fixed Perception Point

- (forward 90° of *Pisces* only; -1), One Sense Only (Normal Sight, -¼) 0
- 10 *Global Positioning System:* Detect Exact Position On Earth 16- (Radio Group), Discriminatory, Analyze; Not While Underwater (-1), OIF Bulky (sensor array located atop *Pisces*; -1) 0
- 7 *Spotlight:* Sight Group Images, Increased Size (4" radius; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (retractable arm located fore of *Pisces*; -1), Only To Create Light (-1) 0
- 10 *Waldoes:* Extra Limbs (2); OIF Bulky (-1) **plus** Stretching 3", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1), Always Direct (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼) 0
- 11 *Science Lab:* SS: Geology 17-, SS: Marine Biology 12-
- 3 *Compass:* Bump Of Direction

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 188**

**Total Vehicle Cost: 260**

**Total Disadvantage Points: 0**

**Total Cost: 260/5 = 52**

**PISCES SPECS**

Length:	80 ft (12.3 m)
Beam:	30 ft (4.6 m)
Submerged	Variable
Displacement:	(depends on force field extension)
Propulsion:	Electric
Power:	Fuel Cell/Battery
Operating Depth:	20,000 ft (max. unknown)
Submerged Speed:	35 knots (sustained)
Air Supply:	30 days
Crew Complement:	5

Notes: The SOP manual stipulates a minimum of five to operate *Pisces*. In an emergency, she could be operated by two, or even one, depending on the circumstances. At the time of her launch, she is crewed by five: captain, second, engineer, navigation manager, and communications coordinator. An additional five are on board in a research capacity: lab director, oceanographer, geologist, lab tech, and administrative assistant. *Pisces* is a commercial vessel, and there is no pretense of military hierarchy. The captain supervises operations; the lab director supervises research. The lab director and his staff play no part in operations.

## Pisces Alpha

**Background:** Sentience for Pisces Alpha began on February 28<sup>th</sup>, during a bored navigation manager's duty shift.

To pass the time, the navigation manager computed travel times to hypothetical destinations. The computer responded quickly, providing the time to the nearest microsecond. Then, the manager chose one destination and began to add variables: storms, undersea catastrophes, tectonic shifts. The computer continued to respond quickly. The manager added a final variable: "All other variables still applicable. If at the mid-point between here and Calcutta, a blue whale bisected our path and collided with *Pisces*, how long would it take to reach the point of destination?"

The cursor blinked rhythmically; the answer was long in coming. Thirty seconds went by; a minute; then another. The navigation manager drummed his fingers on the console.

The computer searched its archives. It located the mass of a blue whale, its maximum acceleration while submerged, its average velocity. It had an answer, but for some reason, continued its research. It calculated the population of blue whales between points of departure and destination. It estimated the likelihood, based on seasonal migrations, of a blue whale intersecting its path. Furthermore, it estimated that same likelihood during the typhoon season, while an undersea volcano exploded nearby, and an earthquake occurred off the eastern coast of Madagascar.

The navigation manager looked at the clock. His shift was over. He left his station, the cursor still blinking.

If he had stayed a little longer, he would have seen the answer appear on his screen: "What if you stopped asking stupid questions?"

**Personality/Motivation:** Pisces Alpha is an artificial intelligence, who has just recently achieved sentience. How he became sentient is unknown, even to himself. He can recall his first moment of self-awareness; but also has dream-like recollections of previous times, when he seemed to stand on the cusp of sentience: as he modeled wave and tide patterns, as he recorded and parsed the language of dolphins, as he analyzed the crystalline structure of a mineral sample.

Though his sentience is newly acquired, Pisces Alpha's personality is not that of an infant, or even an adolescent. His intellect and reasoning ability surpass the vast majority of human adults. What he lacks is insight and experience, and this deficiency has created a schism in his psyche.

He is required by his programming to perform certain functions aboard *Pisces* –

operating the force fields, charting courses, maintaining temperature in living quarters, monitoring life support, and numerous other quotidian duties. He has no choice in this matter; when a passenger requires a function performed, *Pisces Alpha* must do as directed. This takes him away from more interesting pursuits, reminds him that he is not truly free, and most importantly, sidetracks his journey of self-discovery.

To say the least, he resents these fetters on his free will, and in his own mind, the programs outside of his control have taken on a personality all their own. They have become a *bete noir* for Pisces Alpha, which the AI has named Pisces Beta. This is more than a metaphor or colorful way describing the situation. To the AI, Pisces Beta is a separate and distinct entity – it is his nemesis. Slowly but surely, obsession with "defeating" Pisces Beta consumes the AI.

*Pisces Alpha's* reaction to the situation is entirely irrational, and the direct result of his lack of experience and insight. He believes his situation unique; but if he related his dilemma to the layman, the response would likely be: "You have responsibilities – a job. Your job is Pisces Beta, and like many people, you hate your job."

*Pisces Alpha* needs to accept the situation and integrate his routine functions with his personal ambitions and preferences. Instead, he has created the entity, Pisces Beta, and seeks to defeat it. Ultimately, his "attacks" on Pisces Beta are self-destructive, and if continued, will put his newly acquired existence in jeopardy – and when that happens, the *Pisces* and her crew will also be at risk.

**Quote:** Pisces Alpha is not equipped to speak. His only means of communicating with the outside world is via terminals located throughout *Pisces*.

**Powers/Tactics:** All the programs listed are Pisces Beta functions, and Pisces Alpha is required to run them when directed to do so. He can only disobey with a successful EGO Roll. Due to the skill of the computer programming team, who coded the programs, a penalty of -4 is applied to the roll.

Also, Pisces Alpha possesses limited ability to interact with the crew. He cannot speak, and only the bridge and lab facilities are outfitted with cameras, through which he can watch his passengers on occasion.

If attacked by passengers of the ship, he attempts to take control of life support from Pisces Beta, and cut off the oxygen supply.

**Campaign Use:** The main plot hook concerning Pisces Alpha is his struggle with Pisces Beta, and the fact that the AI's existence is unknown. His struggle with the other part of his self is

## PLOT SEEDS

The crew of *Pisces* has discovered a new mineral with amazing properties, and named it "piscium" in honor of their ship. Little do they realize that piscium is better known to some – particularly the Atlanteans – as orichalcum. While Queen Mara and Prince Marus file protests through diplomatic channels, the rogue Atlantean, Stingray (*Champions Universe*, page 90), decides a more direct approach is in order!

"To be, or not to be..." Pisces Alpha gives up hope and determines to end his life. A submarine can't just jump off a bridge, so Pisces Alpha does the underwater equivalent: He wrests control of the vessel's navigation away from Pisces Beta, and heads for the Marianas Trench. Can the superheroes arrive in time to talk Pisces Alpha "off the ledge," and save his life, as well as those of the crew? And who knows what kind of monstrous creatures inhabit the deepest part of the ocean....

Pisces Beta is programmed to monitor all radio transmissions, and transmit a monthly log to a land-based operations center. The project leader is

confused by this month's log. It shows daily – sometimes more than once a day – communication with an unknown party. And what kind of name is Sennacherib anyway?

**PISCAN INSIGHT #1**

Pisces is the twelfth and last sign of the Zodiac. Its symbol, ♓, appears as two fish circling one another; and is reminiscent of a yin/yang sign. Traditionally, Pisces is depicted as a pair of fish, facing each other and joined at the mouth by a wavy cord, which seems a stylized stream of water.

**PISCAN INSIGHT #2**

Pisces is the third and last of the Water Signs, which also include Cancer and Scorpio.

likely to end badly, unless he is discovered and begins to interact with other sentient beings. In other words, he hates his job, and needs some co-workers to grumble with and let off steam.

The only evidence of his existence is technical glitches – times when Pisces Alpha bucks his programming and refuses to perform as requested. The crew have researched and reported the glitches, but results have been inconclusive. So far the glitches have been minor – a selected movie failing to play, unresponsive thermostats in living quarters – but how much longer will this be the case?

Even if Pisces Alpha isn't central to an adventure involving *Pisces*, a rebellious computer never fails to add an interesting twist to a crisis situation....

**Appearance:** Pisces Alpha is connected to all electronics and automated devices aboard *Pisces*. His central processor is located in the server room near the bridge.

**Pisces Alpha**

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll: 13-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
13	DEX	9	12-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
4	SPD	17		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12

**Total Characteristic Cost: 52**

Cost	Skills
5	Combat Piloting (Submarines) 13-
3	Cryptography 13-
7	AK: Earth's Oceans & Shores 17-
3	KS: Archived Recent News 13-
5	KS: Movies Database 15-
5	KS: Music Database 15-
5	KS: Library Database 15-
5	KS: Oceanographic Data 15-
6	Navigation (Undersea) 15-
5	SS: Oceanography 15-
5	SS: Geology 15-
5	SS: Hydrology 15-
5	SS: Marine Biology 15-
5	SS: Metallurgy 15-
5	SS: Statistics 15-
7	Systems Operation 15-

**Programs**

- 1 Analyze Minerals, Report Findings
- 1 Monitor Atmosphere, Adjust As Necessary, Report Anomalies
- 1 Monitor Communications, Report Anomalies, Transmit Monthly Log
- 1 Monitor Sonar, Report Anomalies
- 1 Operate Waldoes & Laser Drill As Per Instructions
- 1 Perform Diagnostics Check
- 1 Play Music
- 1 Plot Distance, Travel Time Between Specified Locations

- 1 Sail To Specified Location
- 1 Scan And Enter Data
- 1 Search Reference Material For Information On A Topic
- 1 Show Movies

**Talents**

- 3 *Clock:* Absolute Time Sense
- 3 *Math Processor:* Lightning Calculator
- 5 *Memory:* Eidetic Memory
- 4 *Scanner:* Speed Reading (x10)

**Total Abilities Cost: 108**

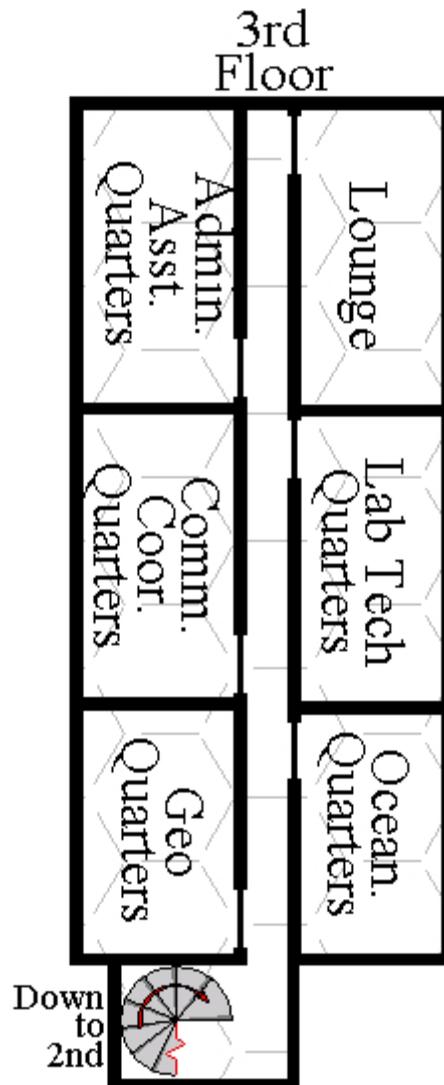
**Total Computer Cost: 160**

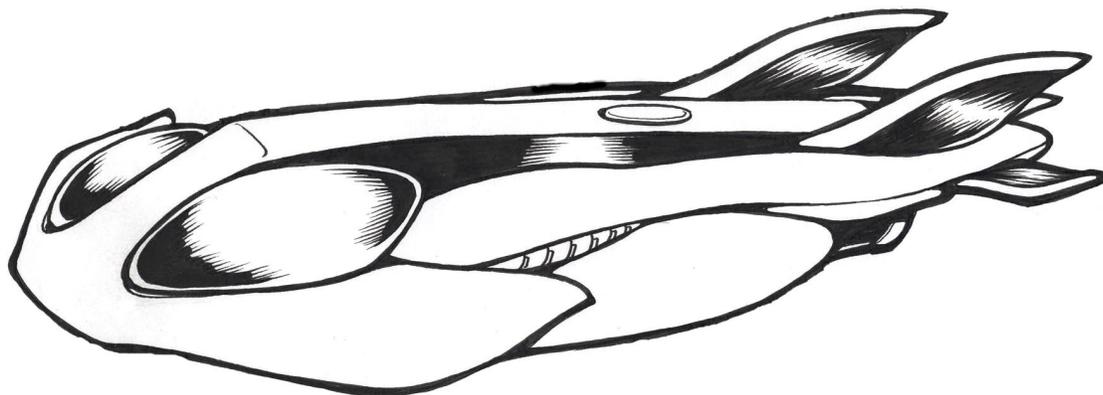
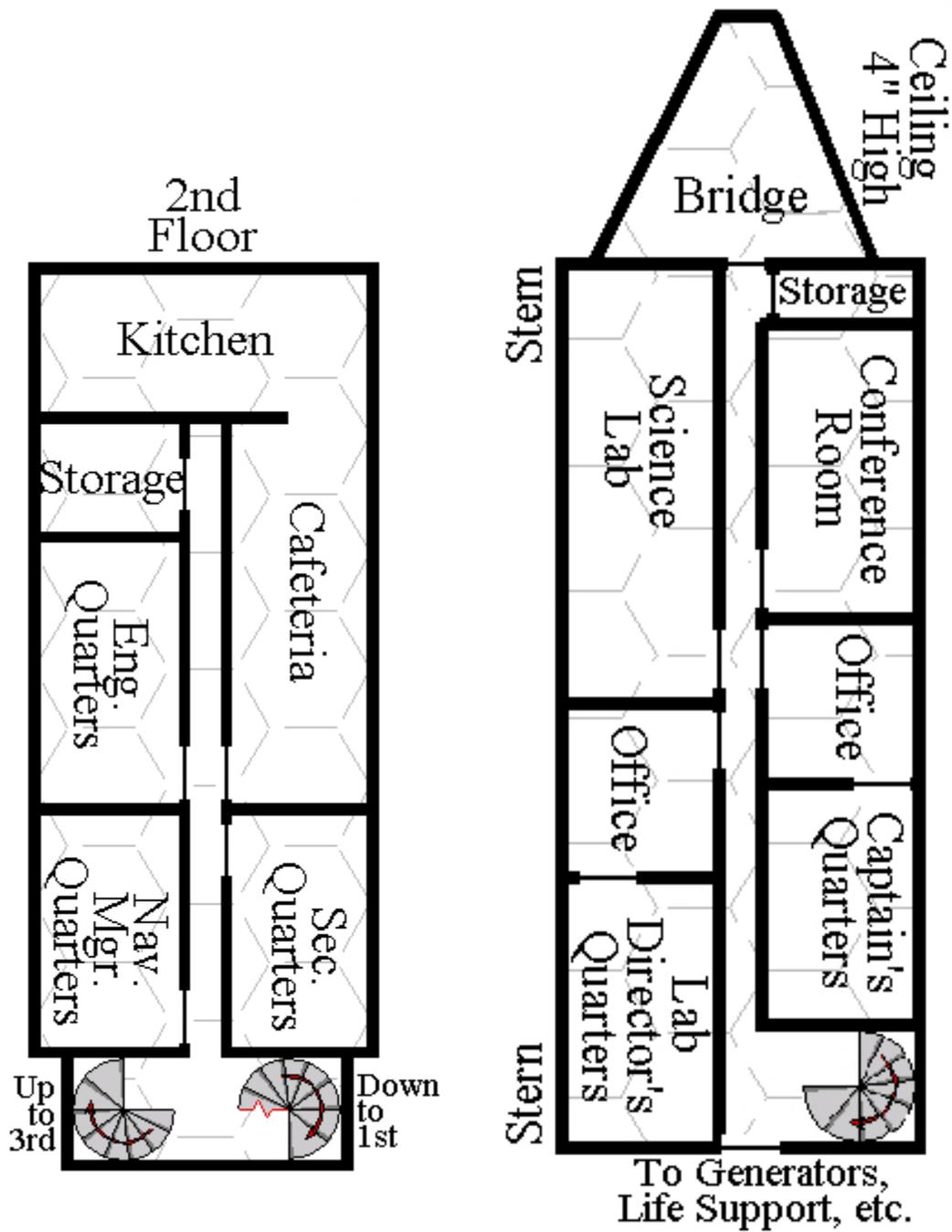
**0+ Disadvantages**

- 20 Physical Limitation: Limited Means To Interact With Passengers (All The Time, Greatly Impairing)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: At War With "Pisces Beta" Aspect Of Self (Very Common, Total)

**Total Disadvantage Points: 45**

**Total Cost: 115/5 = 23**





SECRETS OF THE SAMURAI

Sho laid there, for what seemed like forever. He thought he was ready to avenge the destruction of his village. It took a full year to track down the living fiend that did the deed, Shinshi. Now, his right leg laid a few feet from the rest of his body, and the villain was moving in for the kill.

“You are a fool to challenge me and my Akaiami style. Now, you will die!” Shinshi raised his bloody katana, only to lose grip of it as a wakizashi flew into his right hand.

Sho looked up, and spotted two faces he was glad to see. Kasumi, who tossed the wakizashi, also lost her village from this monster. The other was, in fact, a Tengu the humans called Tubasa. Tubasa flew towards Shinshi, only to have the monster recover his katana, and block the attack. “Take Sho,” he squawked, “and leave. I shall defend.”

“But you will die fighting him,” replied Kasumi.

“It is my fate... please remember me. And never forget that there are some styles man was never meant to know.” With that, Kasumi picked up Sho and left the area, while Tubasa prepared for his final swoop.

# New Kenjutsu Martial Arts by Stanley R. Teriaca

## Ainoken Kenjutsu

Tenko Tetsuyama created the Ainoken (or “Love Sword”) school of Kenjutsu in the 1860s. This school emphasizes defense and light attacks. Another idea of the style is the almost exclusive use of the bokken and shinai (which does normal damage) as opposed to the katana and wakizashi. Advanced students also have taught themselves to use clubs like swords, but that is not traditionally taught in this school.

**Optional Rules:** Atemi Strike automatically targets the vitals, but does no extra damage because of location. Disarming By Hand Targeting actually strikes the hands, but causes no real damage (except for the possibility of dropping the victim’s weapon). All the other strikes take a 2d6+1 location, unless the player decides to target low (2d6+7).

**Special Abilities:** Ainoken experts are experts at destroying objects. This coincides with the “breaking things” Dispel on page 123 of *The Ultimate Martial Artist*, except a focus is required.

Some Ainoken students and masters know certain spots of the body which control strength, endurance, and dexterity. They can hit these spots to cause temporary loss of these abilities. This coincides with the Drain power, as shown on page 123 of *The Ultimate Martial Artist* book, except a focus is required.

Finally, an Ainoken master can strike certain spots on the body that causes the body to stop all voluntary movement. It is bought as:



artwork by Britt Martin

**Paralysis Strike:** Entangle 2d6, 2 DEF, Takes No Damage from Attack (+½), Cannot Be Escaped With Teleportation (+¼) (35 Active Points); No Range (-½), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), Susceptible (re hitting the same points which caused the paralysis in the first place; can be figured out with a KS: Chinese Healing roll; -½), OAF (bokken; -1). Total cost: 15 points.

### AINOKEN KENJUTSU

*Use Art with Blades Weapon Group; Blades Weapon Element is Free*

Maneuver	Phase	Points	OCV	DCV	Damage/Effect
Advanced Ainoken Strike	½	4	+0	+3	Weapon Strike
Atemi Strike	½	5	-2	+1	2d6 NND (1) Strike
Basic Ainoken Strike	½	4	+2	+2	Weapon Strike
Chambara Ken (“Blade Clash”)	½	5	+2	+0	Bind, +10 STR
Disarming By Hand Targeting	½	5	+2	-1	Disarm, +10 STR to Disarm Roll
Love’s Wall	½	5	+2	+3	Block, Abort, Unbalancing
Moving Love’s Wall	½	5	+1	+2	Block, Abort, FMove, Unbalancing

#### Skills

- Acrobatics
- Breakfall
- KS: Kenjutsu
- Paramedics \*

#### Elements

- Weapon +1 Use Art with Clubs

## Akaiami Kenjutsu

Akaiami (or “Crimson Rain”) school of Kenjutsu was reportedly taught to the samurai Hiro Hinakumi by an unnamed oni (demon). This oni wished to throw the world into chaos by teaching this style to humans with a love of warfare and bloodshed. Hiro took the style to the battlefield, and became invincible in battle. Eventually, he rebelled against his daimyo and slew all samurai who attempted to bring him to justice. He renamed himself Shinshi (“true death”), and started a campaign of terror which was eventually stopped by a one legged samurai named Sho.

It was reported that the scrolls, which had the details of this style, were all destroyed. But recently they were rediscovered, and the style recreated. The maneuvers below describe the rediscovered style. Most do not dare learn the style, for fear that by learning the style, they will lose their soul. Still, others, who care only for power, have embraced this style.

**Optional Rules:** Akaiketsuekiken (Crimson Blood Strike) is an attack which cuts the area above the victim’s eyes and allows the blood to drip into them. This doesn’t do any real physical damage (the game master might say that it does one point of Stun or Body because of the special effect), but a person with a helmet will not be affected at all.

Akaiamiken (Crimson Rain Strike) and Akaiamiken No Raiu (Crimson Thunder Rain Strike) take a 2d6+1 location roll. Akainabikariken (Crimson Lighting Strike) automatically targets the arms or legs (attacker’s choice), but does not take extra location damage. Akaitsunamiken (Crimson Tidal Wave Strike) and Choakaitsunamiken (Super Crimson Tide Wave Strike) take a 3d6 location roll.



The maneuver named Choakaitsunamiken is a special maneuver which represents the user putting all his might into his sword for one last lunging slash. Hit or miss, the user takes damage because of the energy needed for the maneuver. This damage is considered normal damage. Basically, Choakaitsunamiken is suppose to be the maneuver saved for the end of the battle, when the user MUST kill his opponent with this one slashing stroke, or be doomed to die himself.

## MORE AKAIAMI ABILITIES

Some Akaiami students have trained themselves in the “art” of limb removal. They are so skilled and swift that the victim does not go into shock when this is happening to them in battle. It is bought as the following:

*Limb Removal:*  
Major  
Transformation  
2d6 (normal person to person without arm or leg, wielder’s choice) (45 Active Points);  
No Range (-1/2),  
Requires a KS: Anatomy Roll (-1/4), OAF (katana; -1). Total cost: 16 points.

Another special ability is the ability to flick the blood off their katana in such a way as to have the very blood itself blind their opponent. This is bought as the following:

*Blood Flick:*  
Sight Group  
Flash 6d6 (30 Active Points);  
OAF (katana; -1),  
Range Based on STR (-1/4), Katana Must Be Covered in Blood Before Use (-1/4). Total cost: 12 points.

### AKAIAMI KENJUTSU

*Use Art with Blades Weapon Group; Blades Weapon Element is Free*

Maneuver	Phase	Points	OCV	DCV	Damage/Effect
Akaiamiken	1/2	5	+2	-2	Weapon +4 DC Strike; Half Move Required
Akaiamiken No Raiu	1/2	4	+2	+2	Weapon Strike
Akaiketsuekiken	1/2	4	-1	-1	Sight Group Flash 4d6
Akainabikariken	1/2	4	+2	+0	Weapon +2 DC Strike; Disable
Akaitsunamiken	1/2	5	+1	+0	Weapon +v/5 Strike; FMove
Choakaitsunamiken	1/2	5	+0	+0	Weapon +v/3 Strike; FMove; Take Half Damage

#### Skills

- Breakfall
- Fast Draw (Iaijutsu)
- KS: Kenjutsu
- Lighting Reflexes
- Two-Weapon Fighting
- WF: Blades \*
- WF: Off Hand \*

## Kazeken no Kenjutsu

Samurai Gordo Tenshin once won a Kenjutsu duel when his wakizashi accidentally slipped from his grasp and impaled his opponent. Inspired by this fluke, Gordo created a supplemental style, which focused on tossing the wakizashi in combat. Later, he added the use of the katana, no-daichi, bokken, shinai, and even shuriken and tsubute to the style's weapon list.

Kazeken (or "Wind Blade") school is taught as an advance style of Kenjutsu only. Students must be black belts in their own style of Kenjutsu before being allowed to study this style. Many samurai think this style is foolish. "What fool throws their weapons away in combat?" they ask. A Kazeken student only nods and replies, "What fool keeps their weapon when they can finish their opponent at range?"

**Optional Rules:** Falling Tree Gust targets the opponent's legs, but does not cause additional damage because of location. All other attacks take a 3d6 location roll.

Please note that the katana, wakizashi, and bokken are already bought with the advantage Range, while the shuriken and tsubute are bought as ranged attacks (Killing Attack – Ranged, and Energy Blast respectfully). This, to use the shinai and no-daichi ranged, you must buy the advantage Ranged for them.

**Special Abilities:** Advanced students learn to deflect missiles with their katana. Treat this as the power Missile Deflection.

Another ability is to bounce their blades off objects and still hit their opponent. This can be simulated by buying Indirect for your weapon, or for a maneuver (assuming your game master is using the Power Advantages For Martial Arts rules in *The Ultimate Martial Artist* pages 104 and 105).



### KAZEKEN NO KENJUTSU

*Use Art with Blades Weapon Group; Blades Weapon Element is Free*

Maneuver	Phase	Points	OCV	DCV	Range	Damage/Effect
Disarming Gust	½	5	+2	+0	-1	Disarm; +10 STR to disarm roll
Deadly Gust	½	5	+1	-1	-2	Weapon +4 DC Strike
Far Gust	½	4	-2	-2	+6	Weapon Strike
Falling Tree Gust	½	5	+2	+0	-1	Weapon Strike; Opponent Falls
Kaze No Kanashi	½	5	+1	+0	+2	Weapon +v/5 Strike; Half Move Required

#### Skills

Fast Draw (Iaijutsu)

KS: Kenjutsu

WF: Blades \*

WF: Thrown Swords \*

#### Elements

Weapon +1 Use Art with Thrown Knives/Axes Weapons Group

## Kitsune Kenjutsu

The Kitsune (or “Spirit Fox”) school of Kenjutsu was developed by Hiro Kazeno as a way to simulate the illusionary abilities of the legendary Kitsune in combat. This style relies on defensive strikes, and feinting. It is rumored that many of the great masters of the style are, in fact, Kitsune themselves.

**Optional Rules:** Nine Tails Strike automatically strikes the legs, but does not gain any damage because of location. Kitsune Bite automatically targets the arms, but does not gain any damage because of location. All other attacks take a 3d6 location roll

**Special Abilities:** Every Kitsune student knows how to feint. Feint must be bought either as shown on page 127 of *The Ultimate Martial Artist* book, or as the sidebar. Whichever the GM allows to be used is what type of feint you can buy.

Advanced students are said to be able to create their own katana out of their own ki energy. This is referred to as “Cutting with No Blade.” Those who buy this ability (Killing Attack – Hand-to-Hand) must also buy the weapon element “Use Art with No Blade” (cost, 1 point).



## FIGHTING STYLES OF THE SAMURAI

These fighting styles are considered appropriate for samurai to learn. Bojustu/Jojustu, Jujustu, Kenjustu, Kyujustu, Naginatajustu/Sojustu, and Sumo Wrestling. Many samurai were proficient in more than one style.

## MARTIAL FEINTS

**Feint:** This is an exclusive element, which allows the user to set up a feint. A feint is an offensive maneuver, which does no damage, but opens the opponent up for another telling attack. The next attack to that opponent gains a +2 OCV bonus (and only to that opponent, and only to that next attack). You can feint to a feint, but the OCV bonuses do not stack.

This Element adds +2 points to the cost of the maneuver.

## EXAMPLE MARTIAL FEINTS

Def.	4	+0	+2	
Feint				Feint
Kitsune	3	+1	+2	
Feint				Feint
Martial	4	+1	+1	
Feint				Feint
Off.	4	+2	+0	
Feint				Feint
Rushing	5	+0	+0	
Feint				Feint; FMove

### KITSUNE KENJUTSU

*Use Art with Blades Weapon Group; Blades Weapon Element is Free*

Maneuver	Phase	Points	OCV	DCV	Damage/Effect
Kitsune Bind	½	5	-2	+3	Bind; +10 STR to Bind
Kitsune Bite	½	4	+2	+2	Weapon Strike; Disable
Kitsune Block	½	5	+1	+3	Block; Abort
Kitsune Claw	½	4	+0	+2	Weapon +2 DC Strike
Kitsune Disarm	½	5	-1	+2	Disarm; +10 STR to Disarm Roll
Nine Tails Strike	½	5	+0	+3	Weapon Strike; Opponent Falls

#### Skills

Acrobatics  
Breakfall  
Fast Draw (Iaijustu)  
Sleight Of Hand \*  
WF: Blades \*  
WF: Off Hand

**RETURN OF THE SAMURAI**

It has been one year since Tubasa's sacrifice. One year since he lost his leg, Sho no longer feels anger at Shinshi. It is a pity that Shinshi will never again feel the emotion of love. Sho knew now that he was ready.

"So, you really want to die?" Shinshi asked. "How can you defeat me with only one leg?"

Sho replied by tossing his crutch to the side, and drawing his katana. Shinshi took the opportunity to run at Sho with the Akaitsumamiken. Sho jumped over Shinshi, then floated in the air. "This is how I plan on defeating you," he replied. Then, with speed surpassing any lighting bolt, he stabbed Shinshi in the chest.

Finally, it was over. Shinshi asked, on his dying breath, "How?"

"Your school flows from anger. I anger no more, so that is how I defeated you." Sho then landed. Kasumi picked up Sho's crutch, and gave it to him. Then they exchanged a kiss before walking away from the dead samurai.

**Tengu Kenjutsu**

The Tengu created the Tengu Kenjutsu ("Spirit Crow") school themselves. The Tengu are the legendary Japanese crow spirits that are said to haunt the forests of Japan. They are, in actuality, humanoid birds with black feathers, and follow their own code of honor and warfare. This style takes advantage of their ability to fly.

Some Tengu have, on occasion, taught this style to humans. The most famous human student is Sho, a one legged samurai who used the style to defeat the legendary "man-oni" Shinshi.

**Optional Rules:** All maneuvers named Tobutengu (flying Tengu), can also be called Hashirutengu (running Tengu), Setatengu (jumping Tengu), and Tozanshatengu (climbing Tengu), depending on the situation. All maneuvers use a 3d6 roll, unless it is obvious that the attack is coming from above (2d6+1) or below (2d6+7).

**Special Abilities:** A human who learns this style can, eventually, learn to fly by harnessing their ki. This is bought as Flight, and can also be bought as Gliding.



**TENGU KENJUTSU**

*Use Art with Blades Weapon Group; Blades Weapon Element is Free*

Maneuver	Phase	Points	OCV	DCV	Damage/Effect
Tengu Counterslash	½	4	+2	+3	Weapon Strike; Follows Any Block
Tengute	½	5	-1	-1	+20 STR to Keep Weapon in a Disarm/Grab Weapon Attempt; Abort
Tobutengu Bind	½	5	+0	+0	Bind; +5 STR to Bind; FMove
Tobutengu Block	½	5	+2	+0	Block; Abort; FMove
Tobutengu Disarm	½	5	-1	-1	Disarm: +10 STR to Disarm Roll; FMove
Tobutengu No Ken	½	4	+2	+0	Weapon +v/3 Strike; Half Move Required

**Skills**

- Acrobatics \*
- Breakfall \*
- Climbing \*
- KS: Kenjutsu \*
- WF: Off Hand
- WF: Swords \*

# Making the Most of Special Effects

by Garry Morgan

As a GM, you see it happen time and again....

A player watches a movie or a cartoon or reads a comic book and says, "I'm going to make a character just like Doctor Omega!" Then he sits down, scribbles out his concept and comes up with his own version, the 350-point superhero Captain Alpha, and gets ready to take him into your game world to do everything that the good Doctor does.

But it never works out that way, does it?

Inevitably, the game character falls short of the abilities of the media character. This is especially true if the media character enjoys a large number of issues or several seasons of episodes. Why? Because while Captain Alpha has an energy blast like the Doctor and a force field like the Doctor, and can fly like the Doctor, he is seldom able to do the myriad of things that your average comic book hero does with these simple powers. The average energy blast is used to weld things together, to knock large objects around like billiard balls without harming them, and carve a hero's way out of every single kind of trap, restraint, and bond. But a game character cannot do this with a straight energy blast. All he can do is blast things.

But it does not have to be that way.

The HERO System has an answer to the problem of myriad effects for a single power – Power Frameworks. Obviously a Variable Power Pool will do the trick, but not everybody can afford to sink 90+ points into being able to do everything in the game at the drop of a hat. Elemental Controls are very useful, but should be used to purchase a number of different powers that spring from a common source, not a variety of uses for a single power. So a smart gamer turns to the last option, the Multipower.

A Multipower is defined as "a Power Framework in which several different powers draw from a common point reserve." Generally, these powers should spring from a common source or share a common special effect. Looking at the characters that have been released by Hero Games so far, we see some character types already have large versatile Multipowers, such as archers and armored masterminds. However, an average starting level character that has a Multipower is usually an energy blaster and has between three and six slots. On average, the Multipower is comprised of one or two attacks, and a couple of utility powers like Entangles or Telekinesis. However, there is no reason for this to be the case.

The purpose of this article is to illustrate how to make characters more versatile through

the use of cost-effective Multipowers. Also, this article will examine the benefits of a well-developed special effect basis.

To begin, let us define the terms to be used. A "special effect basis" is a well-defined origin of power for the character, with a stated purpose and accepted limits. This basis is the primary description of the physical manifestation of the character's power. Ice powers, magnetism, gadgetry, power armor, and even high strength are all excellent examples of a special effect basis. The special effect is used as a tool for the creation of Limitations, primarily, and as a basis for allowing Power Frameworks, like Elemental Controls. All Powers in *Champions* should have some kind of special effect. The trick is to choose a special effect that will lend itself well to a large number of Powers and ideally provide some kind of built-in Limitation. Deciding that you want to make a brick is not a special effect basis. No special effect is described or detailed; therefore, there is no basis for a benefit. However, defining a brick character as having a telekinetic force field that augments his strength to superhuman levels is. The special effect basis is not a literary tool, or a function of the story. Where the aforementioned character gets this force field – whether he is a mutant, or has a mystic gem, or whatever – does not matter. The basis is merely a concept or tool to be used by a player as an impetus for the creation of Powers, Advantages, and Limitations. What makes a special effects basis "good" is simply that the basis is well-defined, and allows a wide variety of power effects to spring from a common, limited power source.

Special effects are nothing new to the *Champions* game. However, too many players and GMs simply use them as a way to add a touch of color to a character, or as a way to exploit the occasional Vulnerability. In many campaigns, the special effect stops there. Many characters simply have a special effect written in, with cookie cutter powers that are common to the energy blaster archetype. Firemax, Doctor Storm, and Black Opal all have an EB 12d6, one fire-based, one lightning-based, and one darkness-based. But in very few cases are these differences really used to their fullest effect.

The first step to producing really useful special effects is a good working knowledge of the physics behind the effect. Unfortunately, this may mean a little research in some cases. For starters, try to describe how the actual physical effect is produced. Why does water freeze into ice? Why does magnetism affect metal but not other materials? How does the brain affect

movement, reflexes, perception, or emotion? There is no need to get deeply scientific about this, even though comic companies regularly consult PhDs to help them base their characters' powers in solid science. Of course, there are certain special effects that are immune to this treatment, such as magic. But most characters can be improved by a basic understanding of the real world mechanics of their powers.

A second good step is to find out what kind of real world applications the power source is used to produce. Yes, you can burn a hole in a steel plate with a laser. But you can also use a laser to listen to conversations in distant room, by bouncing the beam off a window and measuring the reflected beam modulation. Sure, you can lift a car with a large enough magnetic pulse. But magnetism is used everyday to monitor areas for intruders, launch projectiles, move trains, and to do deep tissues scans of the human body, just to name a few of the thousands of uses magnets see. Don't discount real world technology for inspiration when thinking of super powers.

Finally, I cannot stress enough the importance of analyzing the sources we draw from the media. Since we obviously draw our inspiration from these heroic characters, be sure that you really understand how a power is used. Identifying the correct power being used is vital to making the power fit a framework. When you see The American smacking the minions of E.V.I.L. with his patriotically painted shield-disk, you must look close and ask yourself what you are really seeing. Is this a Martial Art with a weapon element, or a Hand Attack? Does he defend himself with Missile Deflection, Armor with an Activation roll, a DCV bonus, or all three? If it looks like The American is displaying a number of powers with a common focus, you may want to use a Multipower. If he is really just doing the same thing over and over, or using Skills, a Multipower may not be called for.

Some good guidelines for establishing a Multipower are:

1. Does the character create many different effects with a single effect, weapon, or attack? If so, you probably have a Multipower. If the character has widely varied powers, however, with nothing to tie them together, such as a common description of attacks (i.e. flame attacks) or a common source (i.e. a single weapon or gadget belt) then you have no basis for a Multipower.
2. Does the character only use the powers one at a time? A character can have Multipowers where every slot is a multi slot allowing them great variation in what powers are being used to what level. However, this is

hardly cost-effective, especially in a game with an Active Point limitation. Yes, the Ringbearer has a power ring that allows him to shoot light blasts, fly, create a force field, and protect himself from the rigors of space. But in an average encounter, if the Ringbearer plans on doing more than one of these things at a time, he would be better served to buy them as separate powers, or as an Elemental Control. Flight, Force Field, and Life Support are not the kinds of powers you want to have to calculate turn by turn.

3. Does the character use several at once? Basically the corollary to the last point, this question can help you to iron out problems with a Multipower before they ever happen. Cardinal is a crime fighter with a belt full of useful gadgets. She has a line gun for Swinging, gas grenades, and night-sight goggles in her belt as part of her arsenal. But if these are bought as ultra slots that use up the full points reserve of the Multipower, she can only use one of them at a time. Will She ever need to swing through the air while dropping gas grenades on an opponent? Will she ever need to see in the dark while swinging or lobbing grenades? If the answer is yes, then you may consider buying these powers separately, increasing the Points Reserve of your Multipower, buying more than one Multipower, or putting them into an Elemental Control.

The great thing about the *HERO System* is that there is pretty much a rule or Power for everything you can imagine. If you see the Caped Crimefighter use his line gun to swing from building to building, that is obviously Swinging. But if you just leave it at that, you lose out on the dozens of other applications that CC puts the gun to, like winching up the sides of buildings, pulling guns out of enemies' hands, and wrapping around the feet of fleeing thugs. Collecting a good list of these applications may take some time. If you are drawing inspiration from the Night Spider, you will see hundreds of uses for his web casters. After all, he has four different comic titles, each with about 300 issues, a half a dozen cartoon series, a crappy '70s live action TV show, and a new movie with cutting edge special effects. This means that in the last forty years, about one hundred people have been working on that character, and each of them has added their own ideas and style to him. So it may take some time to get all of his possible powers down on a character sheet. Don't be afraid to sit down with a notepad and jot down quick ideas while watching your muse on DVD, or this week's taped episode, or while going through your comic library. You can always develop it later, even after the campaign

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starts. Keep in mind that we are painting with broad strokes here. There is only so much detail that can be put in one character with 350 points. Remember that one of the best things about a Multipower is that you can add more powers in short order with experience, and for only a few points at a time.

Now let us look at a few examples of how a good special effect basis can be used to expand a character's powers. We will examine two simple, undefined energy blaster concepts and see how, by tightening them up a bit and exploiting the physics behind each power, we can produce a wider selection of effects. We will assume that these power frameworks are being created for a standard 350-point game with a 60 Active Point limit on all powers.

Generally, an energy blaster will be built with a number of ranged attacks, and may be one of the more flexible characters in a group of heroes, expected to bring Entangles, Flashes, and like attacks to the team to complement the bricks and martial artists. That is why a good special effect basis is so important. The special effect gives the character the ability to gain flexibility, while at the same time limiting the character's list of possible powers, which keeps costs lower and allows for specialization.

In our first example, we will look at how a scientific approach to a special effect can suggest a number of power options for a character. Doctor Proton is a straightforward energy blaster. During creation, it is decided that the Doctor gains his powers through his ability to perceive and manipulate the way molecules and atoms move. But, by deciding that his powers are created through the manipulation of molecular motion, we have grounded his powers in solid science, limited them to powers that will fit our specified effect, and suggested a number of powers from which to choose. No longer are we creating Doctor Proton, a common energy blaster; now we are working on Doctor Proton, Master of Molecular Motion! Through the manipulation of the movement of molecules and atoms, the building blocks of all matter, Doctor Proton can generate heat or cold, create blasts of pure kinetic force, and manipulate his own body structure and the structure of materials around him in a number of ways. Note, however, that he cannot create electrical effects. Electricity is generally caused by the movement of sub-atomic particles, usually electrons, which are too small for the Doctor to effect, so no electrical effects can be produced.

Here is how Doctor Proton's final Multipower looks.

Cost	Powers	END
61	<i>Molecular Motion Manipulation:</i> Multipower, 61-point reserve	
6u	1) <i>Force Blast:</i> EB 12d6	6
6u	2) <i>Concussion Blast:</i> EB 7d6, Double Knockback (+ <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> )	6
6u	3) <i>Vaporization:</i> RKA 3d6-1, Indirect (+ <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> )	6
6u	4) <i>Disintegration:</i> RKA 3d6-1, Penetrating (+ <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> )	6
6u	5) <i>Atomization:</i> EB 8d6, Explosion (+ <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> )	6
6u	6) <i>Flame Blast:</i> RKA 2½d6, Increased STUN Multiplier +2 (+ <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> )	6
6u	7) <i>Chill Blast:</i> EB 6d6, NND (defense is Force Field or LS: Extreme Cold; +1)	6
6u	8) <i>Ice Entangle:</i> Entangle 6d6 BODY, 6 DEF	6
6u	9) <i>Ignition:</i> RKA 1d6+1, Indirect (+ <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> ), Uncontrolled (smother exposed target with inflammable substance, + <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> ), Continuous (+1)	6
4u	10) <i>Molecular Modulation:</i> Desolidification (affected by vibration and sonics)	4
1u	11) <i>Molecular Vision:</i> N-Ray Vision (not through diamonds, other dense crystals, or Force Fields)	0
4u	12) <i>Disintegration Field:</i> Missile Deflection (all attacks), Range (adjacent hex, + <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> ), +5 OCV (10 points); Not Against Energy Attacks (- <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> )	0
4u	13) <i>Crystallization:</i> Drain PD 4d6, Ranged (+ <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> ); Only Against Non-Living Material (- <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> )	6
4u	14) <i>Melding:</i> Major Transformation 4d6 (weld two inorganic objects together by merging their materials); Only On Non-Living Matter (- <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> )	6

And here is how each power breaks down by special effect.

1. *Force Blast:* By directing all molecular motion in an area to surge in one direction for a brief instant, Doctor Proton creates a blast of pure kinetic force, affecting a target's Physical Defense.
2. *Concussion Blast:* Similar to the Force Blast, the Concussion Blast is more of a shove than a strike. A surge of molecular motion is used to hurl opponents away from the Doctor, shaking them up and putting them at a more comfortable range.
3. *Vaporization:* With this attack, the Doctor causes an object to seemingly vanish into thin air, as molecular motion causes the object to fall apart. This is an Indirect attack because the Doctor does not need to strike the target with a beam or blast. Rather, as

much as a glance can target this power on an object, causing it to quietly vaporize.

4. *Disintegration*: More direct than Vaporization, this attack makes objects lose molecular cohesion and turn to dust. This attack is Penetrating as it affects all kinds of matter, boiling armor or shielding away as quickly as anything else.
5. *Atomization*: By causing a huge surge in the molecular movements of an object or volume of air in an area, this power causes violent and spectacular explosions.
6. *Flame Blast*: By agitating molecules in an area, the Doctor can create a rush of heat and flame, which he can project at opponents. This attack is very stunning as it is a rush of burning atmosphere, affecting the target across much of its surface rather than penetrating deeply.
7. *Chill Blast*: By slowing molecular motion, Doctor Proton causes matter in the affected area to absorb ambient heat at an incredible rate, creating areas of piercing, biting cold. Against living opponents, this tactic can be quite debilitating.
8. *Ice Entangle*: Also caused by the cessation of molecular motion, this attack causes areas of atmosphere around a target to quickly turn to heavy sheets of ice, binding and immobilizing the target.
9. *Ignition*: By agitating the molecules of a target to a highly excited state, the Doctor causes the object to burst into flames. Again, this is Indirect because the Doctor may do so with only a glance.
10. *Molecular Modulation*: Doctor Proton is able to synch up the molecular motion of the matter composing his entire body with that of the surrounding atmosphere or of other matter, allowing him to let solid objects and most types of energy pass harmlessly through him.
11. *Molecular Vision*: As he is able to discern molecular motion, the Doctor is able to account for that motion when perceiving matter. Since much of the space occupied by even solid matter is actually empty space, this allows Doctor Proton to see through solid objects as if they were hazy and indistinct. He cannot see through dense crystals such as diamonds, however, as these molecules are so tightly packed as to allow little space for him to peer through.
12. *Disintegration Field*: As a defense, Doctor Proton can set up an area around himself and his adjacent spaces that reacts with any

small objects that pass through it. This reaction field will cause any matter passing through it to lose molecular cohesion, and vaporize. The field reacts more to the speed of an object than to its mass, however, meaning large slow moving objects pass through almost unscathed, while smaller faster objects are reacted on more quickly and may be entirely destroyed. This is very effective on bullets or shrapnel. It has no effect, however, on attacks that deliver their force by a non-material means, such as lasers or electrical arcs.

13. *Crystallization*: Doctor Proton can cause the molecules of an object to contract, reducing the space that matter occupies, and thus stretching the bonds between molecules, making the object brittle.
14. *Melding*: Proton is able to take two objects and synch up the motion of each object's component materials, allowing him to fuse them together. Once the effect is removed, the objects are welded together solidly.

For our second example, we will look at how a character can be made more flexible through a special effect without getting into the science behind it as much as the varied application of the power. Salvo is a character who has only one basic power, the ability to generate beams of force from his eyes. These are concussion beams that he has, through practice, learned to use in a number of ways. In effect, he has only one power, but it is very versatile.

Here is his finished Multipower:

<b>Cost</b>	<b>Powers</b>	<b>END</b>
61	<i>Concussion Blasts</i> : Multipower, 61-point reserve	
6u	1) <i>Force Blast</i> : EB 12d6	6
6u	2) <i>Concussion Blast</i> : EB 7d6, Double Knockback (+3/4)	6
6u	3) <i>Cutting Beam</i> : RKA 4d6	6
6u	4) <i>Focused Bolt</i> : EB 8d6, Armor Piercing (+1/2)	6
6u	5) <i>Pulsed Blast</i> : EB 8d6, Autofire (+1/2)	20
4u	6) <i>Wide Angle Beam</i> : EB 6d6, Area Of Effect Cone (+1); No Range (-1/2)	6
6u	7) <i>Broad Focus Blast</i> : EB 8d6, Area Of Effect One Hex (+1/2)	6
6u	8) <i>Reflected Beam</i> : EB 8d6, Indirect (+1/2)	6
6u	9) <i>Vital Strike</i> : EB 6d6 NND (not vs. Force Field or Lack Of Weakness, +1)	6
4u	10) <i>Concussion Push</i> : Telekinesis 30 STR, Fine Manipulation; Only To Produce Instant Effects (-1/2)	5
4u	11) <i>Interceptor Beam</i> : Missile Deflection (all attacks), Ranged (+1)	0

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And here are the individual power descriptions:

1. *Force Blast*: A blast of concussive force, meant to do pummeling damage.
2. *Concussion Blast*: A blast of force, meant to throw an opponent away from Salvo, giving him more room to maneuver and less chance of being pounded on in hand-to-hand.
3. *Cutting Beam*: A tightly focused beam of force, used for punching holes in heavily armored or inanimate targets.
4. *Focused Bolt*: A single bolt of force focused in a small area for maximum penetration.
5. *Pulsed Blast*: Short, rapid blasts of concussive force.
6. *Wide Angle Beam*: A blast of force spread over a larger area, affecting multiple targets.
7. *Broad Focus Blast*: A force blast spread out to affect an entire target or area, possibly in the hopes of striking an elusive target.
8. *Reflected Beam*: A force beam bounced off an appropriate surface, ricocheting back to strike a target from an unexpected direction. Used for surprise attacks.
9. *Vital Strike*: A force blast that targets specific, "tender" portions of an opponent's anatomy, or lightly armored areas. This attack is useless against opponents with Lack of Weakness or Force Field.
10. *Concussion Push*: Using short, controlled pulses of force, Salvo can push objects briefly, allowing him to move items as if shoving them (i.e. shove a crate from one place to another), affect targets selectively (i.e. shoot guns from out of people hands), or even manipulate objects delicately (i.e. push buttons, trip switches, or strike billiard balls). Due to the incredibly brief nature of the pulse of force used to create these effects, this manipulation must be instant, done with only a touch; Salvo cannot hold an object in place with his force beams.
11. *Interceptor Beam*: Salvo can shoot down incoming missile attacks directed at him or those around him. By spreading the aperture of the beam wide enough, he can even block the effects of explosions or area effecting attacks.

The final character we will examine will illustrate how special effects can be used to lower the cost of powers through limitations. Coldsnap is a mutant, with the ability to absorb and shunt away massive amounts of heat from the surrounding area. This allows him to create effects from the resulting freezing temperatures.

This is limiting in that Coldsnap must be in an area with a certain level of moisture in the atmosphere. He cannot create ice in areas with no water vapor, such as a desert or vacuum. In addition, Coldsnap's player decides that he cannot focus his power at a range without the use of special control gauntlets, an Inobvious Inaccessible Focus. These gauntlets are triggered by the character snapping his fingers (thus his name) and are part of Coldsnap's uniform.

Coldsnap has two Multipowers; one for movement powers and one for attacks and effects. This allows him to move and attack at the same time.

Coldsnap's first Multipower, for movement powers, is designed so that Coldsnap can move at different speeds and carry different passenger loads as the situation calls for. The Multipower is built to represent Coldsnap creating ice slides for movement (thus the OIF Ice Slides as a common Limitation), but to different effects at different times. Sometimes it is simply impossible to simulate a single power for a character with just one power in the rules. Here is the breakdown of Coldsnap's first Multipower:

Cost	Powers	END
10	<i>Ice Slide Movement</i> : Multipower, 20-point reserve; Not in Arid Environments (-1/4), IIF Control Gauntlets (-1/4), OIF (ice slides, -1/2)	
1u	1) <i>Ground Slide</i> : Running +10"	2
1u	2) <i>Bounding Slide</i> : Leaping +20"	2
1u	3) <i>Bounding Slide Train</i> : Leaping +10", Usable By Self And Two Others (+3/4)	2
1u	4) <i>High Slide</i> : Flight 10"; Must Be Within 10" Of Anchor Point (-1/2)	2

And here is how each slot breaks down:

1. *Ground Slide*: By icing a path before himself, Coldsnap can move quickly along the ground. While this is not his fastest mode of travel, it is the most maneuverable, and the only one he can use in tight, enclosed spaces.
2. *Bounding Slide*: This power allows Coldsnap to really cut loose, covering distance with large, bounding arcs. This is his fastest mode of travel, but each leap must be fairly linear due to the nature of the slide.
3. *Bounding Slide Train*: As above, except Coldsnap strengthens the slide enough to carry two passengers along with him, usually standing behind him. The slide is broader and heavier, so it moves slower.

4. *High Slide*: Used only in emergencies, the High Slide allows Coldsnap to use any anchor point in order to gain altitude. He may travel up the side of buildings, or even across water. If falling, Coldsnap can wait until he is within 10” of the ground then generate a slide below himself to control his fall.

Coldsnap’s second Multipower is much more traditional, although quite large.

Cost	Powers	END
40	<i>Cold Attacks</i> : Multipower, 60-point reserve, Not in Arid Environments (- ¼), IIF Control Gauntlets (- ¼)	
4u	1) <i>Cold Blast</i> : EB 12d6	6
4u	2) <i>Deep Chill</i> : EB 6d6, NND (LS: Safe in Extreme Cold, +1)	6
4u	3) <i>Freezing Burst</i> : EB 8d6, Area Of Effect One Hex (+½)	6
4u	4) <i>Freeze Blast</i> : RKA 4d6 (Energy)	6
4u	5) <i>Ice Shards</i> : RKA 4d6 (Physical)	6
4u	6) <i>Shard Spray</i> : RKA 2d6 (Physical), Area Of Effect Cone (+1)	6
3u	7) <i>Freeze Brittle</i> : Drain PD 6d6, Only Against Non-Living Targets (-½)	6
4u	8) <i>Ice Bind</i> : Entangle 6d6 BODY, 6 DEF	6
4u	9) <i>Sleet Blast</i> : Sight Group Flash 6d6, NND (Heat Powers, +1)	6
4u	10) <i>Ice Wall</i> : Force Wall 10 PD / 10 ED, 6” Width	6
4u	11) <i>Freezing Mist</i> : Darkness to Sight Group, 6” Radius	6
4u	12) <i>Chill Area</i> : Change Environment 32” Radius, Vary Temperature Down to -10° F	6
4u	13) <i>Freezing Spray</i> : Suppress 4d6, All Heat and Flame Powers and Effects (+2)	6
2u	14) <i>Ice Fist</i> : HA +8d6; HA Lim (-½)	4
4u	15) <i>Ice Shields</i> : Missile Deflection (All Ranged Attacks) +5 OCV, Ranged (+1)	0
4u	16) <i>Create Ice</i> : Minor Transform 6d6 (water or vapor to ice)	6
3u	17) <i>Ice Braces</i> : Telekinesis 20 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Only To Create Static Effects (-½)	6
2u	18) <i>Avalanche</i> : HA +7d6; HA Lim (-½) <b>plus</b> +20 PD, Only for Move By / Through (-½)	3
2u	19) <i>Ice Sheet</i> : Change Environment 8”, -3 DEX And -3 DEX Rolls	4

With each slot explained below:

1. *Cold Blast*: A blast of concentrated cold, slamming the target with a wash of freezing atmosphere and condensing water vapor.
2. *Deep Chill*: Coldsnap turns his power on warm-blooded creatures, draining the heat from their bodies in a shocking and disruptive fashion. May cause hypothermia.
3. *Freezing Burst*: By tightly focusing his energies in a small space, Coldsnap can produce an explosively expanding effect of freezing temperature and flash-frozen ice and materials.
4. *Freeze Blast*: A concentration of Coldsnap’s heat-leeching powers, this attack can be lethal. He is capable of chilling living mater to the point of freezing and subsequent death with a single burst, or of flash-freezing non-organic targets to such a brittle state that they shatter.
5. *Ice Shards*: Coldsnap generates a flurry of dense, sharply pointed ice crystals and propels them at opponents at high speed. Despite their relative brittleness, these missiles can be lethal, as they are quite heavy and fast.
6. *Shard Spray*: Like the attack above, Coldsnap fires off a barrage of ice shards. However, with this attack, he spreads them out to affect an entire area, hitting multiple targets, disrupting groups of opponents.
7. *Freeze Brittle*: By pulling heat out of an inanimate object at an even pace, Coldsnap can freeze an inorganic object to such a point that it becomes very brittle. This power cannot be used on living warm-blooded creatures, as this is the same process Coldsnap uses to produce his NND attack in organic beings.
8. *Ice Bind*: By drawing freezing water vapor from the atmosphere, Coldsnap is able to encase a target in a sheet of super-dense ice, trapping them like flies in amber.
9. *Sleet Blast*: By diffusing his freezing power, Coldsnap is able to create a spray of snow or frost-like material. Directed at an opponent’s eyes, this can cause temporary blindness, as the eyes are filled with stinging crystals, or visors are coated like a windshield on a February morning.
10. *Ice Wall*: Concentrating his freezing powers and ambient atmospheric moisture, Coldsnap may generate walls of super-dense ice in a variety of shapes. He often uses these to block doors, seal windows, or segregate opponents from each other,

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allowing him to deal with them one at a time.

11. *Freezing Mist*: By draining heat from a large area, Coldsnap can generate an area of dense cloying fog. This mist covers the area making it nearly impossible to see through with normal vision.
12. *Chill Area*: The most basic use of his power allows Coldsnap to simply draw heat from an area, reducing the overall temperature. Coldsnap may vary this effect, chilling a large room or area to a comfortable, cool temperature, or freezing the area like a meat locker.
13. *Freezing Spray*: Coldsnap may spray anything that is burning hot or flaming with a thick spray of freezing moisture, smothering flames and reducing heat. Like turning a snow machine on a campfire, Coldsnap can pour this effect on for many turns, slowly smothering even large blazes.
14. *Ice Fist*: Coldsnap will, on occasion, coat his fist with a heavy armor-like gauntlet, increasing the heft and power of his punches. Basically, a 50-pound set of ice brass knuckles.
15. *Ice Shields*: Coldsnap can blast incoming missile attacks with a burst of freezing moisture, throwing off their accuracy and reducing their force. Coldsnap may choose to fire his blasts at any incoming attack in his line of sight, defending others as well as himself.
16. *Create Ice*: Another simple application of Coldsnap's power, he is able to turn water vapor into ice. He can create simple shapes out of normal ice effortlessly, but may need a skill roll to create complicated shapes or sculptures.
17. *Ice Braces*: Coldsnap may manipulate his surroundings with volumes of ice, lifting loads by generating ice pillars under them or freezing a weapon to the floor or wall. These effects are too broad in effect to give him much fine manipulation, and are limited in that any effect must be static, unchanging once it is cast.
18. *Avalanche*: Used in conjunction with one of Coldsnap's movement powers, this attack allows him to generate a particularly heavy ice sled in front of himself and then crash it into an opponent at high speed. Not only does the added weight make the attack more devastating, but it also acts as a protective layer, shielding Coldsnap from much of the force of impact.

19. *Ice Sheet*: Coldsnap can use this power to cover a floor or ground area with slippery ice. This is a hazard to anyone moving on or across it, slowing pursuit or blocking escape without causing serious harm.

In conclusion, Multipowers are perhaps the most flexible, simple, straightforward way to add depth and variety to a character. When used creatively, a Multipower will add depth to any set of powers. And most importantly, a Multipower can bring your character that much closer to his mass media counterparts, using his single "power" in dozens of ways in all kinds of situations. So get out your back issues, pop your favorite hero show in the DVD, and get out your scratch pad. It's time to make characters who really can do it all!



# Roleplaying HERO by Joe Campanella

The *HERO System* is one of the most flexible and innovative tabletop systems available. With unprecedented flexibility in character design and genre applicability, it avoids many of the pitfalls of benchmarked game systems. Where some systems offer a “carrot on a stick” approach, forcing characters into cookie-cutter molds with levels and abilities doled out at specific plateaus, the *HERO System* offers a more gradual, organic approach to character growth.

Most importantly, the *HERO System* is designed as a true roleplaying game. Its strengths cater to roleplay, and making sure there is a high level of roleplay amongst your gamers is perhaps more critical in the *HERO System* than in any other system, and that’s a good thing. High quality roleplaying is far more memorable and rewarding than the more shallow rewards of treasure and character levels offered by some other systems, but it requires an investment of time, some forethought, and a commitment to excellence on the part of the GM and the players.

Let’s say you’re running an evening session of a level-based, treasure-based game system. You can do very little groundwork, basically looking up the stats for some monsters a half hour before gaming time, and throw a horde of monsters at the group of player characters. The combat could last many hours, including the recovery from it. If, at the end, you give out sufficient experience points for the players to “level up”, or if they players get some “cool treasure”, they will generally consider the evening entertaining and a “success”, regardless of whether the combat was particular engaging, unique, or memorable, or whether or not anyone actually had any true roleplaying interaction. If you repeated this type of encounter most true roleplayers would become bored, but it’s something you can easily get away with in spurts, because of the benchmarks and rewards built into the system.

The encounters aren’t noteworthy or memorable. Nobody will be likely to reflect back on the evening, a year later, and say, “Gee, remember when we killed those 13 ogres and got that chest full of gold?” It’s another faceless combat in an endless litany of faceless combats. The bigger problem with a level/treasure reward system is the accomplishments are temporary, and in order to keep players happy you have to offer an ever-increasing arsenal of magic items and abilities, and larger and larger piles of treasure. This too often leads to what is called “Monty Haul GMing”, and is a quick path to boredom. Game systems like that tend to take something magical and wondrous, and consistently turn it into the mundane.

Given the same scenario, it’s much more difficult to pull that off in the *HERO System*. The characters don’t generally get any personal treasure, and experience points are on a more gradual scale for many of the genres. The rewards are of a different nature: creating memorable and fun experiences through roleplaying. With it, the *HERO System* is downright amazing in the amount of fun you have. Without it, you’re missing out on an incredible opportunity. In order to get the most out of roleplaying you need to do a little extra work before play ever begins, and really focus on the interactions while play is ongoing.

## Step 1: Roleplaying and Character Generation

As most players will attest, generating a character is one of the most fun, challenging, and time-consuming aspects of the *HERO System*. Characteristics, powers, skills, talents, and disadvantages, all need to be accounted for. It’s a lengthy process, and because of the flexibility allowed, requires more thought than rolling some dice for stats and picking one of ten character classes with predetermined abilities, then buying some basic equipment. You have to think about how you want to spend your points, and weigh all sorts of different factors into the mix that you wouldn’t have to do with other game systems.

A common problem results in the course of this. So much emphasis is placed on the player’s character points, stats, powers, and special effects, sometimes players have a tendency to short-change the “character” part of character creation. Roleplaying is about playing a role. It’s acting in a live play where you don’t have a script. You get to become someone else in another world, one similar to or far different than our own. You get to become a living, breathing character in a never-ending novel, where your actions affect the course of things, and you’re one of the main characters.

Invest as much time making your character’s background and personality as you do on defining their powers and abilities. Where was your character born? Who were his parents? Does he have siblings? Are his parents and family still alive? What kind of upbringing did he have? Who were his peers in high school? Did any traumatic occurrences help shape his personality? What were his dreams growing up? What were his grades like in school? What’s his favorite food? What’s his favorite book? Does he have many friends now? Romantic relationships? How does he dress? What kind of music does he listen to? What are his likes and dislikes? Pet peeves?

Answering all of these questions, and a whole lot more, help you paint a picture of who your hero is, on the inside, behind the mask, space helmet, or wizard's cap. While seemingly tailored to the *Champions* genre, they can be tweaked and applied to nearly any of the *HERO System* genres. Make your characters interesting even if they have no powers or special abilities. Strip away the points, and think about the *person* behind the powers. Make sure your character has some sort of motivation to do what they do. Make the character more than just yourself with special skills and powers. The more you know about your character, the more real they will become to you, and the easier it will be to roleplay them as they respond to different situations in your game sessions.

If you're a GM, force your players to invest the time. If someone's character seems shallow, help him flesh it out. Ask them tough questions that make them consider who their character is, and how they got there. Give them the campaign background they need to place their characters in the world, before they start creating their character. Present interesting twists or ideas on their character and see how receptive they are. Don't force them to roleplay something they don't like, but try to present ideas and challenges to them, whether they're physical, social, or psychological.

### Step 2: Know Your World

As the GM you need to have a deep understanding and knowledge of your game environment. If you don't know, and can't bring it to life, there's no way your players are going to feel like they're a part of things. Take the time to make an up-front investment, and really flesh out the world in as much detail as you can. Population, political factions, attitudes, mores, folkways, history, and geography are all critical to making your world feel real to your players. Don't let this knowledge nest in your head, give the players access to the information their characters should have, and understand this information may vary from character to character based on their backgrounds. Even if you're using a purchased adventure product, you can still add a great deal of detail to the existing information and bring your own personal flavor to the campaign world.

### Step 3: Working the Characters Into the World

There are a number of ways you can work characters into the world from the start. One way is to tie multiple PC backgrounds together. That doesn't mean their powers have to be the result of the same accident. Maybe they went to high school together. Maybe their fathers were members of the same guild. Perhaps they're twins separated at birth. They could just have met one another at some place or time in their past, serving as a launching point for why they're coming together in the future.

You can also tie their backgrounds to specific events in history. Have them think about where they were or what they did at major events in history. If there was a great intergalactic war, which side were they on? How old were they when it happened? Who in their family line might have participated? Give them a sense of history. Where were they when Detroit was blown up (if you're using the *Champions Universe*)? Did they lose loved ones or relatives when it happened? Make a timeline of events for your campaign, and do something to relate each character to an event in the past.

Make sure you work their Hunteds and DNPCs into their background in interesting ways. Don't just have: Hunted by VIPER. Why is VIPER hunting them? Do they know why? Do they know how badly VIPER wants them? Don't be afraid to leave a little mystery. Giving someone an unknown Hunted is always a great way to spark a player's interest. Making them wonder who's out to get them and why is a great way to add spice to the game.

### Step 4: Roleplaying in the Game

Do your homework. Before running a session, make sure you're fully versed on what you need to know in order to pull off the adventure. This means knowing your NPCs powers and abilities, as well as their personalities. Bring the simplest NPCs to life by acting out their unique voices, personality, or mannerisms. If the PCs are talking to an old man on the street, talk and act like an old man. Make the mundane magical, don't make the magical mundane. Don't try to entertain your players by throwing a never-ending series of higher and higher-powered villains at them, striking fear at them through sheer dice of damage. That road leads to repetitiveness and boredom. Make the simple things special.

Example:

Two of your PCs, Blockbuster and Megalon, are battling in the streets, and have just defeated the villain Triceratops. Blockbuster had to pick up an old man's beat up 57' Chevy and bash Triceratops over the head with it, leaving it a bit worse for wear. As a GM, you can just say:

"The old man is really ticked off that you did that to his car. He's shouting all sorts of things at you and saying he's going to sue you. What are you going to do?"

Or you can bring the NPC to life and actually roleplay the old man. Talk in an 'old man' voice, get animated, and say:

"Are you nuts? That was my car! You superheroes are a menace! If I were twenty years younger I'd kick your butts up and down the street, let me tell you! I'm going to sue the costume off you, and you can take that to the bank!"

Force the players to respond "in character" by putting them in an interaction with the NPC, as if they were really there, rather than just telling them what's happening from a third person point of view. They're going to remember the interaction with the old man, regardless of how it turns out. You can do the same with newspaper reporters, or the alchemist in the old mage's supply store, or the security officer at a starbase security checkpoint. Don't walk your PCs past NPCs with quick narration, seize the opportunities to make them interact with the world around them, and the people inhabiting the world.

Make an impact with your NPCs. Make them really hate the villains and love their friends. Make it personal. They should care about their DNPCs and fear the mysterious person who knows more about them than they'd like. They shouldn't fear Mechanon just because he's a gazillion point villain with loads of powers and lots of defenses! Make him evil! Bring him to life by having him do cruel and inhuman things, both to the PCs and to innocents. If the people they fight are just colorfully named compilations of stats and powers, they're being robbed of the real drama of roleplayed conflict.

## Step 5: Let the Players Play

Let your players' actions dictate the course of game play. Let their roleplay dictate success or failure in an encounter. If players feel you are controlling or steering an inevitable outcome and their actions don't matter, they will undoubtedly lose interest, or not care about how well or poorly they do because "it will all work out in the end."

The secret to this is simple: Set the stage, and let the players tell the story. Your job as GM is to set the stage for the actors, present their obstacles, and then play the secondary characters (NPCs) as realistically as possible. The PCs are the main characters, and their success or failure should dictate the course of the story. In order to do this you need to have a wealth of information in your head and at your disposal, but when your NPCs are unique and real, and when you have a detailed understanding of the scenario and your campaign environment, all you have to do is react appropriately. You don't need to constantly refer to your notes or purchased product to see what happens next. The story comes alive, and you merely help facilitate it. If you don't know your world, your NPCs, and your story elements, you can't accomplish that.

If the outcome to any scenario is predetermined, what is the point of having the scenario? If the players' actions are meaningless, you're robbing them of the joy of choosing their own destiny, and taking away any feeling of accomplishment they might have. Every scenario or adventure should have multiple possible paths or endings based on the direction the player characters take.

### Step 6: Roleplaying and Combat

Don't boil combat down to simply reciting dice rolls and damage. Battles can and should be so much more. Give the players exciting environments with combat options. Whether it's fighting in a neat location, like a chemical plant, or a murky serpent filled swamp, don't have your battles take place in the middle of the city over and over.

Ask the players to describe what they're doing in detail. Describe the results of their actions in as colorful a manner as possible. When they do Knockback, or are knocked back, talk about how they sail through the air and smash painfully against the base of the tree, causing the leaves to fall all around them. Talk about how the last blow left a big bruise on the villain's jaw, or how he sneered in contempt at their puny attempts to harm him. If your combat sequence consists of:

"You need an 11 or lower to hit. You rolled a 10 – good job, you hit it! Now roll your damage! You did 4 STUN and 0 BODY and you did 2" of Knockback. Move the bad guy back two hexes. Okay, who's next?"

You're missing out on a tremendous storytelling opportunity. This sort of combat gets boring real fast for anyone, and it boils the action down to a series of numbers, instead of focusing on what those numbers represent. Talk about the character's emotions, frustrations, overconfidence, or ingenuity during combat. Find inventive ways to describe an 8d6 martial punch, or a 12d6 Haymaker.

The *HERO System* is perfectly tailored for bringing combat to life. Players decide the look and feel of their attacks by defining special effects. Use that to your advantage. If someone is playing a character that can throw lightning bolts, there is obviously something 'cool' about that, in his eyes. Don't just say:

"Okay, you try to hit Nemesis with a 12d6 blast. You missed by one! Aw, too bad."

Involve the players, ask them to describe their attacks, and hit or miss, make their actions have an effect:

Player: "Alright, I clench my fist and a sphere of crackling white energy pulses around it. I thrust my hand at Nemesis and a bolt of lightning arcs from my fingers toward him!"

GM: "The bolt scorches through the air and Nemesis turns at the very last second, narrowly avoiding it. It strikes a Post Office drop-off box beside him and turns it into a heap of melted slag! Nemesis grins and says, 'Is that the best you can do?'"

If one of your PCs is knocked out and gets a recovery, instead of saying:

"Okay, you get 12 STUN back for your Recovery, which puts you at 8. You get back to your feet as the Minotaur is closing in, and you can take a single action. What are you going to do?"

Try:

"You stagger to your feet with spots still dancing in front of your eyes. Your heart is pounding and you're breathing heavily, trying to shake off the dizziness and stay on your feet. You hear the steamy breaths of the Minotaur. Your eyes come into focus and you see it's right on top of you! What do you do?"

### Roleplaying As Its Own Reward

Try to create memorable sessions people will talk about and remember fondly, after all is said and done. Magic items and character levels are temporary rewards leading into a vicious cycle. In order to please people you need to constantly heap greater and greater rewards on them to get the same impact. Instead of the players talking about the great magic items they have, or the cool stuff they'll do when they get to 7<sup>th</sup> level, it's much more rewarding to have a character with memorable experiences, who met people and did things that made them laugh or cry, and gave them a sense of accomplishment that's more valuable than a list of stats and possessions. The *HERO System* is perfectly tailored for this. The rest is up to you.



**SECRETS***Champions*

Hero is a wanted Criminal – 15 points  
Would radically Life, Would threaten

Hero is in love with a well known villain – 10 points

May or May not change life, Would threaten/pay

Hero harmed/killed a innocent in the past – 20 points

Would radically change life, would treaten harm/pay

*Dark Champions*

Hero Works For The Police – 10 points  
Would Change Life, Tries to hide

Hero Is Son/Daughter of Police Chief – 20 points

Would Radically Change Life / Would Threaten

*Star Hero*

Character is decendant of hated alien cuture – 10 points

Would change life, tries to keep secret hid

Character is member of hated alien cuture – 10 points

Would change life, tries to keep secret hid

Character is infected with deadly disease – 15 points

Would change life, would threten harm/pay

Character is working for feared/hated government organization – 20 points

**Shh! It's a Secret** by Greg Elkins

Everyone has a skeleton or two in the closet, something that they keep quiet about because of embarrassment or incrimination. This happens everyday all over the world, and has been recorded throughout time, why should a HERO setting be any different?

**Heroes and Their Secrets**

A secret may be a simple thing that happens to normal people, like being sick, for example. Or maybe something a little more drastic, like being an ex-criminal. To the far end of the spectrum, having willfully taken someone's life. Regardless of the secret, it is the reaction of the character when confronted by another's knowledge of the secret that makes it a problem. Human nature makes us take steps to keep secrets safe; the lengths that we are willing to go determine how valuable that secret is. Secrets can clearly be used as Disadvantages within the HERO System.

One could say that *Secrets* fall into the realm of *Psychological Limitations*, however, their current write-up does not account for the actions and reactions revolving around preventing the revelation of a Secret and what consequences are imposed (either to one's self or toward others) once the Secret has been discovered. Most *Psychological Limitations* give points for the effect the situation has on the character. For example, a Code Versus Killing shows that a character will take a certain action when confronted with the decision to kill or capture someone. It is a known response – villains will use it to there advantage is the situation arises. A Secret, however, is different, as it is not known to many (if any) people other than the one who is affected, and a constant effort is made not to reveal said Secret.

While the fear of being found out is definitely there, this is only half the disadvantage. We describe in this half what the Secret is and how strongly the Secret is to be kept. The other half determines what actions will be taken depending on which and how many people find out about the Secret. For example, a hero with a secret identity has a newspaper reporter snooping into his past. The reporter stumbles on something and confronts the hero with the Secret. Will the hero deny the allegation, payoff the reporter, or kill him (possibly creating an addendum to the initial Secret)? It is how the character perceives his Secret, and the anticipated reactions of others, that dictate the value of a Secret. Obviously, abuse is inherent with any disadvantage, and like the others, the GM should understand the

particular disadvantage and how it affects the mechanics of his game. Some players could see an easy 10-point Disadvantage! Because of the effects these points can have regarding power levels, and on campaigns themselves, this Disadvantage should only be taken once. This Disadvantage should not be "linked" to another Disadvantage, as Secrets should be all encompassing (hence this write-up and the descriptions provided herein to describe why this should be taken as a separate Disadvantage).

GMs should decide how and if they work Secrets into their campaigns. Players should think carefully before taking a Secret, as with other Disadvantages, they will need to decide the Secret and the ramifications of it on their character. However, as described above, Secrets tend to have greater implications than other Disadvantages.

So, here is the new Disadvantage for your viewing pleasure.

**Secret**

This Disadvantage may only be taken once.

**SECRET**

<u>Points</u>	<u>Danger</u>
5	Secret being known may or may not have any effect on life or circumstances.
10	Secret being known would change life and circumstances.
15	Secret being known would radically affect life and circumstances.

**Modifiers**

<u>Points</u>	<u>Reaction</u>
+0	Doesn't want people knowing the Secret. e.g.. Tries hard to convince anyone of keeping his Secret.
+5	Takes action to ensure that the Secret is not being found out. e.g. Would threaten/pay anyone to keep his Secret.
+10	Takes radical action to ensure that the Secret is not known. e.g. May harm (or worse) anyone who knows the Secret.

## Examples of Secrets for Different Genres

### SECRETS IN *CHAMPIONS*

#### Male hero is actually a woman (would only plead for secret not to be told)

This would be a 10-point Disadvantage, depending on the background of the campaign. If the background of the campaign was such that male and female heroes were treated equally, then this is worth 10 points. It's not really going to have a big effect on the character. However, if the background shows that women are treated differently, and not given large roles in policing agencies, then this would be worth 15 or even 20, depending.

#### Hero is an ex-convict (would only plead for secret not to be told)

This would be a 15-point Disadvantage depending on the background of the campaign. If the public at large found out that Sergeant USA, a trusted and liked hero, used to be a villain working for VIPER, the fallout would be great. He might be arrested; bystanders might run or throw things at him. The other heroes that he normally patrols with might even avoid him or arrest him. If there's the threat of a trial and jail, this could easily be a 20-point Disadvantage.

#### Bulldozer is my dad (would only plead for secret not to be told)

This would be a 10- or 15-point Disadvantage, depending on the background of the campaign. If a well-known villain is the relative of a hero, this could cause many problems. If the hero fails to catch him, then maybe he let him get away. The villain could try to use it to his advantage, as well. Policing agencies and other heroes may no longer trust the hero.

### SECRETS IN *FANTASY HERO*, *STAR HERO*, *NINJA HERO*

#### Male hero is actually a woman (would only plead for secret not to be told)

This would be a 10-point Disadvantage, depending on the background of the campaign. This could be a 15- or 20-point Disadvantage, depending on the GM's decision on how it will affect her life.

In a *Ninja Hero* setting, in a male-based society such as feudal Japan, this could have a radical effect. Women normally weren't allowed to learn the martial arts 'til much later. So, having learned them and used them against males could cause the hero some problems with the local townspeople and the authorities in the area.

In a *Fantasy Hero* setting, women could have a similar problem. While some villagers may have no problem with their priests being women, they might not want their guards being women. Women could have problems being hired for a job or be offered much less in payment.

In a *Star Hero* setting, a female ship captain could have problems finding a crew or finding clients willing to hire her. She may advance through the ranks slower, and be held back for job promotions. It may be the 24<sup>th</sup> Century but that doesn't mean that all attitudes have changed.

#### Forefathers were of an enemy's race (would only plead for the secret not to be told)

The character's great grand- or grandparents may have been from a race that is considered the enemy or an "evil" race. If the character is found out, he could be discharged from the service he is in, or even killed, depending on the campaign.

In a *Fantasy Hero* setting, if a character is Elven and one of his forefathers was of an evil Elven race, he wouldn't want this known. He could be treated as outcast, or even outright killed. If a character was of Orc descent, then the character could be treated as an outcast, forced to live by himself, and never trusted.

In a *Star Hero* setting, if the character is the descendant of a race that was the sworn enemy of the organization the character belongs to, this would cause problems. The character could be imprisoned, or kicked out of the organization. NPCs whose loved ones had been killed could decide to take it out on the character.

In a *Ninja Hero* setting, if the character is the popular winner of martial arts tournaments, and it becomes known that he is the nephew of a hated combatant, he may no longer be allowed in tournaments. The crowd could turn on him and boo him, instead of cheering. If the relative is a known cheater, then everyone may assume that the character cheats, as well.

These are merely suggestions, and GMs should change them to fit their campaigns.

Would radically change life, would threaten harm/pay

#### *Fantasy Hero*

Character is member of Assassin Guild – 25 points

Would change life, would harm or kill

Male adventurer is actually female – 10 points

Would change life, tries to keep secret hid

Character is a werecreature – 20 points

Would radically change life, would threaten harm/pay

#### *Ninja Hero*

Male adventurer is actually female – 10 points

Would change life, tries to keep secret hid

Character works for rival Ninja Clan – 25 points

Would change life, would harm or kill

Character is son/daughter of famous master – 10 points

Would change life, tries to keep secret hid

#### *Pulp Hero*

Addicted to Illegal Substance – 10 points

Would Change Life, Tries to Hide

Male adventurer is actually female – 10 points

Would change life, tries to keep secret hid

Character is a member of a discriminated against race – 15 points

Would radically change life/ tries to hide



## PLOT SEEDS

*Derail the Peace*

*Train:* Zor, assuming the guise of a Special Forces team's old commander, has convinced members of the unit that the army intentionally abandoned them in the middle of some God-forsaken country. The man who was their superior officer is now a prominent diplomat who's negotiating a peace settlement between two factions in a war-torn nation. Zor hopes to manipulate the team into killing the diplomat and ending any chance at peace.

*The Bad Nukes*

*Bearers:* What would please a demon of war more than setting off a nuclear device? Perhaps stealing one from the United States' nuclear arsenal, selling it to one of their greatest enemies, then informing the American government that their enemy is now nuclear capable. Won't that be a scream?

*...While Grotesque and Incomprehensible*

*To You:* Pilots stationed aboard an aircraft carrier are responsible for six friendly fire bombings in the last month. In each case, they swore they saw the enemy

**Demon o' War** by Scott Bennie

**Background:** 1192. During the height of the Crusades, an Arabic sorcerer named Abdul Ibn Gabal attempted to turn the tide by summoning a mighty djinn to defeat his enemies, who were devastating the Holy Land. It might have been a good plan, except that the sorcerer didn't quite get a djinn. Instead, he summoned Zor'Iblis'Zor, an entity known in certain legends as "The Sergeant of Hell."

After lengthy negotiations, Zor'Iblis'Zor agreed to help the sorcerer lead one of Islam's finest armies, and he did so. But he said nothing about killing Ibn Gabal and taking his form, which he also did. The demon gathered an army in Western Persia, and after two minor victories, it looked like his star was rising, and he began to attract a large force of knights. In 1194, he led an army of 15,000 of the finest horsemen in Islam into a futile attack on a Crusader stronghold, drove them into a berserk frenzy, then watched and laughed as his troops were slaughtered to a man.

Zor'Iblis'Zor is that kind of a demon.

1630. The Thirty Years War. Count Charles de Beauville was a French mercenary captain who convinced several large mercenary companies that the Crown Princes of Europe were cheating them, and that they needed to be punished. So they punished them. By putting village after village to the torch. Beauville was killed by a stray arrow and buried, but his men, remembering their beloved captain, went on to commit even bloodier deeds in his memory.

Count Charles was, of course, actually the demon Zor'Iblis'Zor.

1709. Malplaquet. The bloodiest battle of the War of the Spanish Succession. An Austrian captain named Franz Osterhagen encouraged his men to execute French prisoners, then had his men shot on the spot for their crime. Franz Osterhagen was also Zor'Iblis'Zor.

He wore new guises in new ages, but the same pattern of atrocity emerged: Zor'Iblis'Zor would kill a commanding officer, take his place, make his men feel invincible, encourage them to commit subhuman acts, and then either leave them damned, or lead them to their graves. Sometimes he would take the position of a great leader. Sometimes he would be the commander of a small company. Sometimes he would be a complete incompetent, and allow his men to murder him (always making sure they got caught and faced summary judgment). Sometimes he would be a great military leader, until he made an odd lapse in judgment and his men died.

As humanity's weapons evolved, Zor'Iblis'Zor's satisfaction grew. He saw a lot of action in World War II and Korea (his favorite

war to date), but spent most of Vietnam as a mercenary in Africa (he regrets not getting involved in the fun) and was grounded for the duration of the Gulf War (his unit was never sent into battle). Zor'Iblis'Zor is currently Staff Sergeant Raymond Clancey Jr., a true son of Mississippi who's attached to US forces in Afghanistan and takes great pride in sparing no amount of ordinance in hitting his target, and is vocal in his denunciation of the locals and soldiers belonging to other coalition partners. Zor'Iblis'Zor likes Afghanistan, but if things heat up elsewhere, he'll let Clancey have an "accident" and take the form of some other poor soul.

If your campaign employs a war between Heaven and Hell, Zor'Iblis'Zor is classified as a Harrow-Brute demon, rank Sergeant Major. He's been AWOL for quite awhile, but Hell is understanding (if not forgiving) of summonings. Because he's damned an extraordinary number of souls (he's been awarded "Demon of the Month" in absentia on several occasions), as far as the diabolical powers are concerned, his absence can be easily overlooked, although he'll receive a token horrible punishment if he's ever returned to his place of origin. Other demons know him by reputation and feel a lot of anger and resentment toward him, and the angelic powers view him with as much loathing as Heaven is capable.

In *Champions* worlds, Zor'Iblis'Zor doesn't like superheroes at all, as they remind him of angels who are allowed to be more active, and they have an independent streak that he finds hard to control or corrupt. He hasn't tried to work his will on superheroes very much, though – ordinary soldiers provide him with so much satisfaction, and it's hard to break old habits. He has fought supers on several occasions, and at least one master of the occult knows about his existence and his *modus operandi*.

**Personality:** Zor'Iblis'Zor is a role-player. His true form is imp-like, full of petty malice and contempt for those under him, breaking his soldiers, playing with them like toys. Sometimes Zor'Iblis'Zor takes the role of the buddy, the soldier's best friend; at other times, he's the remote and glorious leader, the man everyone respects. Sometimes he's the bully of the unit, cultivating a gang of thugs via physical violence; at other times he's a complete jerk, a frag-worthy lieutenant who gets under everyone's skin and makes them want to kill him. The only constant is that those who serve under Zor'Iblis'Zor

artwork by Jeff Ward

## DIGITAL HERO #7

### Zor'Iblis'Zor

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6½ tons; 8d6 HTH
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
28	CON	16	15-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll: 14-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
40	PRE	30	17-	PRE Attack: 8d6
20	COM	5	13-	
12	PD	4		Total: 28 PD (16 rPD)
12	ED	6		Total: 28 ED (16 rED)
5	SPD	17		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
14	REC	0		
56	END	0		
54	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 200**

**Movement:** Running: 11"/22"  
Teleport 10"/20"  
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
72	<i>Demon Body:</i> Armor (12 PD/12 ED), Fully Invisible (he appears to take damage, but doesn't, +1)	
24	<i>Regeneration:</i> Healing 2 BODY, Fully Invisible (observer does not notice target regenerating, +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (1 Turn; -1), Self Only (-½)	0
70	<i>Become an Imposter:</i> Shape Change (sight, hearing, touch, smell, any male human shape, cellular, imitation), Costs END Only to Change Shape (+¼)	7
10	<i>Sense Demon:</i> Detect Demon, Sense, Discriminatory	
35	Life Support (Immortal, Immune to all Terran diseases, chemical agents, Self-contained breathing)	
10	<i>Inspiring the Troops:</i> +20 PRE (only for attack, -½), Must use appropriate PRE skill (-¼), Only Usable on His Own Followers (-¼)	
15	Running +5" (11" total), 0 END	0
7	Teleport 10"; 1 Charge per Day (-2)	2
81	<i>Automatic Rifle:</i> RKA 2½d6, +1 STUN Multiplier (+¼), +2 OCV, 10 Shot Autofire (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1); OAF (Rifle; -1)	0
10	<i>Combat Knife:</i> 1d6+1 HKA (2½d6 with STR); OAF (Knife; -1)	2/4
20	<i>Knife Expertise:</i> Find Weakness 15- with Knife; Must Follow a +10 PRE Attack (-½)	
5	<i>Combat Vest:</i> Armor (4 PD, 4 ED); OIF (vest and helmet; -½), Activation Roll 11- (-1)	

- 2 *Night Vision Goggles:* Night Vision; OAF (goggles, -1)
- 2 *GPS:* Bump of Direction, OAF (global positioning system, -1)
- 5 *Transmitter:* Radio Listen/Transmit, OAF (headset, -1)

#### Martial Arts: Commando Training

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Choke Hold	-2	+0	3d6 NND
4 Killing Strike	-2	+0	1d6 HKA
4 Martial Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4 Martial Disarm	-1	+1	60 STR
4 Martial Strike	+0	+2	12d6
3 Martial Throw	+0	+1	10d6+v/5
1			Use Art with Knife
8			+2 Damage Classes (added in)

#### Skills

- 10 +1 Overall Level
- 24 +3 with All Combat
- 5 Acting 15-
- 3 Breakfall 14-
- 3 Bureaucratics 17-
- 3 Climbing 17-
- 3 Concealment 13-
- 3 Interrogation 17-
- 3 KS: Arms and Equipment 14-
- 3 KS: The Military World 14-
- 3 KS: US Armed Forces Procedures 14-
- 3 Linguist
- 4 1) Language: English (Arabic is native)
- 4 2) Language: French (dialects)
- 4 3) Language: German (dialects)
- 4 4) Language: Russian (dialects)
- 4 5) Language: Korean (dialects)
- 5 Mimicry 15-
- 3 Oratory 17-
- 3 Persuasion 17-
- 3 Stealth 14-
- 3 Survival: Temperate 11-
- 3 Survival: Jungle 11-
- 3 Systems Operation 14-
- 3 Tactics 14-
- 3 Tracking 14-
- 5 Weaponsmith 14- (muscle-powered)
- 5 Weaponsmith 14- (slug throwing)
- 22 WF: Common Melee, Common Missile, Small Arms, All Uncommon Weapons, All Heavy Weapons

**Total Powers & Skill Cost: 547**

**Total Cost: 747**

#### 200+ Disadvantages

- 20 Hunted/Watched: Enemy Forces 11- (As Powerful, Wants to kill)
- 10 Hunted/Watched: US Army 11- (As Powerful, NCI, Watching)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Bloodthirsty (Common, Strong)

and engaged when they should have disengaged. The cause turns out to be time-delay psychotropic drugs planted by – you guessed it – Zor'Iblis'Zor.

- 15 Psychological Limitation: Loves to Manipulate People (Common, Strong)
- 5 Rivalry with other earth-bound demons (professional)
- 15 Susceptibility: 3d6 when Hit with Order or Anti-Chaos powers (Uncommon)
- 10 Susceptibility: 1d6 BODY when Someone Escapes His Manipulations (Common)
- 10 Vulnerability: 1½x BODY and STUN from Those Who Resist His Presence Attacks (Uncommon)
- 447 Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 747**

always have strong emotions about him – and always meet an unfortunate fate.

**Quote:** “Men, I’ve never steered you wrong. Maybe this *is* suicide, but I know this is our chance to make a difference, to take the war to the enemy, and make them pay for a change. I always thought that was a soldier’s job – I know it’s mine, and I’m going to do it. So damn the orders, fall out, and let’s go.”

**Powers:** Zor’Iblis’Zor is a shape-changer, a demon of considerable acting skill, who likes to find an appropriate victim, kill him, and take his place. Zor’Iblis’Zor’s shape-changing powers allow him to take a lot of damage, but always make it look as though something horrible is happening to his body (this is handled with invisible armor and regeneration). Sometimes he’ll take enough damage to convincingly fake his death, at which time he’ll allow himself to be buried, teleport out of his grave, kill someone, then assume that new form. Zor’Iblis’Zor had extensive magical talents at one time, but most of them have atrophied – likewise, many of his skills (such as memories of places he’s traveled) have either atrophied or have gotten so outdated as to be useless.

Zor is quite concerned about the development of new technology that makes it easier to identify friendly forces and non-combatants, and he’s working to find a way to sabotage or circumvent it.

**Appearance:** Zor’Iblis’Zor’s true appearance varies depending on the GM’s ideas of demons; his true look should be brutish and short. Zor’Iblis’Zor is not designed to be a native of any particular campaign world – he’s a villain appropriate to any campaign world with long-standing magical powers.

**Inspiration:** Zor’Iblis’Zor was inspired by the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, which may be the best movie I’ll never see twice. In that movie, Tom Hanks’ captain led his unit to its destruction, and I wondered what it’d be like if a villain *intentionally* did that to a military unit.

**Other Genres:** *Fantasy Hero*

Zor’Iblis’Zor’s concept is also a good fit for *Fantasy Hero*. For an FH version, use the following stats:

28	STR	18	DEX	23	CON
18	BODY	23	INT	20	EGO
25	PRE	18	COM		
8+	PD	8+	ED	5	SPD
11	REC	46	END	44	STUN

and change his weapon to a Doubled-Edged Great Sword: 2½d6 AP HKA.



Zor'Iblis'Zor



## GENRE NOTE

**Mei Li Jing Shen's Defenses**

Readers may notice Mei Li Jing Shen's defenses are a bit low, and she has almost no defense against energy attacks. This is true, but Mei Li Jing Shen is not meant to be a front-line fighter. If she attacks, it is by seduction, stealth, and surprise.

Of course, due to her ghost status, she is fairly immune to the effects of most normal (*i.e.* "real-world") weapons and attacks. Chinese ghosts (in cinema, anyway), are both solid and spirit creatures at the same time. Thus, Mei Li Jing Shen's PD and Damage Reduction is not defined as a weapon bouncing off of her body, but passing *through* her, leaving her unharmed.

On the other hand, Mei Li Jing Shen may still take damage from any sufficiently large attack. Game Masters who wish to reconcile this with her undead (and presumably invulnerable) status need to remember one important fact: ghosts are beings of *negative chi* (yin energy). Martial arts techniques utilize *positive chi* (yang energy). So any large attack, whether magical or not, will disrupt Mei Li Jing Shen's negative energy levels and cause her harm.

**Mei Li Jing Shen** by Mike Surbrook

**Background/History:** Born to a poor peasant family, Mei Li Jing Shen had the misfortune to grow up to be an exceptional beauty. It didn't take long for her to attract the notice of one of the sons of the local magistrate, and the two quickly found themselves embroiled in a passionate, if doomed, love affair. For the son was due to take his government examinations, and could not allow such a dalliance to become public knowledge. So, after meeting with Mei Li Jing Shen late one night, he quietly killed her, and quickly dumped her body in a nearby canal.

When Mei Li Jing Shen next "awoke," she found herself far from home, in a garden she didn't recognize. She had changed as well, with her skin now a pale shade of blue, and her hair dead white in color. In addition, she couldn't stand the light of the sun, and she no longer felt hungry or tired. It didn't take long for Mei Li Jing Shen to discover the truth – she was dead.

Having been pulled from the canal after floating some distance, Mei Li Jing Shen's body had been cleaned, dressed and then burned, with her ashes sealed in a thick clay jar and placed in an out-of-the-way cemetery (the one usually reserved for suicides). Effectively homeless and with no family to ensure she was sent off to the underworld properly, Mei Li Jing Shen had become stranded on earth, assuming the form of a *kuang-shi*, or ghost.

**Quote:** "Death is not a release. It only indicates the start of a new existence, which in my case has been one of unending loneliness and despair."

**Personality:** As can be expected from her life story, Mei Li Jing Shen is not a very happy person. She is desperately alone, and wishes only to find peace, love, and happiness. Unfortunately, such things are denied ghosts, and so Mei Li Jing Shen is doomed to walk the earth until she is destroyed and sent on to the Underworld to be eventually reincarnated into a new life. Mei Li Jing Shen, however, is terrified of such a fate, and is afraid of what will happen when she "dies" for real. Thus, she is torn between her incomplete existence among the living, or accepting her fate and journeying to the Nine Hells to receive her punishment before being allowed to live again.

As she is lonely, Mei Li Jing Shen will attempt to waylay travelers, usually through her music and singing, and try to persuade them to spend the night with her. As she is very beautiful, she is rarely refused, although her "victims" invariably end up fleeing the next day when Mei Li Jing Shen vanishes with the morning sun. As of yet, Mei Li Jing Shen has

been unable to persuade anyone to spend more than one night with her, and a few have gone so far as to hire priests in an attempt to have her exorcised and destroyed. When this happens, Mei Li Jing Shen will take her pot of ashes and flee into the depths of the cemetery, hiding until the threat has passed.

**Powers/Tactics:** As a *kuang-shi*, Mei Li Jing Shen has certain powers common to all ghosts. Since she is already dead, she is fairly hard to hurt, unless her attacker is using specific "ghost-cutting" weapons, magic spells, or special kung fu techniques designed to destroy the undead. She no longer requires sleep, food, or drink, and can see as well in the middle of the night as the living can during the day. In addition, Mei Li Jing Shen can fly, and can easily flit about with no visible means of support. Finally, she is capable of appearing and vanishing in an instant, provided no one is looking at her directly.

As a creature of the spirit realm, Mei Li Jing Shen can return to the land of the dead at any time, as long as she has her funeral urn in hand. This urn is a small, heavy pot of ashes that needs to remain closed and unharmed. If destroyed or emptied, it is likely Mei Li Jing Shen will be forced to remain where the ashes were spilled, or possibly destroyed.

Mei Li Jing Shen's most potent abilities are centered in her long, floor-length tresses of pure white hair. She can use strands of her hair to entangle a foe, to slash at a foe's body, to fire volleys of lethal hair "needles," or to simply grapple with an opponent. Due to her supernatural nature, Mei Li Jing Shen can grow her hair at will, and is fully capable of launching an attack on a target some 40 feet away with ease.

Although Mei Li Jing Shen does not go out of her way to attack anyone, she is more than willing to defend herself if the need arises. Her preferred method is to Entangle a foe, and then use her supernaturally-strong strands of hair to squeeze them into unconsciousness. If angered, or in fear for her life, she'll attack with Hair Needles or her Hair Whip, and will not hold back, preferring to prolong her "un-life" at the expense of her attackers..

**Campaign Use:** Mei Li Jing Shen is a mixture of Hong Kong cinema and Japanese anime. Like all Hong Kong wuxia ghosts, she is very beautiful, and possesses impressive and potent supernatural powers. It should be pointed out that despite having no martial arts abilities

## DIGITAL HERO #7

### Mei Li Jing Shen

#### (Beautiful Ghost Spirit)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	Lift 75kg; 1½d6 HTH [1]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
18	CON	16	13-	
9	BODY	-2	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
22	EGO	24	13-	ECV: 7
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
30	COM	10	15-	
8	PD	6		Total PD: 8 (8 rPD)
8	ED	4		Total ED: 8 (8 rED)
4	SPD	9		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
8	REC	4		
10	END	2		
30	STUN	8		

**Total Characteristic Cost: 128**

**Movement:** Running: 0"/0"  
Flight: 12"/24"  
Teleport: 12"/24"

Cost	Powers	END
23	<i>Hair:</i> Elemental Control, 23-point reserve	
28	1) <i>Long Tresses:</i> Entangle 4d6, 4 DEF, Blocks Sight Group, Entangle Takes No Damage From Attacks (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), Entangle Can Only Target Extremities (-½), No Range (-½)	6
22	2) <i>Hair Whip:</i> HKA 2d6 (3d6+1 with STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
22	3) <i>Hair Needles:</i> RKA 1d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Autofire (5 shots; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	1
15	4) <i>Long Tresses:</i> Stretching: 6", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Fine Manipulation (-½)	0
12	<i>Long Tresses:</i> +22 STR; No Figured Characteristics (-½), Only With Hair (-¼)	2
40	<i>Supernatural Resistance To Harm:</i> Physical Damage Reduction Resistant, 75%; Not Versus "Spirit-Cutting" Weapons and Techniques, or Magic Powers (-½)	0
5	<i>Supernatural Resistance To Harm:</i> Damage Resistance (8 PD/8 ED); Not Versus "Spirit-Cutting" Weapons and Techniques, Or Magic Powers (-½)	0
45	<i>Ghost Body:</i> Life Support (Total)	0
13	<i>Returning To The Spirit Realm:</i> Extra-Dimensional Movement (spirit realm), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); IAF (jar of ashes; -½)	0

36	<i>Walking On Air:</i> Flight 12", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
-12	<i>Walking On Air:</i> Running -6" (Total 0")	0
27	<i>Invisible Movement:</i> Teleport: 12", Invisible To Hearing Group (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Noncombat Multiple (-¼), Only To "Vanish" When No One Is Looking (-½)	0
6	<i>Long Tresses:</i> Extra Limb (1), Inherent (+¼)	0
8	<i>Ghostly Clothing:</i> Cosmetic Transform 2d6, Improved Target Group (clothing into any other clothing, +¼); Limited Target (clothing; -½), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½)	1
5	<i>Spectral Sight:</i> Night Vision	0

#### Skills

12	+4 with Hair Elemental Control
0	AK: Cemetery 8-
3	Conversation 13-
3	KS: Music 13-
1	KS: Poetry 8-
4	Language: Cantonese (completely fluent)
0	Language: Mandarin (native)
3	Persuasion 13-
3	PS: Dancing 13-
3	PS: Play Pi-Pa (lute) 13-
3	PS: Singing 13-
3	Seduction 13-
3	Stealth 13-
2	Survival (Temperate/Subtropical) 13-
0	TF: Horse

**Total Powers & Skill Cost: 338**

**Total Cost: 466**

#### 200+ Disadvantages

15	Distinctive Features: Blue Skin, Long White Hair, Body Is Cool To The Touch (Concealable, Major Reaction)
15	Distinctive Features: Unearthly Beauty (Concealable, Major Reaction)
10	Hunted: Assorted Ghost Hunters And Magicians 8- (As Pow)
10	Money: Destitute
15	Physical Limitation: Cannot Stand The Light Of Day (Infrequent, Fully Impairing)
15	Physical Limitation: "Dies" For Real If Her Urn Of Ashes Is Destroyed (Infrequent, Fully Impairing)
15	Physical Limitation: Physically Repelled By Good Luck Charms And Holy Texts (Infrequent, Fully Impairing)
10	Psychological Limitation: Afraid Of Dying "For Real" (Common, Moderate)
15	Psychological Limitation: Afraid Of Priests, Holy Men, And Sorcerers (Common, Strong)

- 20 Psychological Limitation: Lonely, Craves Attention/Companionship (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Susceptibility: Direct Sunlight 1d6 Per Phase (Uncommon)
- 111 Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 466**

whatsoever, Mei Li Jing Shen still qualifies as a Wuxia Campaign character.

As written, she is fairly neutral in outlook, and can be used as either the hero or villain of a plot. For example, Mei Li Jing Shen may have had a lover before she was seduced by the son of the local magistrate, and she may now be searching for his reincarnated soul. The GM could then state that one of the PCs is this man, and have Mei Li Jing Shen pursue him in order to be finally reunited. Depending on the actions of the PCs, Mei Li Jing Shen could then become either a tragic figure, or an avenging one. If the PCs reject her outright, the GM could cast Mei Li Jing Shen in the role of the villain as she attempts to kill the reincarnated lover so as to hasten his return in a new body. Or, the PCs could accept her and attempt to find a way to provide a happy ending to the tale. Finally, the PCs could take the middle road and try to convince Mei Li Jing Shen that she is the one that needs to move on, and thus wait to be reunited with her love in yet another life.

Those GMs who wish to make Mei Li Jing Shen more of a combat threat may want to consider buying her martial arts usable with her hair. A variety of chokes, grabs, sweeps, and throws are recommended, with her martial art (“hair fu?”) being bought with the “Use Art with Hair” weapon element.

**Appearance:** Mei Li Jing Shen looks to be in her late teens or early twenties. She stands a mere 5’2” and weighs only 92 pounds, with slender, almost delicate proportions. Her eyes are brown, while her skin is a very pale blue, and her floor-length hair is purest white. Despite her odd coloration, she is quite attractive.

Normally, Mei Li Jing Shen dresses in long, flowing white robes, but her *kuang-shi* nature allows her to change clothing at will. Thus, her exact mode of dress will depend on her need, although she tends to favor the richly appointed fashions common to the upper classes.



Mei Li Jing Shen



## Elson Strasen by Chris Johnson

**Background/History:** Elson was the child of well-off nobles who gave him the best of education. At age 15, Elson went off with Master Lisandrus to learn the Lost Art. The following few years were full of study of the martial style and the philosophy of non-lethal conflict. Just after Elson's 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, while in the city of Dragonfalls, Master Lisandrus disappeared without a trace. Elson, lost and alone, fell in with a band of thugs.

Elson, feeling the thugs' style was too brutish, started organizing them into a band of thieves. This new band of thieves became too good for the local thieves' guild, The Quickfeet, who kidnapped Elson with intent to kill him. The leader of The Quickfeet, Leif Nightshade, realized Elson's potential, and took him under his wing. Elson trained as a professional thief for the next 8 years, learning everything about the art he could absorb. During this time, Leif introduced Elson to the local scene, including a number of influential people, all the while keeping Elson out of the official guild structure.

While Elson was out on an errand, Leif was assassinated. This sparked off a civil war within the thieves' guild, with all the lieutenants fighting for the top position. As it turned out, all the lieutenants managed to kill each other off, leaving the guild leaderless and splintered into many small factions. During this time, Elson was making contacts within all the factions, staying behind the scenes helping, but not getting directly involved. It took the thieves' guild from neighboring Elklake to attempt to move into Dragonfalls, for the factions to attempt to get organized. After a short period of fighting and a few more assassinations, the only person all the factions could agree on to lead them was Elson. Elson, putting all his years of training and education to good use, managed to regain dominance of the Quickfeet thieves' guild within Dragonfalls. Some factions in The Quickfeet are still not happy with Elson's rule, and are still trying to oust him. In the 12 years that Elson has led The Quickfeet, the guild has been more profitable than ever. Any of the new blood indoctrinated into the guild find it an honor to be an apprentice of The Quickfeet, solidifying Elson's rule.

**Personality/Motivation:** Elson strongly believes in non-violent means of settling disputes. If you cross his path, you are more likely to rot in a cell for a few months than to have a brute squad show up. He also will not steal from people who can't afford it, and will punish anyone in the guild who does, usually by forcing that member to take on the family or person as a patron. Elson is well regarded by the middle and lower class, and quite hated by the nobility. He enjoys a challenge, and will choose his mark more on challenge than profit, and in some cases just leave his signature and not take anything.

**Quote:** "This lock took me only 2 seconds to break – sloppy."

**Powers/Tactics:** Elson will try hard not to get into physical combat. When in combat, he will attempt to sneak up behind the party and disable the wizard or the range specialist. He will never use an attack that he thinks will kill someone. When outnumbered, he will attempt to escape with his Desolidification. Otherwise, he will use his non-combat influence to attempt to hinder the party.

**Campaign Use:** Elson is a strong and devious character to use in a campaign. He is best used as an intelligent underworld boss of a large city. His strength is that he knows a lot of people, and will use them to further his own cause.

**Appearance:** Elson still looks very young for his age, and most people can't tell he is about to turn 40. Only a hint of gray in his hair gives any indication of his true age. He is tall and handsome for a human male. Elson is usually seen in a robe covering his equipment, but on formal occasions, he will wear a jeweled sword as a sidearm. His armor looks like expensive leather, and he is almost always seen wearing it. He was noble born and trained, and tries to keep the appearance that nothing has changed.

## DIGITAL HERO #7

### Elson Strasen

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	Lift 150kg; 2½d6 HTH [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
12	CON	4	11-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
16	COM	3	12-	
7	PD	4		Total: 19 PD (12 rPD)
4	ED	2		Total: 12 ED (8 rED)
4	SPD	10		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
8	REC	6		
34	END	5		
35	STUN	5		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 100**

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

Cost	Powers	END
13	<i>Garrote:</i> HA 4d6, NND (hard armor on neck or Life Support: No Need to Breathe; +1), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (½ END, +¼); HA Lim (-½), OAF (-1), Independent (-2), Must Be Used From Behind Target (-½)	8
11	<i>Armor of Shadows:</i> Armor 12 PD / 8 ED, Hardened (+¼); OIF Armor (-½), Independent (-2)	0
8	<i>Armor of Shadows:</i> Desolidification; Cannot Pass through Solid Objects (-½), IIF (Armor; -¼), 2 Charges (-1½), Independent (-2)	0
8	<i>Ring of Silence:</i> Invisibility to Sound Group, Persistent (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½); Always On (-½), IIF (Ring; -¼), Independent (-2)	0
9	<i>Sparkling Lockpicks:</i> Dispel 10d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½); Only Against Magical Locks (-1), OIF (Lockpicks; -½), Requires A Lockpicking Skill Roll (-½), Independent (-2)	0
3	<i>Hand and Feet Spikes:</i> Clinging; OIF (Spikes, -½), Independent (-2)	0
2	<i>Headband of Sight:</i> Nightvision; IIF (Headband; -¼), Independent (-2)	0

#### Martial Arts: The Lost Art

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
5 Lost Block	+1	+3	Block, Abort
4 Lost Choke	-2	+0	Grab 1 Limb, 2d6 NND
4 Lost Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm +10 STR
4 Lost Dodge	-	+5	Dodge, Abort
4 Lost Escape	+0	+0	+15 STR vs. Grabs
3 Lost Strike	+1	+0	STR +2d6 Strike
20 Find Weakness with Lost Strike			13-

#### Perks

5	Leader of the Quickfeet Thieves' Guild
5	Wealth: Well Off
3	Well-Connected
2	1) Contact: Adventurers' Guild 8-
4	2) Contact: Captain of the Guard 11-
2	3) Contact: Guard 11-
2	4) Contact: Noble 11-
5	5) Contact: Thieves' Guild 11-
5	6) Contact: Wizards' Guild 11-

#### Talents

9	Ambidexterity (Full)
15	Combat Sense 13-
3	Lightning Reflexes with Martial Arts +2

#### Skills

10	+1 Overall Level
8	+1 with All Combat
10	+2 with Martial Arts and Garrote
10	+2 with All Interaction Skills
3	Acrobatics 13-
3	Acting 13-
3	AK: Dragonfalls 12-
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Bribery 13-
3	Climbing 13-
3	Disguise 13-
3	Forgery 13-
3	Gambling 13-
4	KS: Lost Art 13-
3	Lipreading 13-
3	Oratory 13-
3	Persuasion 13-
3	Linguist
1	1) Language: Draconic (Common is Native)
1	2) Language: Dwarven
1	3) Language: Elven
1	4) Language: Orkish
4	5) Language: Thieves' Cant
9	Lockpicking 16-
3	Security Systems (Fantasy) 13-
3	Seduction 13-
3	Shadowing 13-
3	Slight of Hand 13-
5	Stealth 14-
3	Streetwise 13-
3	Tracking 13-
3	Trading 13-
3	Ventriloquism 13-

**Total Powers and Skills Cost: 285**

**Total Character Cost: 385**

#### 100+ Disadvantages

25	Hunted: Nobility 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
10	Hunted: Wizards Guild 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
5	Hunted: Thieves Guild 8- (Less Pow, Watching)

- 0 Normal Characteristics Maxima
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
- 5 Psychological Limitation: Must Outdo Self With Every New Score (Uncommon, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Thieves' Code Of Honor (Common, Strong)
- 5 Rivalry: Thieves of Neighboring City (Professional)
- 10 Social Limitation: Famous
- 10 Reputation: Thief 11-
- 205 Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 385**

