DIGITAL HERO #11
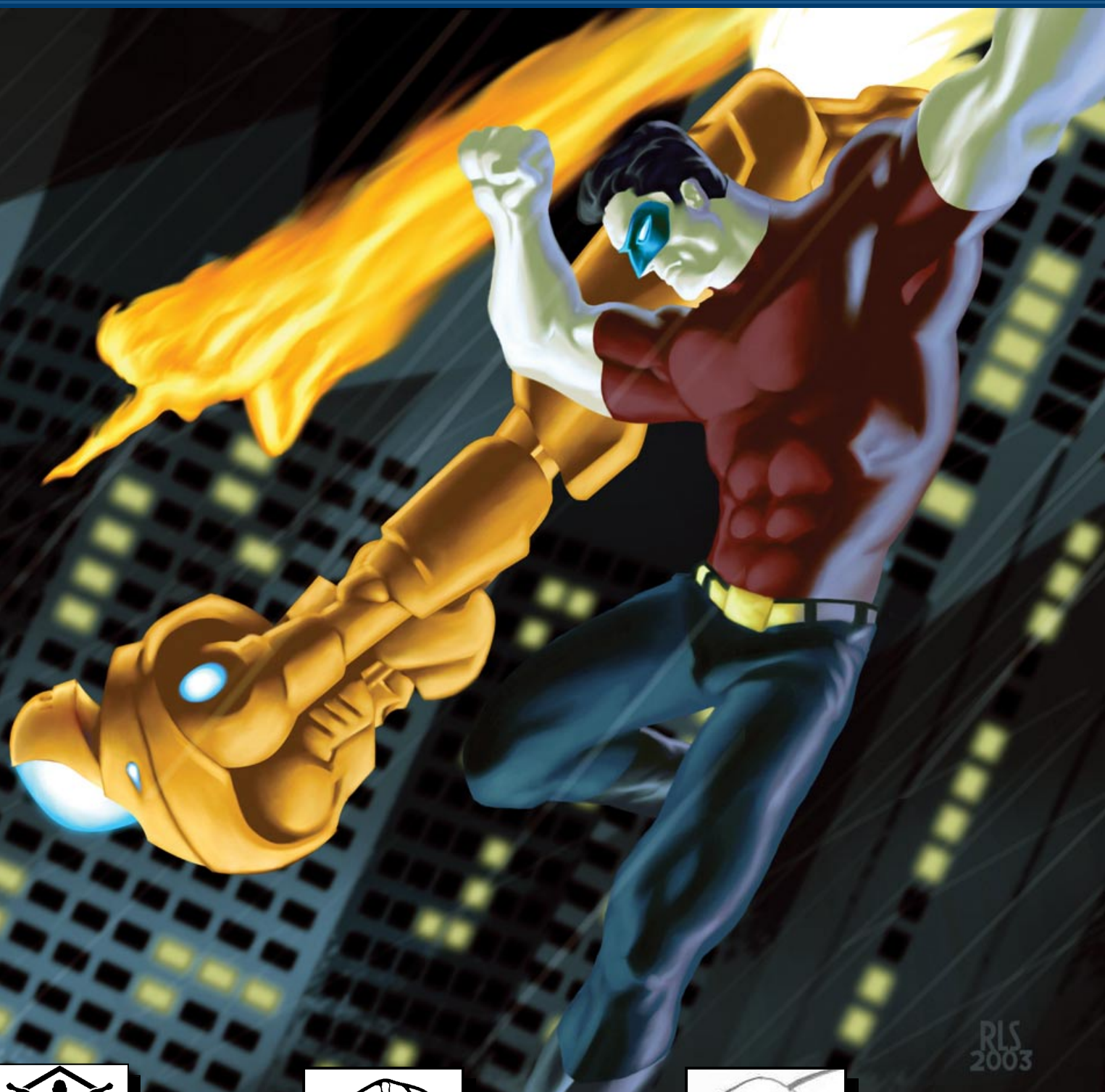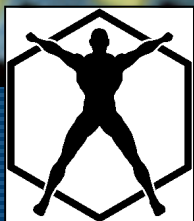
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When We Last Left Our Heroes...

by Steven S. Long

...they were trudging through the High Pass over the Snowthorn Mountains in the bitter cold of winter, seeking the cave of the legendary dragon Kar'thak. Tavern tales told the length of the land of Hellgard say the demon-blooded wyrm's hoard contains enough riches to buy the Eight Kings five times over, and no adventurer can resist a lure like that! Armed with their swords, their spells, and their wits, our heroes have gone forth to beard Kar'thak in his lair.

In short, I've been working on *Fantasy Hero* lately. A lot. ;)

The latest genre book in Hero's fine line of gaming products looks like it's going to be the biggest book we've yet published apart from the *5ᵗʰ Edition* rulebook itself. As of when I write this, I've finished the first four of seven chapters – The Genre, Character Creation, Combat And Adventuring, and Magic – and they add up to just a biscuit over 200,000 words. My guess is the last three chapters – World Creation, GMing, and the sample characters and villains – will take up at least another 50,000 words. By way of comparison, the core rulebook is 298,000 words, and *Star Hero* came to about 235,000 words. So there's a whole heapin' helpin' of Fantasy goodness heading your way in late July, folks.

Just to give you an idea of what's in store for the book, here's a chapter-by-chapter rundown. Chapter One, *Warriors, Wizards, And Wondrous Worlds: The Fantasy Genre,* delves into the nuts and bolts of Fantasy as a genre. After first discussing what "Fantasy" is, it explores the major sub-genres of Fantasy: Crossworlds Fantasy, Epic Fantasy, High Fantasy, Low Fantasy, Swords And Sorcery, and Urban Fantasy. After that, it discusses the interaction of Fantasy with meta-genres such as tragedy, comedy, and romance. It also describes classic Fantasy "bits" and elements, such as dragons, necromancy, prophecies, and swords.

Chapter Two, *Subjects Of The Realm,* reviews the subject of *Fantasy Hero* character creation in two sections. The first section contains over five dozen Racial, Environment/Ancestry, and Professional Package Deals. These provide suggested (but by no means mandatory!) Packages not just for "typical" Fantasy races and professions – dwarves, elves, gnomes, warriors, wizard, priests, and so on – but many more unusual ones as well (such as winged folk, lizard-men, shamans, and bounty hunters). The second section reviews the major elements of the *HERO System,* like Skills and Powers, and describes how they function in Fantasy games. This section includes several thousand words' worth of new or expanded Perks and Talents as well – everything from titles of nobility, to the ability to strike deadlier blows in combat, to the power to turn the undead.

Chapter Three, *Battles And Blades: Combat And Adventuring,* discusses the subject of *Fantasy Hero* combat. The first section has optional rules for the use of Combat Modifiers and Maneuvers in Fantasy settings. Following it is a section containing an expanded weapons list, complete with advanced rules for weapons use and design. Rounding out the chapter is a section on mass combat and siege warfare so that your characters won't have any trouble leveling the Black Tower of Thar'gesh after they defeat its Dark Lord's armies.

Chapter Four, *Arcane Creations: Magic,* is perhaps the most important one in the book. Magic is a core defining element of most Fantasy settings, and how magic works influences many other aspects of the setting. Thus, it's important for the GM to take the time to define how magic functions in his campaign, and what affect it has on society, history, the economy, and even geography. First, the GM has to create a *magic system,* a framework and set of rules explaining how magic works in the game. After he knows how magic works generally, he has to create *spells* for the characters to buy (or let the players create their characters' spells themselves). This chapter walks you step-by-step through this process, discussing not only basic considerations but social and rules-related issues; it includes twelve sample magic systems, each with several spells (a total of about fifty), to get you started. Lastly, the chapter describes enchanted items – how they function in the campaign, how characters can create them, and so forth – and provides over two dozen example items.

Chapter Five, *Beyond The Fields We Know: Fantasy Worlds And Races,* describes how to create Fantasy settings and races. For many gamers, creating their own Fantasy world is one of the most enjoyable things about gaming, and this chapter discusses the creation process in detail. It includes sections on geography, government, trade, travel, technology, and religion, among other subjects.

Chapter Six, *Wonders Of The Imagination: Gamemastering Fantasy Hero,* provides advice for the GM. It discusses campaign guidelines and standards, themes, and morality – all the classics. It also covers the *Fantasy Hero* environment (including underground adventuring, traps, and the like) and Fantasy villains and NPCs – how to create memorable ones and use them to best effect in the game (including how to create challenging encounters, how much treasure

monsters should have, and other such issues).

Chapter Seven, *The Brotherhood Of The Scarlet Sun,* provides a selection of sample heroes and villains to inspire players and GMs, or even to adopt for use themselves. The characters all come from Hero Games' *Turakian Age* setting, but you can easily adapt them to other Fantasy worlds.

To top all that off, the book concludes with a 5,000-word bibliography describing recommended Fantasy novels and movies, as well as listing nonfiction works used to research FH. I'm sure even the most devoted Fantasy fan will find something new there to spark his interest.

Needless to say, all this has kept me busy nearly every waking minute – there's a lot of information crammed into this book, and that much text takes time to write! Hopefully now that I've whetted your appetite a little bit, you can start planning a campaign to run as soon as *Fantasy Hero* hits the shelves!

— Steven S. Long
HERO System Line Developer
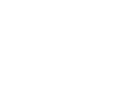
HEROglyphs by Steven S. Long

Trigger Happy

EXPANDED RULES FOR TRIGGER

The *Trigger* Advantage is one of the most flexible and interesting Power Modifiers in the *HERO System 5th Edition.* However, to maximize its usefulness, it needs some expansion and additional clarification. Submitted for your inspection, and possible incorporation into your games:

TRIGGER

This Advantage allows the character to set up a power that will activate when a given circumstance occurs. Some examples of Triggers include a button that the character must press, a radio control device, an activation word, applying sufficient pressure, a reflex action, or reaching a certain altitude.

The value of Trigger depends on what conditions or circumstances activate the Trigger, how easy it is to re-set the Trigger, and related factors. See the accompanying Trigger Table for a summary of costs. The minimum value of Trigger is +¼, regardless of the modifiers applied.

Activating Conditions

The primary consideration for a Trigger is what activates it. If only one condition activates the Trigger – such as a coded radio signal, or pressing a button – then the Advantage is worth +¼. This value also applies if a discrete and related set of conditions activates the Trigger, such as "Grabbing, or being Grabbed by, another character" (see *Damage Shield,* below). If the Trigger can vary – the character can change it each time he sets up the power – then Trigger is a +½ Advantage. Once a character sets a +½ Trigger, he cannot change it (though he could activate the Power by satisfying the Trigger's conditions and then set the Power up with a new Trigger condition).

The circumstance which activates a Triggered power must be easily verifiable, and cannot depend on any Senses the character does not possess – characters cannot use Trigger as a cheap way to detect phenomena they could not ordinarily perceive. (If the character wants to create a Trigger that has special Senses, he can buy these specifically for use with one Triggered power for a -2 Limitation, or with any Triggered power for a -1 Limitation.) The GM may want the player to write down the circumstances that activate the Trigger; this can prevent disagreements later.

TRIGGER TABLE	
Value	**Activating Circumstances**
+¼	One defined condition, or related set of conditions, activates Trigger
+½	Character can define Trigger condition with each use of the power
0 more Advantage	Activating the Trigger requires a Zero-Phase Action
¼ more Advantage	Activating the Trigger is an Action that takes no time
¼ less Advantage	Character does not control activation of personal Trigger
¼ more Advantage	Two activation conditions apply simultaneously
½ more Advantage	Three or more activation conditions apply simultaneously
	Reset Parameters
½ less Advantage	Trigger requires a Turn or more to reset
¼ less Advantage	Trigger requires a Full Phase Action to reset
0 more Advantage	Trigger requires a Half Phase Action to reset
¼ more Advantage	Trigger requires a Zero-Phase Action to reset
½ more Advantage	Trigger resets automatically, immediately after it activates
0 more Advantage	Character can set Trigger multiple times; power must have Focus or Charges
	Miscellaneous Considerations
¼ less Advantage	Trigger can expire (it has a time limit)
¼ less Advantage	Trigger can Misfire
½ more Advantage	Damage Shield (see text)

Example: *Arkelos is leaving his tower behind, and wants to set up some magical traps. He casts a guardian spell – Entangle, Area Of Effect, with a +¼ Trigger. The Power goes off whenever anyone tries to enter the room without saying "I'm home." Since Arkelos has no special Senses, only intruders perceivable by normal human Senses can activate the trap. If a visible thief tries to enter the room, he sets off the Entangle, likely trapping him until Arkelos returns. However, since Arkelos himself cannot see invisible beings, an invisible thief would not activate his Triggered spell.*

In some cases, activating a Trigger requires a character to take some specific action. As a default, this is a Zero-Phase Action, but the character can make it an Action that takes no time (so that it will activate even if it's not the character's action) by paying for an additional +¼ Advantage.

Example: *Lt. Andy Barrett of the U.S. Navy SEALs is going on an infiltration mission. He realizes that if he's spotted, the enemy can shoot him easily because he'll be seriously outnumbered. Since he may need a way to generate some quick cover, he gets four smoke grenades and rigs them to a bandolier. He buys the grenades (Darkness to Sight Group on a Focus) with a Trigger, defined as a reflex action – whenever he needs some cover, he reflexively reaches up and "pops smoke" so the enemy can't see him. The GM allows him to set the Trigger for all four grenades. If it becomes necessary to use the grenades, activating the Trigger is a Zero-Phase Action.*

If a character has a Trigger for a personal power for which he cannot control the activation, he may, at the GM's option, reduce the value of Trigger by ¼. An example would be an Aid STR, Triggered when the character becomes Enraged (or Berserk). Since the character cannot become Enraged at will, he gets less use out of his Triggered power, so the GM might reduce the Advantage's value. (The GM may also allow the power to take the *No Conscious Control* Limitation, if appropriate.)

Normally only one activation condition can apply to a Trigger at one time. If two conditions can apply simultaneously (for example, "power activates if five minutes pass *or* I say 'relgarb'"), Trigger costs ¼ more Advantage. If three or more activating conditions can apply simultaneously, Trigger costs ½ more Advantage. The GM may restrict the number of activating conditions a character can apply simultaneously in the interest of common sense, dramatic sense, or game balance.

Some Triggers can *Misfire,* meaning conditions or events other than the predefined circumstances can activate them. For example, a bomb with the Trigger "radio detonator" might Misfire if a radio tuned to certain frequencies comes within 2" of it. A Trigger subject to Misfire costs ¼ less. The typical chance to Misfire when the condition occurs is 11-; the GM may modify this based on the situation and the nature of the power.

A Trigger remains "ready" even if the character that bought the power goes to sleep or is Knocked Out. If the character dies, the fate of the Trigger depends on the circumstances. In some cases, such as powers bought through a Focus, the power may remain active (other characters may be able to use it, if the Focus is Universal). In other cases, the power may fade away, or the Trigger may activate automatically upon its creator's death (this works well for some types of spells, for example).

A Trigger has no preset time limit or duration. It's possible for a Trigger to remain ready for use for years. If a Trigger has a defined time limit (it will no longer work after a specified time period has passed), the GM may reduce the Advantage's value by ¼, but in this case, whether the duration has passed should be obvious to an observer.

Reset Conditions

The next thing to consider about a Trigger is how the character resets it. As a default, a character must use a Half-Phase Action to reset a Trigger power; he may only reset a given Trigger once per Phase. If it takes longer to reset the Trigger (a Full Phase, or a Turn or more), the Advantage costs less.

Some Triggers take less time to reset; these cost more. A Trigger that a character can reset as a Zero-Phase Action costs +¼ more. A Trigger that resets automatically after every time it's used costs +½ more. This takes no action on the character's part. This effectively makes the Trigger equal, in many ways, to a Constant power or the like, so the GM may want to establish a minimum value of +1 for any Trigger with this reset condition.

Example: *Severin d'Compeigne is a master fencer who has a lethal riposte technique – every time he Blocks a sword-blow, he can strike back at whoever attacked him. He defines this as an HKA 1d6 with a Trigger that has a single activating condition (whenever he Blocks a weapon attack with his sword). He specifies that the Trigger resets automatically after each use, and that it activates as an Action that takes no time. This costs him +1 total. Whenever he Blocks a weapon attack, his Trigger attack activates automatically and he strikes back at his attacker. Immediately after it activates, the Trigger resets, so that the attack applies* every *time he Blocks a weapon attack, even if he Blocks ten weapon attacks in the same Segment.*

Typically, a character may only set a Trigger once; after the Trigger activates, the character must reset the Trigger. (This does not apply to Triggers that automatically reset, of course.) If a Power has the *Focus* Limitation or the *Charges* Power Modifier, the character can set the Trigger multiple times. This would be appropriate for attacks like landmines, for example. The GM can allow characters to set other Triggers multiple times, if desired, or forbid multiple setting if appropriate.

Using Trigger Powers

To Trigger a power, the character must first set up the power – for example, a landmine (2d6 RKA, Explosion, Trigger [when sufficient pressure applied, +¼]) must be buried at the proper location and activated before it will go off. The character pays END (if any) for the Trigger when he sets up the power; Limitations such as Activation Roll, Extra Time, Concentrate, and Requires A Skill Roll also apply when the power is set up, not when it is used.

For Triggered powers not activated by the character who bought the power, the target of a Triggered power is the person who sets off the Trigger – who steps on the landmine, who walks into the zone that activates a trap, or the like. Of course, that may make other people targets as well (if, for example, the Triggered power is an Explosion). In situations where the character controls the activation of the Trigger, such as the bandolier of grenades mentioned above, the character may choose his target.

The character makes the Attack Roll needed to hit a target with the power when the Trigger activates, not when he sets up the power. For a power not typically intended for use in combat (such as a Triggered trap, or a landmine), the character uses his OCV at the time he sets up the attack. Based on the special effects, the nature of the Trigger, and other such factors, the GM may, in his discretion, forbid characters to use bonuses from Combat Skill Levels, maneuvers, or the like, and simply require the use of base OCV only. For a power typically intended for use in combat (such as the bandolier of grenades mentioned in the example above, or a Damage Shield), the character uses his OCV at the time he makes the attack, and can apply Combat Skill Levels normally.

In either case, the GM may, at his discretion, impose modifiers on the character's OCV to reflect the situation when he Triggers the attack. For example, if he can't see the location of the Triggered power clearly (perhaps it's blocked by Darkness), he may have a harder time Triggering it precisely. On the other hand, some Triggered powers (like a landmine, whose Triggering the character doesn't really control at all) might not suffer a reduced OCV in this situation.

For a typical Triggered power, calculate the Range Modifier from the point at which the power is "located" (where the character set the Trigger and left it). With other Triggered powers, like the bandolier of grenades mentioned above, the "location" of the power and where the character is when he activates it are the same, so he calculates the Range Modifier from the character as normal.

Even though a power has been set with a Trigger and not yet used, another character may Dispel or Drain that power, or deactivate it by other appropriate methods. For example, an enemy wizard could Dispel Arkelos' guardian spell, saving himself from being captured by Arkelos' trap. A soldier could defuse a landmine with a Demolitions roll.

If a character applies an Adjustment Power to increase a Triggered power, or he Pushes a Triggered power, the effects of the Adjustment Power or Pushing fade at their normal rate. A character cannot "boost" a Triggered power, set the Trigger, and thus "lock in" the boosted effect. Characters may not Haymaker Triggered powers.

Characters can usually spot a power with a Trigger with a PER Roll, unless the power has the Advantage *Invisible Power Effects.*

Damage Shield

These expanded and revised rules for Trigger make it possible to dispense with Damage Shield as a separate Power Advantage, and simply make it a modifier for Trigger. In this case, the Trigger is activated if the character Grabs, or is Grabbed or touched by, another person (+¼; increase to +½ if the character can activate the Damage Shield whenever he touches another character). It takes no time to activate (additional ¼) and resets automatically (additional ½). The Damage Shield modifier (an additional ½ Advantage) reflects that fact that the Triggered power *automatically* hits the target, without the need for any Attack Roll (characters may *not* apply this Advantage under any other circumstances). Thus, the total cost for a Trigger Damage Shield is +1 ½. Using this arrangement, a character need not apply Continuous (+1) to a non-Constant power used for Damage Shield, and may apply the *No Range* (-½) Limitation to Ranged powers used for Damage Shield.

> **Example:** *Feuermacher has a "Fiery Mantle" Damage Shield, built as follows:*
>
> Fiery Mantle: *RKA 1d6+1, Trigger (when Grabs, or is Grabbed or touched by, another character, activates as an Action that takes no time, resets automatically; +1), Damage Shield (+½) (50 Active Points); No Range (-½), No Knockback (-¼). Total cost: 29 points.*
>
> *Whenever Feuermacher is Grabbed or touched by another character, or when he Grabs someone, his Damage Shield causes that person 1d6+1 Killing Damage. This occurs automatically; he does not have to make an Attack Roll. Furthermore, his Damage Shield's Trigger activates and resets automatically; neither action requires him to do anything nor takes any time.*

⚠ **Trigger Cost Multiplier: See table.**

Ⓧ

Hero Universe by Darren Watts

The Fab Five in the '70s

Hail and well met, fellow fans and Herodom Assembled! Presented for your approval, Part Three of the ongoing introduction to the Fabulous Five, as publicly acclaimed by at least one or two of you. Today: The 1970s!

Part V

The young mother on the sidewalk screamed and draped her body over her small child as pieces of masonry plunged toward her from the collapsing roof of Stuart's Department Store. As she braced herself for the deadly impact, she was suddenly swept up in what seemed to be an enormous wind, which deposited her ungracefully across the street. Confused, she clutched her daughter's hand as she watched the brickwork crash into the sidewalk and shatter where she'd been standing a second before.

"You'll be all right, ma'am," said the Streak, saluting her briefly with a jaunty smile. And then he was gone in another blur and breeze, returning to the chaotic battle raging up the block. She hugged her daughter closely, near tears with relief they were both unharmed, but still a small part of her reeled. *He smiled at me!*

Meanwhile, Diamond struggled to remove himself from pile of debris he'd turned a small corner grocery's front wall into when he hit it at high speed. "Hey Al! Where are you, man?" He climbed to his feet, shaking off the effects of Sludge's massive blow. For a moment he feared for his young partner, but then was relieved to see an utterly-out-of-place Bengal Tiger across the street, growling and preparing to leap back into the fray.

Their opponent, a massive gray-brown monstrosity whose body seemed to flow like thick molasses, was ineffectively swiping through the air at their newest teammate, the Thaar Princess Kestrel. Dodging under his outstretched arm, she swooped in close and struck another blow with her steel staff. Though she was not doing much damage against his dense form, she was far too fast for him to land a blow in return.

From behind, Kid Chameleon landed on Sludge's back with a ferocious growl, slashing with the claws of his tiger form. Sludge almost seemed to ignore the attack, shrugging him off with a roll of his enormous shoulders. Streak braked to a halt next to Diamond. "Okay, boss, we need a new idea here. He's taking everything we got and laughing at us." Unspoken was the rest of the thought: *Amazing Man would have thought of something by now*, but Diamond heard it anyway. He shook his head, as if to clear away

cobwebs. "Don't worry about it. I've got him." He braced himself to leap back into the fight, when suddenly a whistle pieced the sounds of combat.

Diamond and Streak looked around for the source of the noise, but saw nothing. Then, Kestrel flared her wings against a sudden burst of wind, and Kid Chameleon ducked his head as newspapers and dirt began to blow into his face. Sludge looked around, puzzled, as the wind began to whirl around him with ever-increasing force. As he stood in the middle of the street, with flecks of goo flying off his grotesque body in the gale, he screamed, "Who is doing this? Who dares attack Sludge?!?" Then the winds lifted him off his feet and sent him crashing into the brick wall next to the surprised Diamond and Streak.

To his credit, he remained conscious, and slowly began to try to stand up again. Diamond clenched his fist and brought it down on the felon's head, sending him into unconsciousness.

Diamond looked down at the goo on his hand, and grimaced. He looked around for something to wipe it off on, and Streak backed up quickly. "Umm, I'll go see if I can find something to tie him up with. *Without* touching him." He blurred away.

Shaking as much of the goo off his hand as he could, Diamond looked out into the street. There, a small, delicately lovely young woman, with dark eyes and a modest dress, walked slowly down the street to where Kestrel and Kid Chameleon were standing. She picked her way through the debris, and held her hand out to shake Kid's. *That tiny little thing? Hmmph. Well, let's see what her story is....*

Kestrel

Background/History: Kestrel, whose real name is Klee, is the Princess of the Birdpeople of Thaar, a race of humanoids who were mutated by aliens thousands of years ago and given several avian characteristics, including functional wings, feathers instead of body hair, and lighter bone structure. The small society of Birdpeople has lived in secrecy for centuries on a mist-covered island in the Indian Ocean, where they were discovered by the Fabulous Five for the first time in 1965. Though their initial contact had its bumpy moments, the Five helped King Gudra thwart an assassination attempt by Gyrfalcon, his treacherous Captain of the Guard, and became heroes of the land. Klee, who was Gudra's daughter, became the new Captain, and when the Five arranged for a small team of anthropologists to come live on the island, she spent a lot of time with them and learned about the ways of humans.

In 1970, Klee came to America along with several of the scientists (who were preparing to publish a book on their findings), and wound up involved in a plot by Gyrfalcon and his ally, Revenger. Klee helped the Fab Five defeat the two villains again, and she began a romance with Kid Chameleon. A few months later, when Amazing Man and Siren announced their retirement, Kestrel accepted Chameleon's offer to help replace them.

Kestrel served as a member of the Five throughout the 1970s, a period of several tragedies on the team, most notably the death of her boyfriend at the hands of Dr. Destroyer in 1975 and the subsequent madness of her friend and teammate Scirocco. When the team disbanded for good in 1979, she returned to the Island of Birdpeople and her post as Captain of the Guard. When King Gudra died in 1985, she was next in line for the throne but declined the offer; her cousin Kea instead took the throne, and rules there today.

Personality/Motivation: Kestrel is a warrior born. She is always in search of her next challenge, whether physical or mental; she is a brave fighter, but also an intensely curious explorer. She is always conscious that she is the representative of her people in America, and will not do anything to dishonor herself or her people in the public's eyes. She was drawn to Kid Chameleon's gentle, quiet spirit, as well as his bravery; after his death, she became much more withdrawn and quiet herself, taking less pleasure in personal combat than she once did.

Quote: "Leave those people alone, coward. If you want a battle, turn and face *me*."

Powers/Tactics: Kestrel is a talented hand-to-hand fighter and exceptionally skilled at fighting with polearms, especially the telescoping staff she carries at her belt. She's a fairly shrewd tactician, and will avoid getting too close to opponents who can hurt her. She works well with teammates, setting them up by tangling enemies with her bolos, or drawing fire by swooping across the battlefield.

Appearance: Kestrel is a lovely example of the Birdpeople; she appears to be a cross between a tall human and a golden-feathered hawk. Her plumage is bright gold on her head and slightly duller and darker on the rest of her body. Her eyes are large and black, and she has a short beak and talon-like nails on her fingers and toes. Her wings span nearly fifteen feet and grow from between her shoulder blades. Her costume is a modified version of the Fab Five jumpsuit with holes cut for her wings.

Kestrel

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	200 kg; 2½d6 HTH [1]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
12	INT	2	11-	PER Roll: 11-
13	EGO	6	12-	ECV: 4
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
16	COM	3	12-	
18	PD	14		Total: 26 PD (11 rPD)
15	ED	11		Total: 19 ED (7 rED)
6	SPD	27		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
9	REC	2		
36	END	0		
36	STUN	7		

Total Characteristics Cost: 145

Movement:
Flight:	15"/60"	
Running:	6"/12"	
Swimming:	2"/4"	

Cost	Powers	END
8	*Eagle Eyes*: Telescopic +5 to PER Rolls (only to offset the Range Modifier)	0
30	*Warrior's Eye*: Find Weakness 11- with All Attacks	0
23	*Natural Wings*: Flight 15", 4x Noncombat; Restrainable (-½)	3
2	*Warm Feathers:* Life Support: Safe in Intense Cold	0
7	*Avian Thoughtspeech*: Mind Link (Specific Group of Minds: Avians); Eye Contact Required (-½)	0
3	*Natural Toughness*: Damage Resistance (3 PD/3 ED)	0
12	*Costume:* Armor (8 PD/8 ED); Activation Roll 13- (-¾), IIF (-¼)	0
10	*Staff*: HA +4d6 (8d6 with STR); OAF (-1), HA Lim (-½) **plus** Stretching 1"; No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), OAF (-1)	3
17	*Halberd*: HKA 2d6 (3d6+1 with STR); OAF (-1) **plus** Stretching 1"; OAF (-1), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼)	4
11	*Bolo*: Entangle 4d6, 4 DEF; OAF (-1), 2 Recoverable Charges (-1), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), Can Be Missile Deflected (-¼)	0

Martial Arts: Birdpeople Fighting

Cost	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm; +10 STR
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Abort
4	Strike	+0	+2	Weapon +2 DC
5	Sacrifice	+1	-2	Weapon +4 DC
5	Offensive	-2	+1	Weapon +4 DC
1	Use Art with Polearms and Spears			

Perks

3	Contact: Gudra, King of the Birds 11- (useful Skills or resources)

Talents

3	Absolute Range Sense
3	Bump Of Direction
28	Danger Sense 12- (Immediate Vicinity, Sense, Out of Combat)
5	Lightning Reflexes: +3 DEX with All Actions
3	Lightsleep
3	Perfect Pitch

Skills

6	+2 with Polearms
3	Acrobatics 14-
2	AK: City of Birdmen 11-
5	Analyze: Combat 12-
2	Animal Handler (Birds) 13-
3	Breakfall 14-
3	High Society (Birdman) 13-
2	KS: Birdmen of Thaar 11-
2	Language: Birdpeople: Fluent Conversation
2	Navigation (Air) 11-
3	Paramedics 11-
3	Shadowing 11-
3	Stealth 14-
2	Survival (Arctic/Subarctic) 11-
3	Tactics 11-
3	Tracking 11-
5	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Javelins and Thrown Spears, Lances, Staffs

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 243

Total Cost: 388

200+ Disadvantages

20	Distinctive Features: Birdperson (Concealable, Extreme Reaction)
15	Enraged: When Foe Behaves Dishonorably (Common, go 8-, rec 11-)
15	Hunted: Rogues' Gallery 8- (As Pow, Harshly Punish, PC has a Public ID or is otherwise very easy to find)
5	Physical Limitation: Light-boned, Takes +1" Knockback (Infrequently, Slightly)
15	Psychological Limitation: Overconfident in Combat (Common, Strong)
20	Psychological Limitation: Code of Honor, Assists Forces of Good, Protect the Weak (Common, Total)
10	Social Limitation: Public Identity (Frequently, Minor)
88	Experience Points

Total Cost: 388

Scirocco

Background/History: Leila Riad was born in Cairo in 1948, to a pair of Egyptian scientists. After her parents died in a car crash in 1959, she was raised by her older brother Hamid. In 1966, she discovered that she was a mutant, with the astonishing ability to control winds. She was also manic-depressive, prone to fits of anger (punctuated by small but destructive tornadoes) or long stretches when she couldn't bear to go outside. She traveled to America in 1970 and became a patient of "Psychologist to the Superheroes" Michael Livingstone, who diagnosed her and put her on a course of medication. With her life newly under control, she sought out and joined the Fabulous Five. The Egyptian government supported her decision to stay in America, as the official government team did not allow female superhumans to serve.

For several years she served with the team, briefly romancing Streak between two of his marriages and helping them defeat such villains as Griffin and the Slug. She battled against Dr. Destroyer, and when Kid Chameleon fell in battle in 1975, her depression returned and she took a leave of absence from the team. She spent several weeks in therapy again, but disappeared after a June session and wasn't seen again for almost three years.

When she returned, she had unfortunately totally surrendered to her illness and went on a destructive rampage through New York, only narrowly averted by the new members of the Fab Five. She was returned to Egypt and her family for additional treatment, but escaped several times, leaving trails of destruction in her wake.

In 1991, she encountered the mutant Syfon, who permanently drained her of her powers and left her lying injured in an alley. She was rescued by passersby, and returned to a Cairo hospital. Since then, she has resumed therapy and currently lives in a managed-care facility in Alexandria.

Personality/Motivation: While a member of the Fabulous Five, Scirocco's personality is prone to swings between active, determined, and even aggressive heroism and passive mildness. Before 1975, however, her illness remains under control and doesn't really endanger her or anyone else. She's a loyal and supportive teammate, and is keenly aware of her status as perhaps the most famous Arab woman in the US, taking great care in how she presents herself to the public. She is unfailingly polite and friendly to the press and fans.

She undergoes a relatively brief romance with the far more outgoing Streak, instigated in one of her "up" periods. It ends fairly well, as both agree they have little in common.

Quote: "I'd advise you to surrender. Before I get *angry*."

Powers/Tactics: Scirocco controls winds, using them primarily to throw opponents around the battlefield and set up the attacks of her teammates. Between her whirlwinds and wind-blasts, she has little reason to ever come close enough to risk injury, and so tends to snipe from above while Diamond and Kestrel lead the charge, or even from behind cover if her winds are not defense enough.

Appearance: Scirocco is an Egyptian woman in her early twenties, with long dark hair and pretty features. Her eyes are large and dark brown. She stands only 5'1", but is lean and in good shape. She wears the standard Fabulous Five jumpsuit.
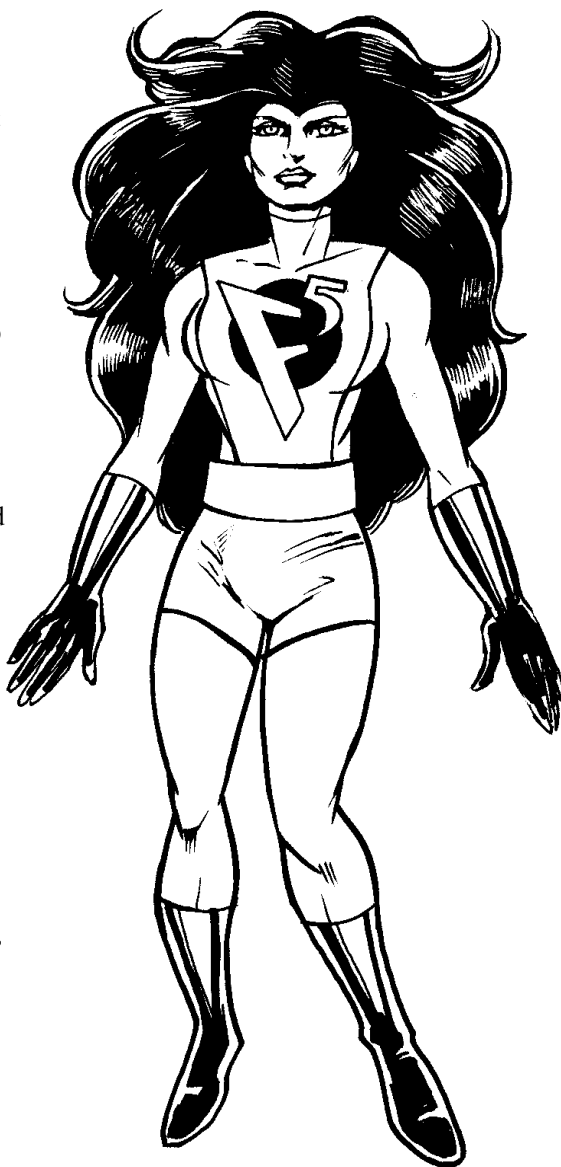
Scirocco

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	Lift 150kg; 2½d6 HTH[1]
22	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7 (9)
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 12-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
18	COM	4	13-	
6	PD	3		Total: 29 PD (23 rPD)
8	ED	4		Total: 26 ED (18 rED)
6	SPD	28		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
7	REC	0		
46	END	5		
26	STUN	3		

Total Characteristics Cost: 109

Movement: Flight   20"/80"
                 Running: 6"/12"
                 Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
75	*Wind Control:* Multipower, 75-point reserve	
7u	1) *Mini-Tornado:* EB 7d6 (vs. ED), Area Of Effect (14" Cone; +1)	7
7u	2) *Wind Blast:* EB 8½d6 (vs. PD), Double Knockback (2x KB; +¾)	7
4u	3) *Wall of Wind:* Force Field (15 PD/10 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
7u	4) *Mini-Whirlwind:* Telekinesis (50 STR)	0
5u	5) *Dust Storm:* Flash 7d6 (Sight Group), Area Of Effect (4" Any Area; +1); IAF (Only Where There is Dirt and Debris to Stir Up, -½)	7
4u	6) *Shield of Wind:* Missile Reflection (Arrows, Slings, Etc.), Ranged (Adjacent Hex; +½); Will Not Work Against Heavy Missiles (-¼)	0
2u	7) *Fingers of Air:* Spatial Awareness	0
45	*Wind-Riding:* Flight 20" 4x Noncombat	4
16	*Costume:* Armor (8 PD/8 ED); Activation Roll 15- (-¼), IIF (-¼)	0
10	*Charmed:* Luck 2d6	

Perks

2	Reputation: Celebrity Superheroine (large group, 8-) +2/+2d6
3	Contact: Egyptian Government 8-, Organizational Contact

Talents

15	Combat Sense 12-

Skills

6	+2 with Multipower
10	+2 with DCV
3	Acrobatics 13-
3	AK: Middle East 12-
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Bureaucratics 12-
3	High Society 12-
2	KS: Arab Superhumans 11-
2	Language: English (Fluent Conversation, Arabic is Native)
3	Stealth 13-
1	Tactics 8-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 241

Total Cost: 350

200+ Disadvantages

15	Dependent NPC: Brother Hamid 11- (Normal)
15	Hunted: Rogues' Gallery 8- (As Pow, Harshly Punish, PC has a Public ID or is otherwise very easy to find)
5	Hunted: Egyptian Authorities 8- (As Pow, NCI, Watching, PC has a Public ID or is otherwise very easy to find, Limited Geographical Area)
15	Physical Limitation: Suffers from Clinical Manic Depression (Infrequently, Fully)
20	Psychological Limitation: Code vs. Killing (Common, Total)
10	Psychological Limitation: Egyptian Patriot (Common, Moderate)
10	Psychological Limitation: Somewhat Paranoid (Common, Moderate)
10	Social Limitation: Celebrity Arab Heroine (Frequently, Minor)
10	Unluck: 2d6
40	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Sludge

Background/History: Charlie Moore was never much more than a thug. He'd taken a couple of private security jobs in the late '60s, but had regularly supplemented his income by strong-arming gamblers who owed money to the local mob. In 1970, he was released from his third short term in County Jail and took a respectable night job guarding Connel Industrial Chemicals' local production facilities, which were regular targets for anti-pollution protesters. The pay was decent, and Charlie certainly appreciated the opportunity to push around some longhaired kids.

At least, until the night in 1970 when a group of monkeywrenchers tried to burn down Connel's chemical labs. Moore was chasing a couple of the kids involved when he was caught in a sudden explosion, bathing him in an uncanny combination of chemicals that worked a mutagenic change on his body. Transformed into a hideous monster and shunned by society, Moore became the supervillain known as Sludge.

Sludge roamed the country for several years, getting into various scrapes with superheroes. He was one of the first villains sentenced to Stronghold in 1978, and participated in the notorious mass breakout from that facility in 1985. In 1997, he encountered the alien Nebula, who passed judgment on him and transported him to the extra-dimensional prison world of Duress, where he's been trapped ever since.

Personality/ Motivation: Sludge is a bully who hates what he's been mutated into; an ugly, smelly, terrifying monster even in his own eyes. He feels tremendously sorry for himself and takes out his anger and pain on everybody around him. He loses his temper, starts smashing things, and the next thing he knows he's either on the run again or slapped into a prison of some sort. He'd love to find a cure for his condition – several "master criminals" have promised him one in exchange for "a little help on this next job," and they've failed (or not even tried) enough that he doesn't easily believe anyone else making such a promise.

Quote: "You've all laughed at me! Well, ya won't be laughing after I feed ya this lamppost!"

Powers/Tactics: Sludge is a living, roughly humanoid pile of toxic waste, and can spit poison or flow his body like mud. He's tremendously strong, and not very bright, so his attacks tend to be straightforward and unimaginative. He's particularly dangerous in close, where he can release clouds of smog to blind opponents and then grab and crush them.

Appearance: Sludge is a monster transformed by toxic waste into a living mass of pollution. His body is semi-solid and capable of "oozing" through small spaces. He should be roughly humanoid, but with a rounded, corpulent head and body that seems vaguely liquid. His skin is a disturbing grey-brown.
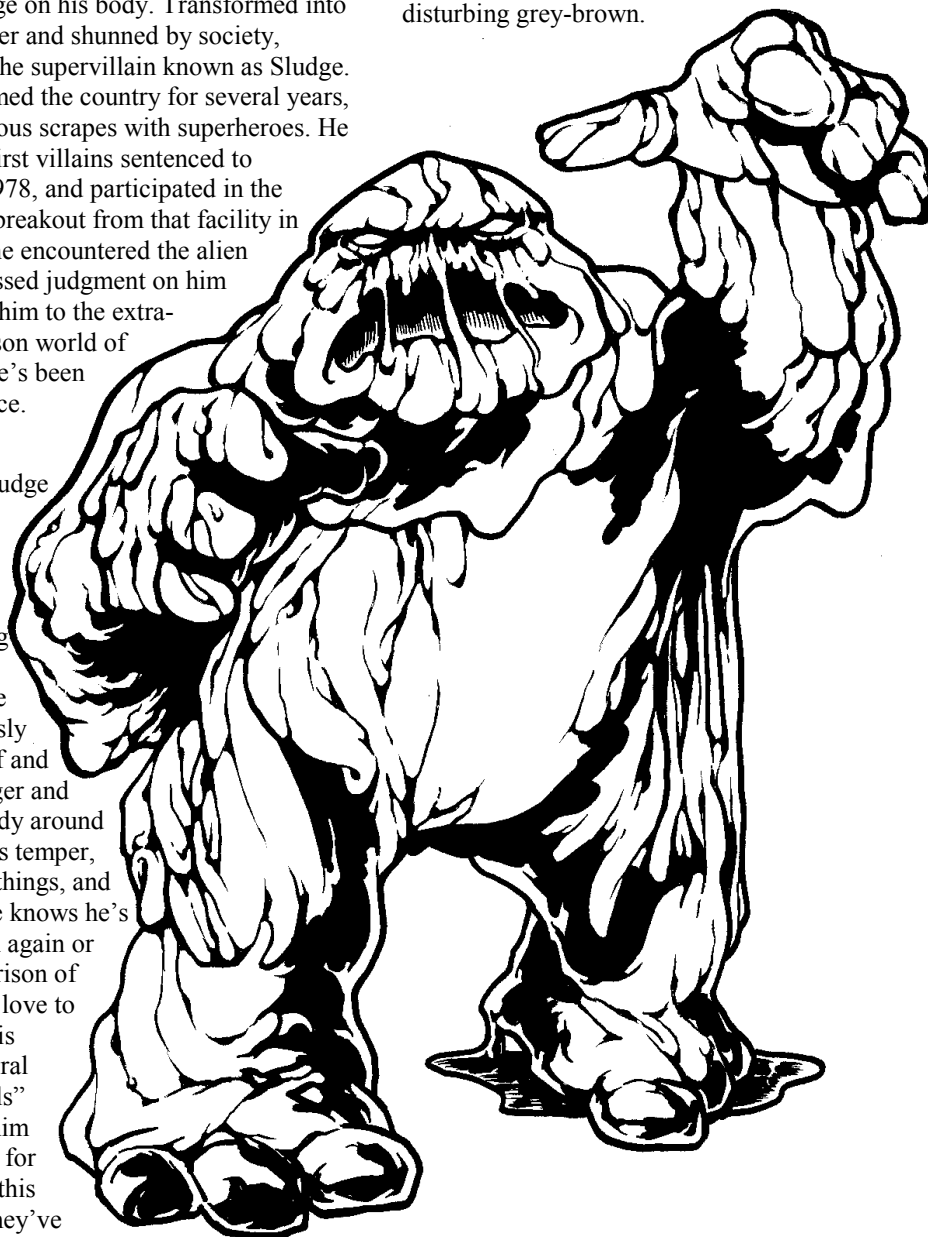
Sludge

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
65	STR	55	24-	200 tons; 13d6 HTH [6]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
35	CON	50	18-	
23	BODY	26	14-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll: 11-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
4	COM	-3	10-	
25	PD	4		Total: 14 PD (8 rPD)
20	ED	2		Total: 13 ED (8 rED)
5	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
20	REC	4		
70	END	5		
74	STUN	3		

Total Characteristics Cost: 214

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

Cost	Powers	END
16	*Pollution Powers:* Elemental Control, 32-point Powers	
13	1) *Toxic Spittle:* RKA ½d6 (vs. PD), Personal Immunity (+¼), Penetrating (+½), Uncontrolled (+½), Continuous (+1); Limited Range: 8" (-¼)	3
17	2) *Toxic Fumes:* Change Environment 8" radius (-1 PER Roll: Sight Group, -4 PER Roll: Smell/Taste Group, Long-Lasting: 20 Minutes); Nonselective (-¼)	4
19	3) *Sludge Blob:* Flash 6d6 (Sight and Smell/Taste Groups)	4
22	4) *Sludgy Suffocation:* EB 4d6, No Normal Defense (Self-Contained Breathing, +1), Continuous (+1); No Range (-½), Must Follow Grab (-½)	6
28	5) *Smog:* Darkness to Sight and Smell/Taste Groups 3" Radius, Personal Immunity (+¼)	5
30	*Sludgy Body:* Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
15	*Sludgy Body:* Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%	0
40	*Sludgy Body:* Desolidification (Affected by Earth Control and Ice/Cold Powers), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Cannot Pass Through Solid Objects (-½)	0
25	*Sludgy Body:* Stretching 5"	2
12	*Regeneration:* Healing 3d6; Only in Already-Polluted Areas (-1), Self Only (-½)	3
22	*Mutated Physiology:* Life Support (Immunity: All terrestrial diseases and biowarfare agents, Immunity: All terrestrial poisons and chemical warfare agents, Safe in High Radiation)	0

Skills

15	+3 with Hand-to-Hand Combat
3	AK: Polluted Sites of New York and New Jersey 12-
3	Climbing 13-
3	Demolitions 11-
2	KS: Environmental Groups 11-
2	KS: Toxic Chemicals and Waste 11-
2	SS: Ecology 11-
3	Stealth 13-
2	Survival (Temperate/Subtropical) 11-
1	WF: Rifles

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 295

Total Cost: 509

200+ Disadvantages

25	Distinctive Features: Enormous Sludgy Monster (Not Concealable, Extreme Reaction)
10	Enraged: Against "Despoilers of the Environment" (Uncommon, go 11-, rec 14-)
15	Physical Limitation: Low Manual Dexterity (Fingers too large for guns, keypads, etc.) (Frequently, Greatly)
15	Psychological Limitation: Hates Big Corporations that Pollute (Uncommon, Total)
20	Psychological Limitation: Hates His New Appearance and Powers and Takes It Out On "Normals" (Very Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Impulsive and Careless (Common, Strong)
15	Reputation: Horrible Monster 11- (Extreme)
10	Unluck: 2d6
20	Vulnerability: 2x STUN and BODY from Cold-based Attacks (Uncommon)
164	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 509

You Gotta Have Character by Jason Walters

> "Life is lived forwards, but understood backwards." — Kierkegaard

I have set my mind on the science of martial arts since my youth long ago. I was thirteen years old when I had my first duel. On that occasion I won over my opponent, a martial artist named Arima Kihei of the New School of Accuracy. At sixteen years of age, I beat a powerful martial artist called Akiyama of Tijima province. When I was twenty-one, I went to the capital city and met martial artists from all over the country. Although I engaged in numerous duels, never did I fail to attain victory.

After that, I traveled from province to province, meeting martial artists of the various schools. Although I dueled more than sixty times, never once did I lose. That all took place between the time I was thirteen years old and the time I was twenty-nine.

When I had passed the age of thirty and reflected on my experiences, I realized that I had not been victorious because of consummate attainment of martial arts. Perhaps it was because I had an inherent skill for the science and had not deviated from natural principles. It may also have been due to the shortcomings in the martial arts of other schools. In any case, I subsequently practiced day and night in order to attain an even deeper principle, and spontaneously came upon the science of martial arts. I was fifty years old at that time.

Since then, I have passed the time with no science into which to enquire. Trusting in the advantage of military science, as I turn it into the science of all arts and skills, I have no teacher in anything.

— Miyamoto Musashi
The Book of Five Rings

Renowned Japanese swordmaster Miyamoto Musashi may have been one of the greatest, as well as strangest, warriors to ever live. Though he began his days as a violent, rather brutish young man, his dedication to feudal Japan's "way of the sword" transformed him into a master of his chosen weapons, the *katana* (or "longsword") and the *wakizashi* (or "sidearm"). In a process that was a much spiritual as martial, Musashi embarked upon a quest to conquer himself by defeating others, thus hoping to become a better man while simultaneously transfiguring himself into a living legend. Unable to settle down into any normal kind of existence, Musashi lived the life of a masterless Samurai (or ronin) doomed to wander through the violent world of medieval Japan in search of spiritual, as well as physical, perfection. Towards the end of his career as a duelist, Musashi's abilities had become so great that he preferred to fight, out of fairness to his opponents, using only a single sharpened piece of bamboo.

Having more than proved himself with over sixty kills, Musashi retired to a cave in Japan's wilderness to perfect his art of two weapon fighting, known as *Nito-Ryu*, before composing his classic *Gorin no sho*, or The Book of Five Rings, an ambitious guide to the principles of craft, skill, timing, tradition, and spirit.

artwork by Ron Salas

DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS OF MEDIEVAL JAPAN

Bakufu – meaning literally "tent government." It was the military paragovernment of the Shogun who actually ran Japan, as opposed to the Imperial Government, which was largely for show.

Bushido – a code of conduct specific to the armed gentry class known as *bushi*. Most Samurai referred to themselves by using this term.

Musha-Shugyo – the "warrior pilgrimage" in which a Samurai sets out on the road, traveling more or less randomly while seeking out opponents to fight in order to prove his martial prowess.

Ronin – or "wanderer," was an unemployed nomadic Samurai available for hire by a baron or clan. During the third *Bakufu* known as the Edo period, the entire *bushi* class was disenfranchised from their ancestral land. Japan was then divided into some 200 baronies, which were only allowed to retain a limited number of warriors. This resulted in a large number of *ronin* roaming the countryside.

Samurai – derived from the Japanese verb *samurau*, which means, "to serve as an attendant." This word was used by other social classes to refer to lower level warrior-nobles.

Shin-ken – translated literally means "real sword," but in common parlance means to do something with complete earnestness. Could also be translated as "deadly serious."

Taryu-Jiai – a contest in which practitioners of different schools or styles of martial arts fight in order to improve their ability as well as demonstrate the superiority of one style over another.

Miyamoto Musashi

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	15	14-	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 HTH [2]
26	DEX	48	14-	OCV: 9/DCV: 9 (12)
20	CON	20	13-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
12	PD	7		Total: 12 PD (0 rPD)
8	ED	4		Total: 8 ED (0 rED)
6	SPD	24		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
15	REC	12		
60	END	10		
70	STUN	27		

Total Characteristics Cost: 220

Movement: Running: 12"/24"
Swimming: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
11	*Katana:* HKA 1½d6 (2d6+1 with STR); OAF (-1), STR Min 12 (-½), Real Weapon (-¼)	2
7	*Wakizashi (Wooden Sword):* HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR); OAF (-1), STR Min 8 (-½), Real Weapon (-¼)	1
15	*Sheer Toughness:* Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%	0

Martial Arts: Nito-Ryu

	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Bind	+2	+0	Bind, +10 STR
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Disarm	-1	+1	+10 STR
4	Lightning Stroke	+2	+0	Weapon +2 DC Strike
5	Slashing Stroke	-2	+1	Weapon +4 DC Strike

Talents
9 Ambidexterity (Eliminate Off Hand Penalty entirely)

Perks
9 Reputation: Greatest Warrior in Japan (large group, 14-) +3/+3d6

Skills
16 +2 with All Combat
15 +3 with DCV
9 +3 with Nito-Ryu

7 Acrobatics 16-
7 Breakfall 16-
5 Climbing 15-
10 Defense Maneuver IV
5 Fast Draw 15-
3 High Society 13-
3 Language: Mandarin (Fluent Conversation, Literacy)

2 Language: Japanese (Imitate Dialects, Literacy)
3 KS: Siege Warfare 13-
3 KS: Painting 13-
3 KS: Calligraphy 13-
3 PS: Teacher 13-
5 Rapid Attack (Hand-to-Hand)
5 Survival (Marine Surface, Temperate/ Subtropical, Urban) 13-
10 Two-Weapon Fighting (HTH)
9 Tactics 16-
4 Weaponsmith (Muscle-Powered HTH) 14-
3 WF: Blades, Homemade Weapons, Off Hand

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 204
Total Cost: 424

200+ Disadvantages
15 Distinctive Features: Disfiguring Skin Condition (Not Concealable)
10 Distinctive Features: Samurai Bearing (Concealable)
10 Distinctive Features: Bizarre Style: Never Bathes, Changes Clothes, or Combs Hair (Concealable)
10 Money: Destitute
20 Psychological Limitation: Code of The Bushi (Common, Total)
20 Psychological Limitation: Code of Vengeance: Must Avenge All Insults to Self and Lord (Common, Total)
20 Reputation: Most Dangerous Person In Japan (14-, Extreme)
15 Social Limitation: Ronin masterless samurai) (Frequently, Major)
104 Experience Bonus

Total Disadvantage Points: 424

Background/History: Shinmen Musashi No Kami Fujiwara No Genshin, better known as Miyamoto Musashi, was born in 1584 during the 12th year of the reign of Emperor Tensho. His father Shinmen Munisai, a low ranking Samurai and swordsman, served the noble Shinmen Family as a personal bodyguard while also providing training to their household forces. His mother Omasa died shortly after his birth, leaving him in the care of his stepmother Yoshiko, who raised him as her own son. Musashi was not destined to have an easy childhood, however, for while he was still very young his father divorced Yoshiko, and she returned to her family home in Harima Province, taking her young step-son along with her. It was there that the young Musashi, along with his older sister Ogin, was raised with only infrequent visits by his father.

Shinmen Munisai was, by all accounts, an extremely strict man who showed his son little affection. However it was during his occasional visits that Munisai took it upon himself to teach his son both the "way of the sword" as well as *Bushido*, the warrior code of the *Bushi* warrior class to which all Samurai belong. Rather than being stymied by his father's harshness, Musashi excelled at this martial training (though his relations with his father were always strained).

At the tender age of 13, Musashi fought his first duel. His opponent was one Arima Kibei, an exponent of the *Shintouryo* school of swordsmanship. On the day before the match Musashi had been walking through the streets of Harima Town when he passed a sign, which read, "Whoever wants to challenge me shall be accepted. Arima Kibei," to which he added a note which read "I will challenge you tomorrow," along with his name and address. That evening a message arrived from Kibei, both accepting the challenge as well as setting the site of the duel. The next morning young Musashi set out, sword in hand, quickly defeating (i.e. killing) Kibei and becoming a minor sensation in the area. Three years later at the age of 16, he fought again, this time defeating an opponent from Tijima.

Even though he had become a widely respected (and feared) young man in his hometown, Musashi felt that he hadn't really tested himself. In 1605, he struck out towards Kyoto, the old capital of Japan, on a *Musha-Shugyo*, or warrior pilgrimage, to make a name for himself as a swordsman. One of his first opponents was Yoshioka Genzaemon, the head of a family of prestigious warriors who had served the Ashikaga Shogunate as military instructors. Though it would have been no loss of face for Genzaemon to refuse a match with an unknown ronin warrior such as Musashi, he accepted, setting the match for the very next day.

As the two men entered combat Genzaemon showed signs of both anger as well as impatience, while Musashi appeared relaxed and indifferent. Within a few moments, the contest ended with Genzaemon lying unconscious on the ground.

Yet Musashi's fight with the Yoshioka clan was far from over. Genzaemon's younger brother, Denshochiro, attempted to restore his family's honor by challenging his sibling's tormentor; but Musashi killed him in the subsequent duel. The Yoshioka family began to get desperate. This time it was Genzaemon's son, Matashihiro, who challenged Musashi; only this fight was to be very different from the first two. Matashihiro's challenge was a ruse. His real plan was to ambush Musashi with a group of his followers, ending his family's disgrace by finishing the young ronin once and for all.

Unfortunately for his would-be murderers, Musashi arrived early to the match site. Concealing himself in the underbrush, he watched as the small party of warriors assembled in the glen. Seizing the initiative, Musashi attacked all of them at once in a preemptive strike. He flew from his cover, issued a challenge while in midair, and began killing Yoshioka retainers before they even knew what had befallen them. Having killed half a dozen men (including the duplicitous Matashihiro), he fled into the woods with some 80 samurai in hot pursuit. They never caught him.

Feeling more confident than ever, Musashi spent the next eight years wandering the roads of Japan, dueling any opponent willing to face him. Having developed his own two-weapon fighting style known as *Nito-Ryu*, he freely indulged in *Taryu-Jiai* contests in which he pitted himself against the practitioners of other martial schools. He engaged in over sixty fights during this period without ever once being defeated, always learning from each combat so that he could improve his own style. Occasionally he would settle down for a short period of time, usually staying with a powerful Diamyo or a high-ranking samurai who wished to learn *Nito-Ryu*; but before too long he would return to his wanderings. His quest for self-improvement remained paramount to any other concern.

This period of Musashi's life culminated with the final, most famous battle of his dueling career. On April 14th 1612, he was rowed out to a small island to face Sasaki Ganryu Kojiro, one of history's great swordsmen as well as the infamous master of a fighting technique known as the "swallow cut." Kojiro wielded an incredibly long, specially constructed *katana* with such speed it was said that he could cut a swooping bird out of the air in mid-flight. Unfortunately for Kojiro, Musashi had an opportunity to examine this weapon sometime

ZEN AND THE ARTS OF BUSHIDO

There were several good reasons why the Samurai class became devoted to Zen Buddhism. Its principles of directness, simplicity, and effectiveness are particularly useful to a soldier during combat, while its accent on detachment from the cycle of life and death served to make him more determined and fearless when facing a dangerous opponent. The Zen emphasis on intuition and experience, as well as its disinterest in abstract speculation, also served him well as a warrior. Meditation provided him not only with much needed relaxation, but also invigorated his mind while improving his ability to act intuitively.

Not surprisingly, many of the popular martial arts of today such as jujitsu, kendo, judo, and karate are derived from these principles.

THE WISDOM OF MUSASHI

If you practice day and night in the (following)…. strategy, your spirit will naturally broaden. Thus is large-scale strategy and the strategy of hand-to-hand combat propagated in the world. This is recorded for the first time in the five books of Ground, Water, Fire, Tradition (Wind), and Void. This is the Way for men who want to learn my strategy:

1) Do not think dishonestly.
2) The way is in training.
3) Become acquainted with every art.
4) Know the Way of all professions.
5) Distinguish between gain and loss in worldly matters.
6) Develop intuitive judgment and understanding for everything.
7) Perceive those things which cannot be seen.
8) Pay attention even to trifles.
9) Do nothing which is of no use.

before their match. To combat its inordinate reach, he carved one of the boat's long oars into a crude wooden sword on his way to meet Kojiro. As soon as his vessel hit sand Musashi leapt from the boat, sprung over one of Kojiro's lightning fast low cuts, and brained him on the head. With his opponent stunned and dying on the sand, Musashi leapt back into the boat. He was back out to sea before Kojiro's seconds had even realized what had happened.

With his reputation as Japan's premier warrior firmly established, Musashi elected to give up dueling so that he could focus on the refinement of *Taryu-Jiai*. Once again, he wandered the land, only this time as a teacher, setting up schools and occasionally working as a general for various warlords and shoguns. Actively refusing challenges from would-be rivals, Musashi adopted and raised two sons, Mikinosuke and Iori. He also found the time to take up painting, producing a variety of beautiful landscapes and portraits, which are still in existence to this day.

In 1644, Musashi entered the service of warlord Hosokawa Tadatoshi, the head of the powerful Kumamoto Clan, as well a personal friend. Given a sizeable stipend and a variety of upper-class privileges (such as the right to go hawking), Musashi eagerly looked forward to having an opportunity to transform his philosophies into actual government policy. Unfortunately, he would never have a chance to realize this ambition; Lord Tadatoshi died a year after Musashi joined the Hosokawa Clan, thus ending his dream. The warlord's death was a terrible blow to Musashi. Seized by depression, he left Hosokawa castle and scaled a mountain range to the ancient Buddhist shrine of Reigan-Do, which was located in an isolated cave. There he spent 18 months meditating while writing his now legendary work the *Gorin no sho*, or *Book of Five Rings*. One week after the book had been completed, he died peacefully in his sleep at the age of 61.

Personality/Motivation: It would be easy to categorize Miyamoto Musashi as a man whose life had been dedicated to perfecting the art of killing others with a sharpened blade. Yet this would be an overly simplistic conclusion, for in the great Japanese tradition of *Bushido* Musashi's life was also a quest to conquer himself, to become a better man. From almost the first moment that the great Buddhist evangelist Eisai first introduced Rinzai Zen to Japan, monks attempted to temper the warlike nature of the nation's Samurai class through their pacifistic teachings. Yet the resulting philosophy merely added a spiritual dimension to the bloody undertaking of warfare and killing. It is this aspect of combat that consumed Musashi,

generally to the detriment of any who dared attach themselves to (or oppose) him.

A complex, intelligent man deeply concerned with the unseen world of the spirit, as well as the dangerous world of the flesh, Musashi was a study in cryptic opposites: an intellectual prone to flights of wild violence, a quietist obsessed with killing, a non-materialist determined to prove himself in the eyes of others. Perhaps he can best be understood emotionally as a small boy looking to prove himself to an unreachable father. Or, on the other hand, Musashi could be viewed as a compulsive man of action in search of inner peace. In any case, he was a man who spoke using only a few, well-chosen words, fought using only a few, well-chosen moves, and lived in pursuit of only a few, well-chosen goals.

Quote: "The first of these basic principles is keeping inwardly calm and clear even in the midst of violent chaos; the second is not forgetting about the possibility of disorder in times of order."

Powers/Tactics: Musashi was one of history's great duelists, a killing machine able to visit unbelievable violence upon his opponents, whether confronted individually or in groups. Capable of attacking twice each round, he generally disarmed his adversaries using his *wakizashi* before delivering a massive *lighting strike* killing attack with his *katana*. In most fights, this direct, often brutal method settled matters before an enemy could even react, let alone strike back. When fighting against two or more enemies, however, Musashi used his tactical ability to determine which member of the opposing group was most dangerous, attacking him with his *katana* while selecting a secondary adversary to simultaneously attack with his *wakizashi*. Musashi always struck to kill.

Although terrible to behold in battle, Musashi's fighting style relied on having willing opponents who were actively seeking to close with him. Against an unwilling opponent with a greater movement rate, or against an opponent who attacks from a distance, he was at a something of a disadvantage.

Campaign Use: Musashi was a real life example of the much beloved "brooding lone warrior" figure, a man who wanders from town to town fighting evil while searching for his own place in the world. This archetype is a universal one, not only a treasured part of Japanese mediaeval mythology but a collective kind of hero that occurs in nearly every culture at nearly every point in history. Fictional examples include Clint Eastwood's popular "spaghetti western" adventurer The Man With No Name, Marvel Comic's The Incredible Hulk, Sir

Gawain of the Arthurian legends of England, Severian the Torturer from Gene Wolfe's *Books of the New Sun*, and even the character of Motorcycle Boy (Mickey Rourke) from Francis Ford Coppola's *Rumble Fish*. All of these characters are Musashi-like in their own special ways.

While naturally suitable for any campaign set in the 17th Century Edo period of Japanese history, an immortal Musashi with a five point *Mysterious Zen Immortality: Life Support (character is immortal)* could easily be used as a supporting hero (or villain) in several of the settings which Michael Surbrook recommends in his *Ninja Hero* book, such as Saturday Morning Kung Fu Theater or King Of The Streetfighting Warriors. He's more than powerful enough to stand up to many of the characters detailed in *Champions Universe,* while also being strange enough to turn up in a Vibora Bay campaign (as well as violent enough to turn up in Hudson City). An immortal Musashi could be wandering the world looking for superpowered martial artists to duel, making him an excellent candidate for a 15-point Disadvantage *Hunted: Miyamoto Musashi 8- (More Powerful, Kill)* for your high-kicking hero, or looking for students to train, in which case he is a 7-point Perk *Contact: Miyamoto Musashi 11- (Extremely Useful Skills, Good Relationship)*.

Appearance: Musashi was quite an odd looking Samurai by the standards of the 17th Century. During his infancy, he contracted the skin disease eczema, a condition that permanently covered his body in scars. Because of this Musashi couldn't shave his hair into a proper *sakayaki* (or topknot), preventing him from wearing the hairstyle that would normally have distinguished him as a member of the Samurai class. To compensate for this he wore his hair in a wild, tangled ponytail that fell between his shoulder blades. Physically, Musashi was a giant amongst men, standing just over six feet at a time when the average Japanese man stood well under five. Although he wore the elaborate kimono of a warrior, his clothing was cut from simple burlap rather than silk. It was soiled and worn from hard, continual use.

Though it is written in many modern accounts that Musashi had an aversion to personal cleanliness, it is far more likely that he simply practiced the aesthetic Zen ritual of taking cold, predawn immersions, called *mizugori*, rather than the hot, soothing baths commonly taken at the time.

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MUSASHI SELF-PORTRAIT

"IMMORTAL" MUSASHI PLOT SEEDS

Musashi has decided that the egotistical martial artist villain known as Green Dragon is going to be his next opponent. To draw Green Dragon's attention, he has embarked upon a very public, very violent career of crime fighting in the PCs' home city. Musashi has repeatedly dared Green Dragon to face him while speaking to reporters. Can the PCs prevent the two high-powered Asian warriors from turning their downtown into a war zone?

Musashi has decided that the ultra-powerful alien gladiator known as Firewing is going to be his next opponent, so he has publicly challenged him to a duel – a challenge that a bored Ariax Thone was more than happy to accept. Unfortunately the master swordsman is way out of his league this time (though he refuses to admit it) and, *even more* unfortunately, the two have agreed to use Millennium City's Cultural Center as their battleground. Can the PCs put a stop to this madness before history repeats itself?

Miyamoto Musashi

One of the PCs has a problem: no matter where he goes, no matter what he does some weirdo Samurai keeps following him, lecturing him on the inferiority of his fighting skills. He continually admonishes the PC with cryptic sayings, urging him to "become the opponent" and "attain the principle so you can detach from the principle." Is there someway to make Musashi go away, or would it simply be better for the PC to accept him as a teacher?

Somehow Musashi has obtained a device that allows him to locate the normally stealthily concealed Flying Fortress, home of the master villain The Warlord. Enraged by a recent attack upon Tokyo by the War Machine and the Shadow Army, he plans to infiltrate their base so that he can put an end to their world dominating plans – forever. Will the PCs help him?

Your Horoscope For: Cancer by Allen Thomas

This month's installment of *Your Horoscope For:* presents a *Star Hero* scenario set in the Terran Empire. The scenario involves the Shiseki, the crab-like subject race of the Ackálians described on page 26 of *Terran Empire* and in "Leftover Hero" in issue #8 of *Digital Hero*. The scenario is intended for a group of 4-6 PCs built according to the guidelines for Standard Heroic characters on page 15 of *HERO System 5th Edition*. If your PCs fall outside these guidelines, you should adjust the adventure accordingly.

Introduction

An Imperial outpost near the Ackálian Neutral Zone has received a surprising transmission: a request for political asylum from a Shiseki colony. Located on a large asteroid, the colony was originally established to mine metals and radioactives, and once those resources were depleted, it was refitted to serve as a repair station for Ackálian military vessels. Named Asteroid 10001192/324 on Imperial star-charts and more often called Crab Shack 324 by military personnel, the asteroid was formerly located in Ackálian space, but telemetry reports show the transmission originated deep within the Neutral Zone almost precisely midway between the Ackálian and Terran Empires. At the behest of Imperial authorities, the PCs are to journey to the Shiseki colony, make first contact, and most importantly determine whether the defection is some sort of ruse on the part of the Ackálians.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Individuals within the expansionist faction of the Terran Empire have long argued for a first strike against the Ackálian Empire, but during the reign of Empress Marissa III, their arguments have fallen on deaf ears. Now those same shadowy individuals are resolved to take matters into their own hands. They have dispatched handpicked agents into the Ackálian Empire. Each agent has a single mission goal: to provoke a war – and recently one of their agents accomplished his mission and engineered the defection of the Shiseki.

Special agent, Marko Redd, came to the colony a week ago as a POW aboard the Intruder-class starship, *Knife in the Dark*. Needing repairs, the starship was scheduled to be in port for only three days… plenty of time for Agent Redd to escape from captivity and use his psionic abilities to subvert the Shiseki hive mind. Once in control of the hive mind, he ordered the Shiseki to equip the asteroid with a hyperdrive engine and move it into the Neutral Zone, then beam the request for asylum to Imperial forces.

Now Marko Redd, hidden below in a section of abandoned mines, awaits the arrival of Imperial and Ackálian forces. He knows a conflict will break out over the asteroid – it's only a matter of time – and is also confident this conflict will quickly escalate into an interstellar war.

INVOLVING THE PCS

Most PC groups in the *Terran Empire* setting fall into one of three camps: pro-Imperial, Rebels, and Neutrals. Involving pro-Imperial PCs in the adventure is simple: they are asked by the Exploration Service or Diplomatic Corps to travel to the colony and assess the situation (mainly to determine whether or not it's a trap). Rebels, on the other hand, are more difficult to involve, but they might intercept a transmission from the Shiseki and travel to the colony with hopes of convincing them to join the fight for freedom – rebel forces would surely benefit from a starship repair facility manned by the industrious Shiseki. Getting neutral PCs involved is a matter of either appealing to their greed or just being in the right place at the right time. Maybe the PCs travel to Crab Shack 324 hoping to exploit the Shiseki; or maybe they are pressed into emergency service by the Empire, since only the PCs can reach the asteroid before the Ackálians.

INTEL ON CRAB SHACK 324

The following information is provided to the PCs through an Imperial Contact or quick research.

– The description of the Shiseki from page 26 of *Terran Empire*.

– Analysts deem the Shiseki the *least* likely subject race to defect from the Ackálian Empire. Their hive mind, biological specialization, and societal caste system make them perfectly suited as subjects of a totalitarian regime.

– Crab Shack 324 is a fully functional starship repair facility equipped with the latest in Ackálian technology. Military intelligence would love to get their hands on it.

– Approximately 1000 Shiseki inhabit the asteroid. Roughly 75% of the population are workers, 15% are breeders, and the remaining 10% are warriors.

artwork by Tom Miskey
cartography by Lisa Hartjes

SHISEKI WARRIORS

For Shiseki warriors, apply the Package Deal described on page 13 of *Digital Hero #8* to the Noteworthy Normal on page 224 of *HERO System 5th Edition*. Equipment includes: an obsolete Ackálian ion rifle with the same stats as the MIP-162 Ion Pistol on page 142 of *Terran Empire*, but with a STR Minimum of 11. When the PCs arrive, there are 80 Shiseki warriors in the colony.

Scene One: On the Prowl

Imperial forces aren't the only ones to hear of the Shiseki defection. The Ackálians dispatch *Use of Superior Force,* a Prowler-class starship, to either secure or destroy the colony soon after the PCs enter the Neutral Zone.

Just before arriving at Crab Shack 324, the PCs receive a transmission from the Ackálian ship. Captain Chaka, commander of the *Use of Superior Force,* informs the PCs that the asteroid's movement into the Neutral Zone was due to a navigation error, and she warns that any attempt to contact the Shiseki will be considered an aggressive act by a hostile force – and treated accordingly. The captain fervently (and indignantly) denies any suggestions that the Shiseki have requested asylum, and if presented with a recording of the Shiseki transmission, declares it a ruse concocted by the Terran Intelligence Command. Captain Chaka does not reveal her location, but *Use of Superior Force* is farther away from the asteroid than the PCs and will arrive two standard days after the PCs.

The Ackálian ship is intended to lend urgency to the scenario by setting a time limit for the PCs' investigation, but it can also serve as an excellent excuse for a starship battle. If your PCs are equipped to handle a Prowler (described on page 182 of *Terran Empire*), then move the ship closer to the asteroid. After the battle, let the PCs know *Use of Superior Force* was an advance scout for a larger force that will arrive in two days.

"SPEAKER"

Scene Two: First Contact

The Shiseki direct the PCs to dock with the space elevator. Once inside, they are greeted by a single Shiseki worker who has been designated "Speaker" by the hive mind. Matter-of-fact and to the point, the Speaker expresses the hive's desire for political asylum and cites the brutal oppression of the Ackálian Empire as the reason for defection. Negotiations are unnecessary. Surprisingly, the Shiseki capitulate to any and all demands made by the Terran Empire. All the Shiseki ask is clearance to enter Imperial space and assurance of the Imperial government's protection. The Speaker does not volunteer information about the *Knife in the Dark* and her crew; he only mentions it if the PCs ask to inspect the repair facilities.

Roleplaying the Shiseki: As described in *Terran Empire,* a hive mind guides the Shiseki and their society. As such, they conduct themselves very differently from Humans. You should try to get this across to the players when role-playing the Speaker and other Shiseki. Use first person plural pronouns (*i.e.,* we, us, our) rather than the first person singular. Individual Shiseki are referred to in conversation as a Human would refer to his body part or other possession (i.e., "Our worker will see to it."). Furthermore, the hive mind can speak through any Shiseki wearing a translation device – not just the Speaker – so if a conversation begins in one place and moves to another, the PCs might find themselves speaking with first one Shiseki, then another, and finally a different one without a break in the dialogue.

Telepathic Contact with the Shiseki: If a PC contacts the Shiseki via Telepathy, allow him an Analyze Psi Powers Roll. If successful, the PC notes a strange schism in the psyche of the hive mind, as if a single "voice" commands the others and this voice is distinct from the rest.

The voice is Marko Redd. Although a skilled psionic, he must keep his psyche separate from the hive mind or else risk losing himself in the gestalt. This separation creates the schism noticed by the PC. Telepathically contacting Marko Redd via the hive mind is the same as contacting an unwilling target (described on page 148 of *HERO System 5th Edition*). Because the two minds are linked via the hive mind, Line Of Sight is *not* required. Of course, telepathic contact is a two-way street. Once a PC has established contact with Redd, he attacks with Mind Control.

If asked about the schism, the Speaker for the Shiseki claims it is merely how the hive mind functions and describes the voice as a sort of telepathically manifested super-ego.

LAYOUT OF CRAB SHACK 324

With ports for two starships, the space elevator rises from between two horseshoe-crab shaped buildings on the surface of the asteroid. Inside the buildings are quarters for guests and the former Ackálian overseers (three in number and now dead). The quarters conform to standard Ackálian tastes. The PCs are provided with quarters in this part of the colony, or else they can stay aboard their vessel – whichever they prefer.

The Shiseki inhabit large caverns directly below the surface buildings. The caverns are crudely carved from rock and almost entirely unadorned. The living conditions are shockingly primitive by Human standards. Individual Shiseki have little attachment to possessions or need for privacy; when a rest period comes, the hive mind directs a Shiseki to the nearest unoccupied space and the Shiseki resides there until his rest period is over.

A single tunnel leads from the buildings on the surface to the dry dock where the *Knife in the Dark* is held hostage. More details about the *Knife in the Dark* and her crew are given in Scene Three.

Visible from the PCs' ship as they dock, the Class-Epsilon hyperdrive used to move the asteroid into the Neutral Zone is located on the surface in a temporary containment facility. With inspection of the engine and successful use of SS: Starship Engineering or the like, a PC feels the engine can safely make one and maybe two more jumps into hyperspace. Jury-rigged controls for the hyperdrive are located in the colony's control and monitor room.

Anti-Gravity Crane
Elevator To Control Room
Fork Lift
Dead Arkalians
Blast Doors
Melted Blast Doors
Door

Drydock Map

1 inch = 24 hexes
15" High Ceiling

Machine Shop

Control Room

Knife in the Dark

To Space

To Colony

Storage
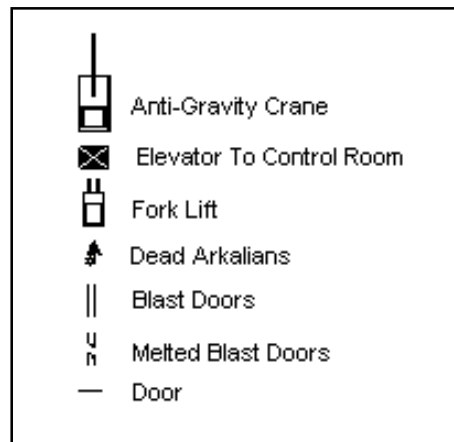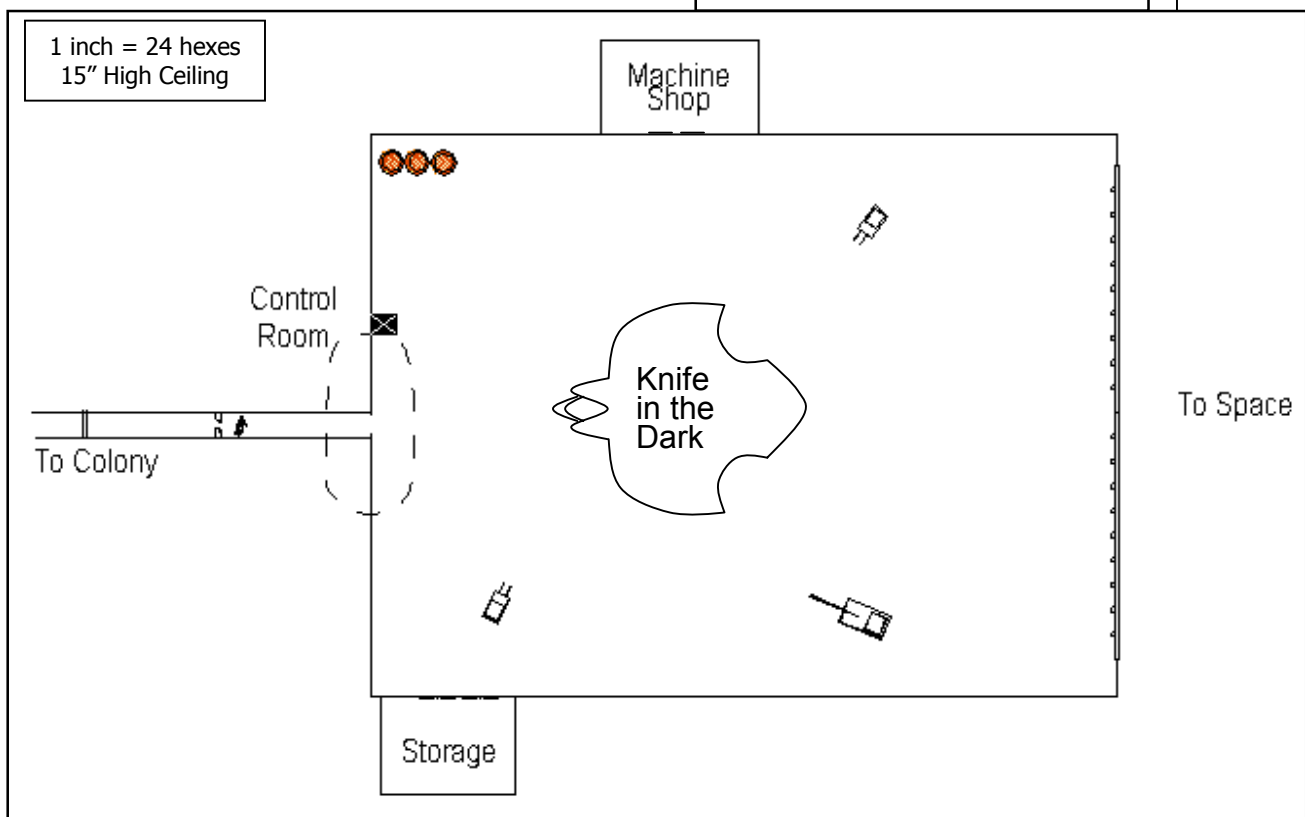
ACKÁLIAN SOLDIERS

For Ackálian soldiers, apply the Package Deals, *Ackálian* and *Imperial Army (Infantry)* described on pages 25 and 112 of *Terran Empire* respectively, to the Skilled Normal template on page 224 of *HERO System 5th Edition*. Equipment includes an Ackálian Laser Rifle, Medium Battle Armor, and a Flight Pack.

Scene Three: Ackálian Saboteurs

Soon after Marko Redd escaped from captivity aboard the *Knife in the Dark* and subverted the Shiseki hive mind, he commanded the Shiseki to cut all life support and power to the dry dock and repair facilities. Trapped inside, the Ackálians were forced to take up residence inside their ship. Given time, they are confident they can breach the bay doors leading out from the dry dock, but their hyperdrive engine was dismantled by the Shiseki and none of the Ackálians possess the technological know-how to repair it. The *Knife in the Dark* originally had a crew of 25, but only ten remain – the rest were killed by Shiseki warriors during a failed attempt to breach the doors sealing the repair facility from the main colony.

Contacting the Ackálians: The communication systems of the *Knife in the Dark* are fully functional, and the PCs can open communications with the Ackálians if they wish. If they do, they speak with Captain Zarkhan. Belligerent and bellicose, Zarkhan tells the PCs about the three Human prisoners and threatens to kill them if the PCs don't surrender. The names of the three prisoners are Selden Fromm, Bjorn Dottery, and Elda Sinnel. They were all crewmembers of the *Prudence,* the ship Marko Redd used to enter Ackálian space. (For more details, see the Background section of Redd's Character Sheet.) Zarkhan also rants about the fourth prisoner (Marko Redd using the alias Darko White), whom he accuses of being Terran Intelligence agent and ultimately the cause of the Shiseki defection.

THE ACKÁLIANS' PLAN

The Ackálians have not been idle. Spending their time exploring the maintenance tunnels, they have found one that runs close to the surface. They plan to retake the asteroid from the Shiseki – ten Ackálians against a thousand Shiseki; it will be glorious! If they learn Imperial representatives are on the asteroid, they implement their plan immediately adjusting it to neutralize the PCs.

The plan is as follows: The Ackálians break through to the surface of the asteroid (the location is marked with an "X" on the Overview Map). Two Ackálians remain aboard the *Knife in the Dark* to guard the Human prisoners. Four of them make a beeline for the hyperdrive intending to destroy it, a distance of 80". The final four wait for the Shiseki to deploy their forces. They then head for the colony, a distance of 55". They plan to cut a hole into the building, fight their way to the space elevator, and then blow up the PCs' ship. If they survive, they will then hunt down the PCs and kill them.

The main problem the PCs face is time. It will take time for them and the Shiseki to get into space suits and onto the surface. If they hesitate too long, the hyperdrive engine is likely destroyed before they can stop the Ackálians.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the PCs don't make contact with the crew of the *Knife in the Dark,* the Ackálians have no way of knowing Imperial representatives are present. Covertly, Marko Redd informs them of the situation using a coded text transmission. Redd knows this will force the Ackálians to take action and distract the PCs from discovering the truth about the Shiseki defection.

Scene Four: Special Agent, Marko Redd

Three main clues point to Marko Redd and his involvement in the Shiseki defection:

1. The strange schism in the Shiseki hive mind.

2. The information from Captain Zarkhan concerning the escape of one of his prisoners.

3. If the three prisoners are rescued from the Ackálians, they also inform the PCs of a fourth prisoner who escaped upon the arrival of *Knife in the Dark* at Crab Shack 324.

Redd is hidden in a section of abandoned mines. By the time the PCs arrive, his only goals are to maintain control over the Shiseki hive mind and remain hidden until the asteroid enters Imperial space, then he plans to make contact with his handlers to arrange for his extraction. He feels the imminent arrival of the Ackálians will force the PCs to order the asteroid moved to Imperial space before they can fully uncover what's going on.

So long as the PCs do not actively search for Redd, the Shiseki disavow any knowledge of the escaped prisoner. If the PCs begin a search without disguising their intentions, the Shiseki work against them and are entirely unhelpful. If the PCs try to enter the mines, the Shiseki attempt to subdue them, stating that the mines are dangerously unstable.

The surest and quickest way of locating Marko Redd is to examine energy output from the main generators. With a successful Systems Operation Roll, a PC notices that energy is being routed to a section of mines. The area is marked on the Overview Map with a dashed line.

All entrances to Redd's hideout are sealed by a 10 PD/10 ED Force Wall. Once the Force Wall collapses, life support systems can no longer maintain the atmosphere, emergency alarms sound immediately, and Marko Redd knows the PCs have found him out. You should consult pages 285 and 286 of *Star Hero*

concerning rules for explosive decompression, since Redd might be knocked prone if a Force Wall collapses. The size of the rupture is 2" with normal atmospheric pressure. The mines are a zero-G environment; rules for fighting in zero-G are located on page 280 and 281 of *Star Hero*. Furthermore, there is no light source within the mines.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the adventure is open-ended and much depends on the actions of the PCs. The main goal however is to avert a major interstellar incident. Players will probably come up with a great many ways of doing so, and it's up to you to decide whether they're successful. But you should keep in mind: If you don't want to begin an interstellar war in your Terran Empire campaign, then don't. The Terran Diplomatic Corps can step in if the PCs are struggling to find a solution, and handle the situation "behind closed doors." Of course, the PCs should be given every chance to arrive at a solution by themselves, and provided below are two possibilities. You should feel free to nudge your players in the right direction if necessary.

Misdirection: The classic sci-fi way of handling the situation: make the Ackálians believe the asteroid is destroyed when in truth it escaped into hyperspace. Crab Shack 324 returns to normal space within the Terran Empire, and the Ackálians are none the wiser… at least for the time being!

Diplomatic Compromise: The Ackálians would much rather provoke a war with the Terran Empire on their terms, and this opens the door to a diplomatic solution. The most likely compromise is the Shiseki and Human prisoners (including Marko Redd) are allowed to depart the asteroid, and the asteroid itself is returned to Ackálian space. So long as the PCs aren't belligerent or threatening, representatives for the Ackálians begrudgingly agree to this. If Captain Zarkhan is still alive and allowed to communicate with the representatives before a compromise is reached, this becomes a delicate situation – the Ackálians will demand that Marko Redd be turned over to them for "questioning."

TROUBLESHOOTING

The PCs probably realize something suspicious is happening early on in the scenario. If, rather than investigate, they report to their superiors Crab Shack 324 is obviously a trap and attempt to depart the asteroid, Marko Redd commands the Shiseki, via the hive mind, to activate the hyperdrive and make the jump to Imperial space. He'd much rather have the Shiseki granted asylum, but "needs must as the devil drives" so to speak… and Redd has no intention of being left to the tender mercies of the *Kairensha*.

WHAT ABOUT THE SHISEKI?

Once free of Marko's control, the Shiseki find themselves in a very bad situation. To the Ackálians, the Shiseki appear to have defected and harsh masters like the Ackálians might not believe the hive mind was taken over by some human. And whatever they believe, they might very likely decide better safe than sorry and terminate the Shiseki present on the colony. Persuasive PCs stand a good chance of convincing the Shiseki to defect for real – while subservient, the Shiseki value the life of their hive mind as much as any sentient values his life.

Discontinued Mine

Key

- Life Support Generator (Cables Run Into Wall)
- Force Wall
- Switch
- Cart
- Force Wall Projector
- Electro-Rails

To Colony

Overview Map

0   48"

Colony

Ackalian
Break-Out

To Repair

✕

Hyperdrive

Not To Scale

Colony

Port   Port

Space Elevator
(100" Tall)

Top Down View
of Colony

Control
Room

12"

24"

(24", Shaped Like Horseshoe Crab)
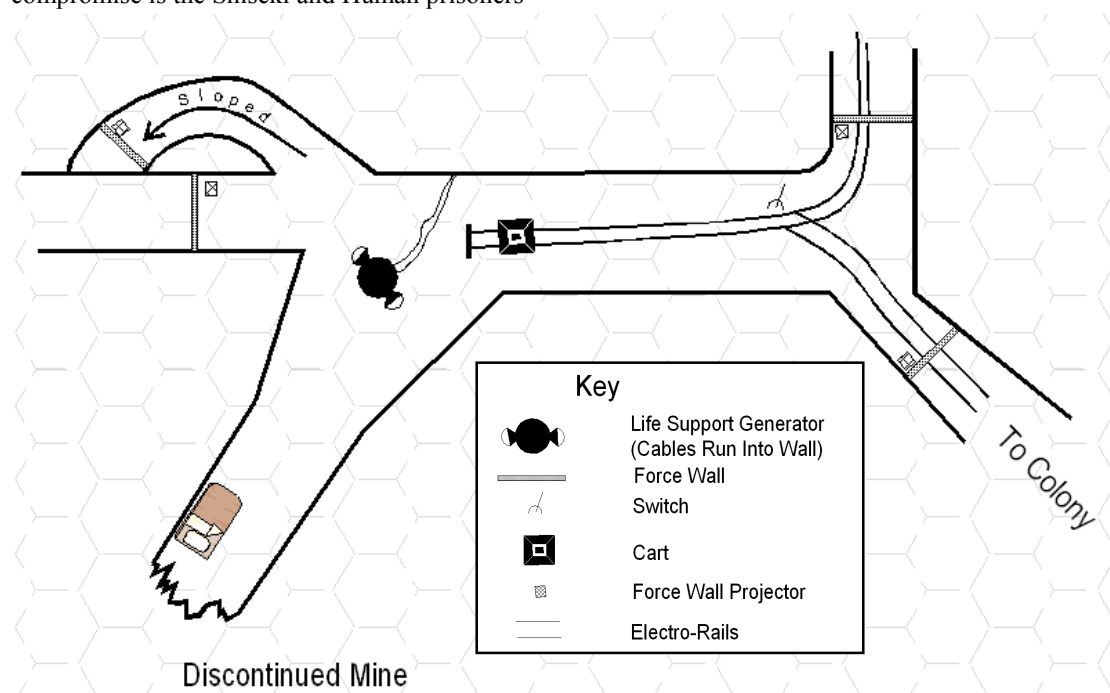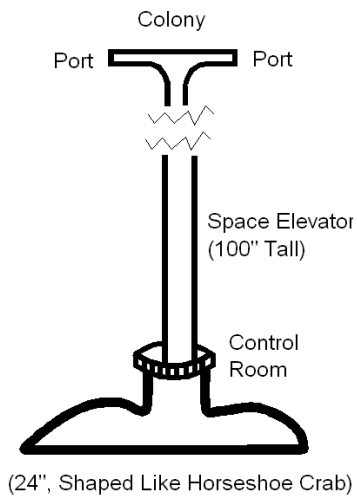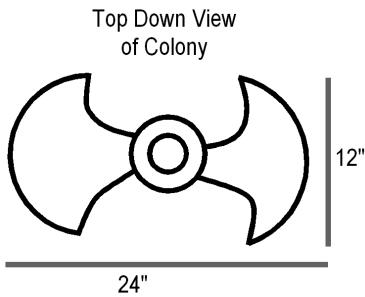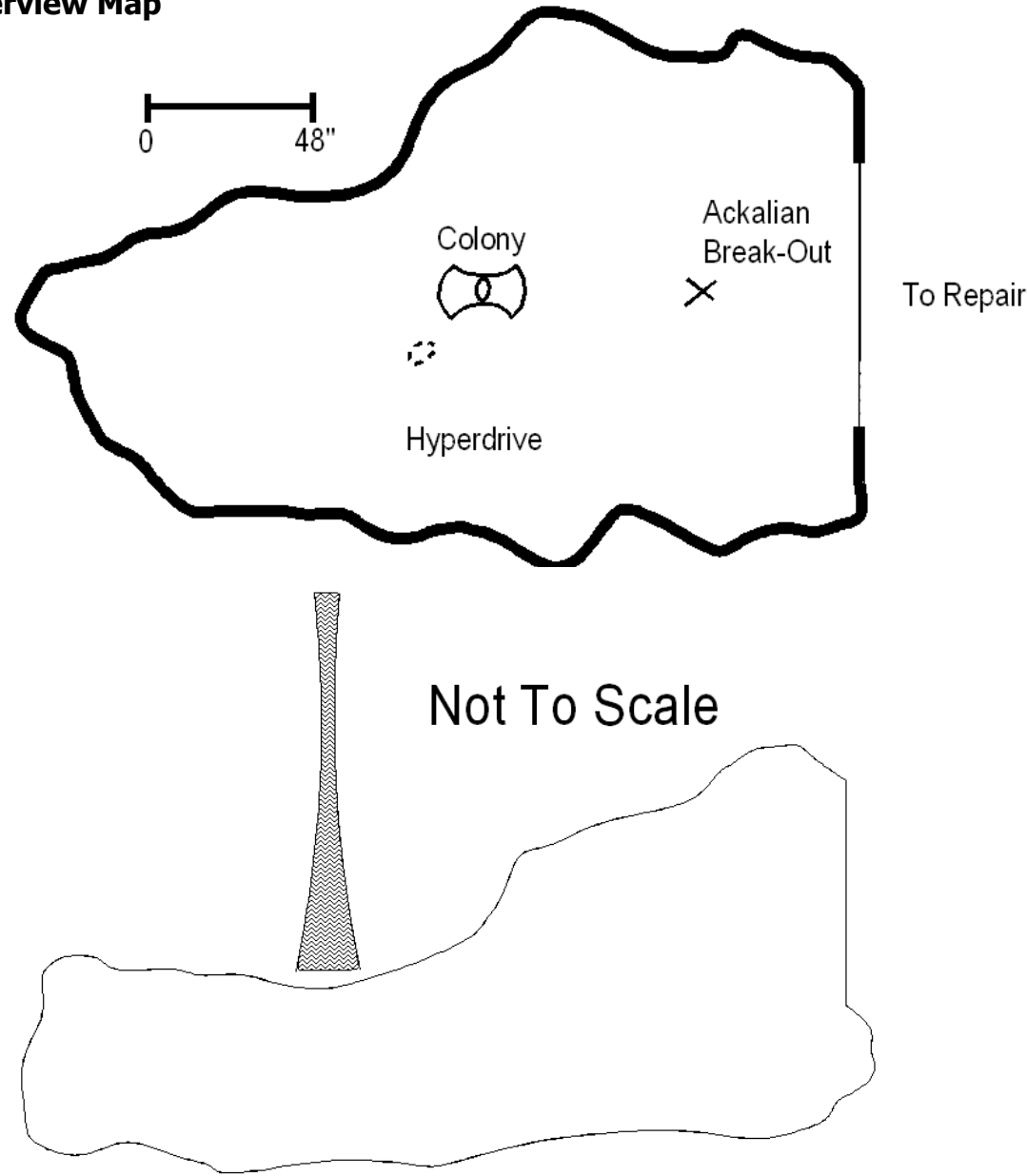
Marko Redd

Background/History: It was a suicide mission. For special agent, Marko Redd, it was the latest in a lifetime of suicide missions. Missions for Army Special Forces, the Mind Police, the Terran Intelligence Command… and now missions for a cabal of high-ranking officials – generals, senators, and assistant ministers – who wanted an interstellar war.

Body tense, Marko Redd sat on his cot in a dark, spartan cubicle on some nameless, uncharted planet. On the single monitor, figures hidden in shadow sat behind a long table, and one of them, the one sitting at the center of the table, explained Redd's next suicide mission.

Infiltrate the Ackálian Empire. Provoke a war.

There were more words than those, but that was all Marko Redd heard. Those words were all he needed to know.

The meeting concluded. Files were downloaded to his terminal: *The Effects of a Dominant Ego on a Hive Mind,* "Ackálian Activity on Asteroid #10001192/324, Security Clearance Alpha-Red," and the flight plans of the merchant trader, *Prudence.*

The first file was a study of five species, ranging in intelligence from ants to human-level intellects, all of which were guided by a hive mind. The researchers agreed: An alien aggressive psyche, once successfully introduced into the hive mind, had little difficulty taking control, due to the mind's cooperative nature and the society's total lack of dissent. The second file detailed a Shiseki colony located on the edges of the Ackálian Empire. The Shiseki were a race guided by a hive mind. The third showed the trader vessel's flight path, which would take it through the Neutral Zone and far too close to the Ackálian Empire and a colony of Shiseki.

The rest was easy for Marko Redd.

Using the alias, Darko White, he got a berth aboard the *Prudence* as a communications officer. He sabotaged the engines and engineered an emergency evacuation of the starship as it passed through the Neutral Zone. He made a mistake; three other crewmembers accompanied him in his escape pod. He cared nothing for the lives of the others; he felt the same as a man who had turned left instead of right and now had to walk an extra five or ten minutes. It was a mistake, but no matter – he would arrive at his destination one way or another.

As he planned, the pod's emergency beacon was intercepted by the Intruder-class starship, *Knife in the Dark.* Once taken aboard the Ackálian ship as a prisoner, he sabotaged that ship's engines forcing it to stop at Asteroid #10001192/324 for repairs. He escaped soon after the ship docked, and then, using his powers of psionic mimicry, he took control of the Shiseki hive mind.

His mission was going perfectly, until the members of the diplomatic team sent by the Terran Empire proved themselves overly curious….

Personality/Motivation: After stints with Imperial Special Forces, the Mind Police, and Terran Intelligence Command, Marko Redd is something less than human. All three of those agencies have worked hard to create the perfect living weapon, and Marko Redd feels as much emotion as a blaster or rifle. His superiors point him in a direction, and he kills the target. Never questioning the morality of his actions and ethics of his superiors, he merely performs as ordered. His lack of emotion is obvious from his lack of facial expressions (the Disadvantage, *Distinctive Features: Flat Affect*). Marko must struggle to smile or frown, and he only does so when it's necessary to fit in with whatever group he's infiltrating.

Quote: "Mission accomplished, sir."

Powers/Tactics: Marko Redd has at least passing familiarity with any and all skills he might need for a mission. Additionally, he benefits from a great many cybernetic enhancements and has trained extensively in the martial arts. Despite his skills, his most useful infiltration ability is Domination, and most unique ability is Psionic Mimicry. Marko can mimic any psionic power he "witnesses" used. Various agencies have tested and studied Marko, but none have determined how the ability works. One researcher postulated that Marko possesses myriad untapped powers, but due to his psychological abnormalities, cannot use them without copying the powers of others. In some way, the mimicry is a part of his ability to blend in with his surroundings, and he cares nothing for them beyond that. The truth, however, is unknown.

During the scenario, Marko uses his Psionic Mimicry to copy the Shiseki Hive Mind. He does not change the VPP unless absolutely necessary, since he would lose control of the Shiseki if he did.

Campaign Use: Marko Redd should scare the daylights out of the PCs. If he doesn't, increase his Combat Levels and Damage Classes accordingly. Also, if one of the PCs is a powerful psionic, you should increase the points in Marko's Mimic VPP. But be careful, he's already rated a Psi-Zeta – much higher and he might be too powerful for most Terran Empire campaigns. Neither vengeful nor hungry for justice, Marko does not Hunt characters on his

Marko Redd

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
15	CON	10	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
12	COM	1	11-	
6	PD	3		Total: 12 (6 rPD)
6	ED	3		Total: 10 (4 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	6		
40	END	5		
40	STUN	12		

Total Characteristics Cost: 105

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

Cost	Powers	END
4	*Fast On His Feet:* Running +2" (8" total)	1
3	*Artificial Arm:* +5 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only With One Arm (-¼), No Figured Characteristics (-½), Restrainable (-¼)	0
17	*Finger Laser:* RKA 1d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); IIF (artificial arm's index finger; -¼), Beam (-¼), No Knockback (-¼)	0
28	*Neurotoxin Injector:* HKA 2d6, NND (defense is LS: Immunity to neurotoxins; +1), Does BODY (+1); IIF (artificial arm's palm; -¼), Must Target Unarmored Hit Locations (-½), No STR Bonus (-½), 4 Charges (-1)	0
5	*Flare Compensation:* Sight Group Flash Defense (6 points); Restrainable (-¼)	0
4	*Thermal Vision:* Infrared Perception (Sight Group); Restrainable (-¼)	0
8	*Radio Implant:* Radio Perception/Transmission; Restrainable (-¼)	0
6	*Armorskin:* Armor (3 PD/1 ED)	0
3	*Internal Oxygen Supply (Intox):* Life Support (Extended Breathing: 1 END per 20 Minutes); Restrainable (-¼)	0
7	*Blood Filter:* Life Support (Immunity: alcohol, zootoxins, phytotoxins, and microbe toxins); Activation 14- (-½)	0
49	*Psionic Mimicry:* Variable Power Pool (Mimic Pool), 40 base + 20 control cost; VPP Mimics Target's Powers (-½), Powers May Only Be As Powerful As Target's Powers (-½), Only Psionics (-¼)	var.
35	*Mental Domination:* Mind Control 7d6, Telepathic (+¼); Concentration (½ DCV; -¼)	5
10	*Mind Shield:* Mental Defense (14 points)	0

Martial Arts: Commando Training

	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
3	Aikido Throw	+0	+1	5d6+v/5; Target Falls
4	Boxing Cross	+0	+2	7d6 Strike
4	Choke	-2	+0	Grab One Limb; 2d6 NND (2)
4	Judo Disarm	-1	+1	+15 STR Disarm
4	Karate Chop	-2	+0	HKA 2d6
4	Kung Fu Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	+1 Damage Class (already added in)			
2	Use Art with Clubs, Knives			

Perks

1	Fringe Benefit: Psionics License
1	Fringe Benefit: Security Clearance

Talents

6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
1	Environmental Movement (high gravity)
4	Environmental Movement (low gravity)
4	Environmental Movement (zero-G)
3	Lightning Reflexes: +2 DEX to act first with all actions

Skills

24	+3 with All Combat
10	+1 Overall
3	Acrobatics 13-
5	Analyze Psi Powers 13-
5	Breakfall 14-
1	Bugging 8-
5	Climbing 14-
3	Combat Driving 13-
3	Computer Programming 12-
7	Concealment 14-
7	Deduction 14-
3	Demolitions 12-
1	Disguise 8-
5	Fast Draw (Small Arms) 14-
1	Forgery 8-
7	Interrogation 14-
2	KS: The Espionage World 11-
2	KS: The Imperial Army 11-
2	KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 11-
2	Navigation (Land) 12-
3	Paramedics 12-
7	Power: Psionics 15-
2	PS: Soldier 11-
7	Security Systems 14-
7	Shadowing 14-
2	SS: Psionics 11-
7	Stealth 15-

8   Survival (Arctic, Mountains, Deserts, Urban) 12-

8   Systems Operations (Communications, Environmental, Sensor, and Weapon Systems) 12-

3   Tactics 12-

3   Tracking 12-

4   TF: Human Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Human Space Vehicles

6   WF: Human Common Melee Weapons, Human Small Arms, Human Advanced Arms

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 387

Total Cost: 492

75+ Disadvantages

10   Distinctive Features: Flat Affect (see Personality/Motivation) (Concealable, Noticed and Recognizable)

15   Hunted: The Kairensha 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Kill)

15   Hunted: The Republic Central Intelligence 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Capture)

15   Hunted: The Perseid Intelligence Division 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Capture)

15   Hunted: Thorgon Secret Police 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Kill)

20   Psychological Limitation: Sociopath (Common, Total)

15   Reputation: deadly secret agent, 14- (Extreme, Known Only To Intelligence Operatives)

15   Social Limitation: Minority (Very Frequently, Minor)

20   Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

277   Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 492

own. If he is Hunting a PC, it is because that character has made a very powerful and influential enemy – and the character had better watch out!

Appearance: Marko stands six-foot tall with broad shoulders and perfectly erect carriage. His short hair is black peppered with iron gray, and his half-lidded eyes are dull brown. He wears whatever clothing is appropriate to the situation; if left to choose for himself, his clothing is dark and plain, but always immaculate and never wrinkled.
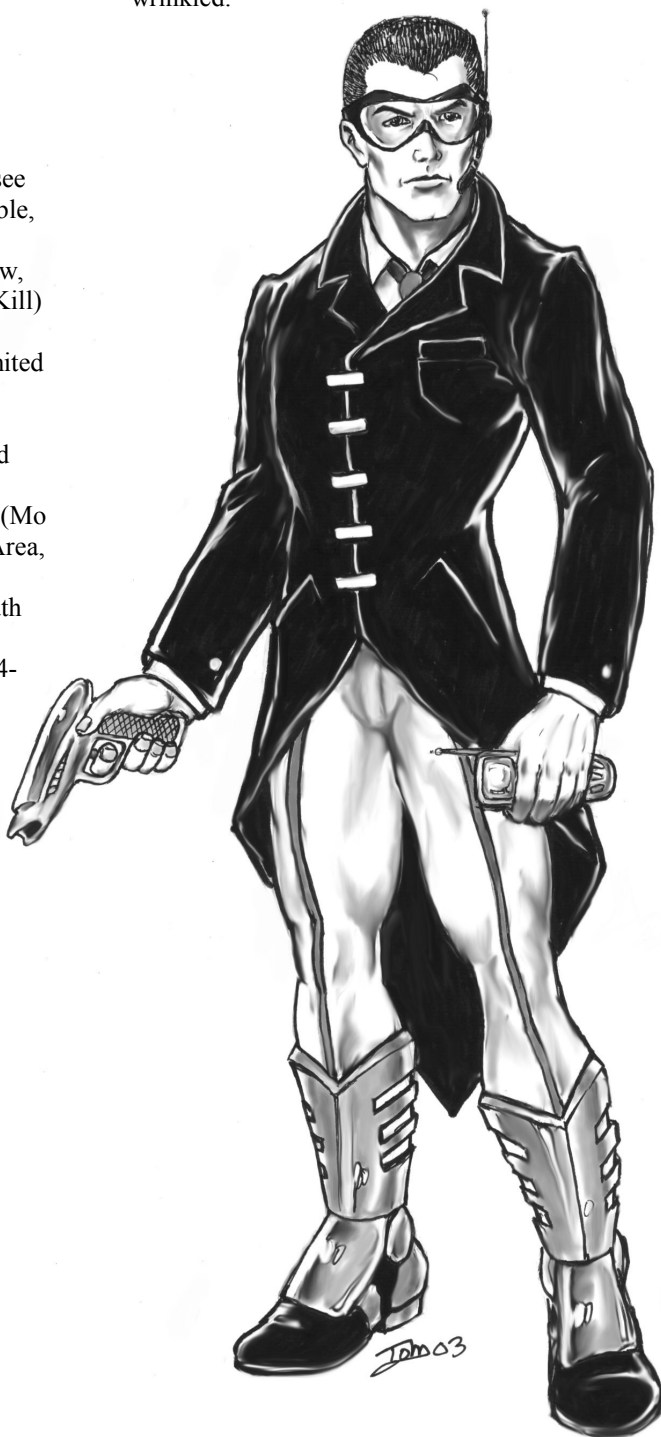
It's Your Lucky Day by W. Ross Watson

In the *HERO System*, the Power *Luck* can be a very good thing. It can protect you from a falling construction girder, it can keep your elderly aunt out of trouble, and it can even make having a secret identity easier to bear. Lucky characters can achieve impossible goals and challenge incredible odds. On the flip side, of course, the Disadvantage *Unluck* has the opposite effect. Unlucky characters (or unlucky things like bases and vehicles!) often find themselves attracting all the wrong sorts of attention from falling pianos and banana peels underfoot.

> Karma studied the roadblock through her binoculars. The green garb on the soldiers she observed included the symbol of a capital letter V. "So, the Nest Leader sends his VIPER goons to smuggle drugs into my country," she whispered bitterly to herself. "We shall see about that." She hesitated, her binoculars spotting one major detail – the green-suited agents had appropriated an old Russian military tank to assist them in keeping traffic off the road.
>
> Karma dropped the binoculars and rose to her full height, stretching out a hand towards the armored machine. Her body glimmered, wrapped in violet ribbons of energy, and a sparkling blast of that lavender light leapt from her fingers to strike the tank dead center.
>
> Nothing seemed to happen. Startled, the VIPER agents quickly grabbed weapons and moved in her direction as a cigar-smoking sergeant bawled orders. By some freak chance, ashes from his cigar drifted on the wind. The ashes spiraled down into the Russian tank's gas reservoir, its fuel cap foolishly left open by a junior agent. A massive explosion quickly followed, and the roadblock vanished into fire and oily fumes. Karma looked on and smiled. "How… unfortunate," she whispered.

Leading a Charmed Life

Luck is among those powers that can be purchased by even the most non-super character. A bronzed pulp-era soldier of fortune can be just as fortunate as a dark-caped vigilante out for justice or a starfaring spaceship pilot. Alternately, an entire character can be based around the concept of a phenomenally lucky person. This is most appropriate for superheroic campaigns, featuring characters such as

Longshot and Roulette from Marvel Comics. Characters who do not have luck as a central defining theme should most often have no more than 3d6 of Luck. This limit is appropriate to generally lucky characters. For example, the average heroic two-fisted archaeologist or adventuresome professor would probably have around 2d6 of Luck.

A character whose concept heavily involves being lucky should restrict themselves to a maximum of 5d6 of Luck. A master thief who regularly escapes capture or death, like Lupin III or Simon Templar, would be a good example of an incredibly lucky non-superpowered person.

Characters who rely heavily on Luck and utilize it as the central basis for their superhuman abilities (under normal superheroic campaign conditions) should have a maximum of 10d6. Longshot of the X-Men (when his motives were pure) and the example character Karma both represent this type of character. A campaign with characters beginning at more than 350 points may find that 10d6 may not be enough… in that case, GMs should set an appropriate limit as they see fit.

> "I'm sorry ma'am, I have to see your passport." The customs agent looked sympathetic, but firm. Karma sighed, tapping her fingers on the counter as she thought furiously.
>
> "I need to get out of the country," she insisted. "You don't understand…" A soft, high pitched chiming sound rippled through the air as in the next line over; a woman moving on past the customs inspection dropped something. Many people in line muttered, wondering what the strange sound might mean.
>
> Karma blushed. "Er, uh, it's my cellphone," she lied, stooping down to pick up the dropped item. Knowing it was important, she opened up the book and blinked in surprise. The woman had dropped her passport… and the blurry picture was a near perfect match for Karma herself. She smiled and passed it over to the customs agent. "I think this ought to be what you need," she murmured, eyes glittering eagerly.

artwork by Derrick Thomas

Luck… in Color!

Since Luck does not cost any Endurance to use, Luck inherently is normally invisible and requires no visible special effects. However, Luck can be purchased with the Limitation *Visible*, meaning that Luck has identifying features to it that put it in the realm of "obvious." Most characters who do not use Luck as part of their concept or superpowers have invisible Luck. In the real world in which we live, all Luck, good and bad, is invisible except in its results. A piano falling on someone's head, well, that's bad luck. Really, really bad luck. Finding a hundred-dollar bill on the sidewalk is the enviable opposite. It is both easy and hard to fall into the usual patterns with Luck. It is easy because unless it's acknowledged, the force of Luck in a campaign can be as simple as rolling a "6" and hearing the GM say, "You've found a clue to the missing heiress." It is also difficult to continually come up with new ways to envision Luck impacting a character's life, although some players may relish the challenge! For a character with multiple dice of Luck, the player can come up with a "crib sheet" of lucky examples he can use in his roleplaying. So when the dice come up on sixes, the player can lean forward and casually say, "Actually, the kidnappers made a fatal mistake. They sold her gold watch to a pawnshop. Isn't it lucky that my uncle Fergus *owns* a pawn shop?"

In superheroic campaigns, characters whose powers and abilities focus on the tides of fortune often have luck that is less subtle: Longshot's right eye glows with yellow light in the form of a star. Karma's Luck manifests as a ringing chime around her.

There are many ways in which a hero could manifest his Visible Luck: a sound, an odor, or even a psychic disturbance detectable to those with mental senses could all be used to create the sense that something is going on. Try to think of all five senses to find a good special effect. Perhaps the villain Hazard is lucky when the sound of dice rattling in a cup can be heard, or the maybe cigar smoke of the poker game where he gained his powers tends to show up whenever the breaks go his way.

The Visible special effect display of Luck often coincides with its potency as a superheroic power as opposed to a general aptitude for good fortune. In fact, a good GM guideline is, "the more dice of Luck, the more obvious the manifestation." Alternatively, the general strength or intensity of the special effect should be based on the amount of sixes rolled, perhaps at a +1 PER for every "6" rolled.

> "You wanted to see me," Hazard asked, the words rasping as he entered the luxuriously appointed office. Two broad-shouldered men in black suits stood on either side, one closing the door as soon as he entered.
>
> Boss Marconi nodded, clasping his pudgy hands together on his teakwood desk. "Yeah. Word is, you did good on the ponies today. Real good." Marconi's eyes darted to the two suits, one of whom drew and cocked a pistol. "I want to know how you did it."
>
> Hazard smirked. "I'm just lucky, that's all." He replied, loosening his tie and repressing a grin as he detected a hint of cigar smoke in the air.
>
> Marconi laughed. "You won every bet you placed today, all day." The pudgy Mafioso stabbed a finger towards Hazard. "That's what I call a system, 'cause nobody could be that lucky."
>
> Hazard chuckled. "Maybe, and maybe not." Hazard sensed without looking that his powers had saved him once again… whoever had last sold ammunition to Marconi's goons had accidentally mixed in some blanks… blanks that were right now loaded in the two .45s aimed at his chest.
>
> "We'll see just how lucky you are, smart guy!" Boss Marconi snarled, nodding to the two dark suited men, who raised their pistols towards Hazard.
>
> "I guess we will." Hazard replied calmly.

Do You Feel Lucky, Punk?

When should a player be allowed to roll for Luck? A Power like Luck is something a player has spent character points on, and thus he should get some gaming "mileage" from it each and every session. One recommendation allows the player to roll his Luck dice once for every die of Luck he has purchased per gaming session. Considering that a Luck die only generates a point of Luck one out of every six times, it's not unreasonable to allow a player to choose when to "spend" his Luck die roll. GMs, be careful with allowing multiple rolls per die: Luck is a good thing for the players, but too many random events can seriously overcomplicate an encounter and take valuable time away from roleplaying or campaign goals.

An alternate procedure is to require at least thirty minutes of game time between Luck rolls. Another option would be to use the time chart to determine how long a player has to wait before he can try again: every point of Luck received moves the time for the next Luck attempt down

one step on the time chart, for example. However, GMs take note: a character with lots of Luck dice could find himself using up his good fortune for the entire day, or in extreme cases, a week! The time chart method works best when dealing with characters who possess no more than 5d6 of Luck.

The *HERO System* includes a vast amount of options with which to customize a character. One of the more unusual choices that the game offers is the ability to Push your Luck! No, this is not a joke, although the GM knows that when you are really pushing your luck is when you are trying to sneak a power like this into his game! Normally, Luck cannot be pushed, as it is a power that does not normally cost Endurance. In the event that a character has purchased Luck with the *Costs Endurance* Limitation, or your GM allows it, you're in business. 10 points of Luck equals 2d6, which does not favor the odds of rolling a "6," making Pushing your Luck an appropriately risky proposition. If a character decides to Push his Luck in a life-threatening situation, one alternative is that instead of gaining 2d6 of Luck, the character burns the 10 points on gaining a single, automatic "6," providing him with at least one Luck point.

> Sonic Man broke the sound barrier getting to school on time after foiling the bank robbery. Once changed into his secret identity as Kevin Kornell, the teenage superhero sighed in relief. He hefted his folder full of papers and headed on campus. "Boy I sure am glad I got that report done last night."
>
> Kevin checked his watch. Just five more minutes until biology class began. Hurrying into the classroom, his sneaker caught on a chair. "Whulf!" He grunted, tumbling forward in a somersault that was anything but graceful. There was a splashing sound and he heard his fellow students laughing as he got to his feet, shaken.
>
> "Oww." He rubbed his head, then glanced around. "Has anyone seen my homework," he asked. Mutely, the rest of the class pointed to the extra-large fish tank against the far wall… the new home for Kevin's carefully written report. "Oh no," mumbled Kevin. "Isn't that just rotten luck?"

Black Cat Crosses Your Path…

Luck is a good thing… but Unluck is not. In fact, whenever someone in my HERO games purchases Unluck, I discuss it with the player, since it can potentially be the source of much aggravation and frustration on the player's part. It takes someone with a good sense of sportsmanship and good humor to accept that their character is going to look foolish some of the time! What I recommend is that the GM should attempt to restrict himself to asking for Unluck rolls only when it would bring a sense of comic relief. When the heroes are facing off against Doctor Destroyer in the grand climax of the game, a hero's weapon backfiring isn't going to have a good impact on the game. If his weapon backfires during maintenance, causing a round of laughter from the players to include the possessor of the Unluck, then it's what I call a success. When dealing with Unluck, remember that it *is* a Disadvantage, and it should therefore hinder the character. But the bottom line is, Unluck should not cause a player to have less fun than anyone else.

Most campaigns should limit an unlucky character to 3d6 of Unluck, or 5d6 if it is a very important defining detail of the character. As with Luck, the GM should usually require one Unluck roll for each dice of the Disadvantage the character possesses per game.

SKILLS AND LUCK

Many skills directly relate to a character's personal good fortune or misfortune. To represent this, a lucky character could purchase Overall Levels that could be applied to skills with a successful Luck or Activation roll. Some skills have a special relationship with fortune, and a GM could use Luck or Unluck to adjust these skills when appropriate.

All skills derive some influence from the surroundings or situation. A lucky hero is likely to have a better effect with those skills and a hero with Unluck isn't going to be as successful as he could otherwise. Luck points could potentially be used to recover from unsuccessful skill checks, such as failing an Acrobatics roll and ending up prone. Skills that most commonly are affected by Luck and Unluck include:

Gambling: The *HERO System 5th Edition* rulebook already has a provision for Gambling: Every "6" rolled on the Luck dice represents a +2 to the gambling check. Alternatively, this skill can represent more than one game of chance; for example, a single gambling roll might be called for after an entire night at a casino. In cases like these, the GM can apply a flat +1 to the skill roll for every dice of Luck the Hero possesses. A -1 should apply for every die of Unluck. The previous two examples do not include a separate roll for Luck points.

Bribery and Trading: Both of these skills rely on forms of monetary compensation. The GM could call for a Luck or Unluck roll when these skills are used, and apply a +1 for every Luck point and a -1 for every Unluck point rolled on the dice to the skill check. Exceptionally lucky characters might be able to barter rare or exotic items in trade or as a bribe with a successful check. Unlucky characters are likely to be spotted by their Hunteds when they are trying to make a deal!

Bureaucracy: This is a skill most often used to speed things up! Cutting red tape is a good thing for nearly all heroes. Lucky heroes, with the GM's permission, can make a Luck roll. Each Luck point lowers the time chart by one for the bureaucratic operation they are attempting. Unlucky characters should roll Unluck… any Unluck points will result in gaining the attention of busybody functionaries or corrupt authorities, most often slowing the process down by at least one step on the time chart.

POWERS AND LUCK

The fickle forces of fortune can be used as the special effects for many *HERO System* powers. Most Defense Powers (listed on page 77 of the *HERO System, 5ᵗʰ Edition* rulebook) can easily be explained as the character's ability to "luckily" be hit only by a glancing blow from attacks or by dodging out of the way. Attack Powers, such as Energy Blast, can deal their damage by way of unlucky "accidents" such as power lines falling onto a target, or a broken gas main sparking into a flaming explosion underneath the target's feet. Some categories do not work well with Luck as a special effect… most Mental Powers and Movement Powers, for example. However, it's possible to explain a Teleporting character showing up "just in time" by lucky happenstance. This is one exception to the Movement Powers category.

ADVANTAGES AND LUCK🛑

Indirect: Indirect powers can use lucky or unlucky events as special effects. This is a good way to explain the piano falling out of the upper story window onto the villain.

Invisible: Many Invisible powers could be attributed to lucky events. Karma's armor is invisible…. Attacks that strike her are reduced in damage, due to her lucky tendency to only take a "grazing hit."

Ranged: Some heroes may find it useful to share the wealth when it comes to Luck! For example, the mutant known as Roulette (A member of the Hellions from Marvel Comics) can throw "discs" of probability warping energy, empowering her targets with both good and bad fortune. Naturally, a character wishing to use his Luck at range would also have to buy the Advantage *Usable On Others*. One way to simulate Unluck at range is with a ranged Transform: Humans become Humans with the Unluck Disadvantage. Another option would be to purchase fully invisible Telekinesis, possibly with the *No Conscious Control* Limitation, intended to plague a target with a series of nasty accidents.

Variable Special Effects: Since fortune can take many forms, adding the *Variable Special Effects* Advantage can be very representative of a change in fortune. Luck has a limited form of *Variable Special Effects* "built in." However, any Luck-based powers the character may possess could benefit by purchasing this advantage. Karma's attacks have the *Variable Special Effects* Advantage, and this advantage is further modified by the *No Conscious Control* Limitation. This means that she can't control what form the damage will take, but she knows it can take virtually any form! The *Variable Special Effects* Advantage could be purchased with the Limited Group defined as "Lucky (or Unlucky) Accidents." A GM might also rule that a successful Luck roll could determine the special effect generated by the power to exploit the target's Vulnerabilities or Susceptibilities, if any.

LIMITATIONS AND LUCK

Activation: Unreliable powers often have an Activation roll. "Chancy" powers and abilities may suffer outbreaks of bad luck, failing to function. In these cases, activation is a good limitation to represent those kinds of difficulties. Even better, adding the modifier *Jam* to the roll makes a tricky power that much more reliant on the blessings of fortune to operate.

Always On: This may seem like a strange limitation for Luck. However, it could easily simulate a character who has little fine control over his own abilities. For example, a character with this limitation on his Luck could be constantly surrounded by lucky incidents. As a limitation, this could mean that co-workers or followers could become jealous or irritated by the seemingly never-ending supply of good fortune the character is "blessed" with. Luck can make you live longer, but it won't necessarily make you popular or well liked!

Charges: Luck purchased with the Charges limitation would be a good way to simulate a character who has only so many chances to escape his fate, and no more. For example, a feline hero with the figurative "nine lives" could purchase his Luck in the following manner:

Example: *Nine Lives: 8d6 Luck; 9 continuing charges of 1 hour each (+1), Charges Never Recover (-2). Total cost: 20 points.*

Focus: Unlucky characters will tend to lose or break foci more often than normal. A GM might consider an extreme Unluck roll to include effects on the hero's foci. If a hero has enough Unluck points, he may end up losing his focus only to have it found or recovered by one of his Hunteds! In addition, a focus for the Luck power is easily explained. A lucky rabbit's foot, a four-leaf clover, or even that cereal box with the leprechaun on the front. Disney's famous miser, Scrooge McDuck, owned "The One Dime To Rule Them All," which was claimed to be the source of his legendary wealth and a powerful talisman of good fortune.

> **Example:** *Rabbit's Foot: 4d6 Luck, IAF (detectable by magical senses). Total cost: 15 points.*

Limited Power (Random Roll): Some characters have little control over their powers and abilities, manifesting energies and effects as if by the whim of chance. Powers that are based upon an unpredictable outcome could be bought with the combination of *Variable Special Effects* Advantage and *No Conscious Control* Limitation as discussed earlier. Another option is to define a set of effects a power can generate, plug those effects into a multipower, and assign each slot a result for a random dice roll. Using this option is represented by taking the Limitation *Limited Power* and defining it as a random roll as described below.

Whatchamacaller, the supervillainess, has a Multipower with 11 ultra slots (labeled "2" through "12"), and rolls 2d6 when activating her powers. Each result on the dice has a different function. Generally, a similar Limitation would be worth -½. If a hero wanted less abilities to roll for (and more certainty of his powers) he could take a -¼ limitation and roll 1d6 every time he used the power, one of six events dictated by the die roll result. This works best as a limitation on a multipower framework, with each slot based on the active points modified by the random roll limitation.

Requires A Skill Roll: The *HERO System* includes the ability for a character with Luck to base the activation of his powers upon the amount of sixes he rolls. Requiring a Luck roll is a good limitation for a superhero whose powers are based on the tides of fortune. For a character with less than 5d6 of Luck, he should consider requiring only one level (one "6" on the Luck dice result) of Luck for activation of his powers. For a Character who has more (around 8 to 10d6 of Luck), requiring two levels (two "6"s) of Luck is not unreasonable.

POWER FRAMEWORKS AND LUCK ▲

As a Special Power, Luck is not normally allowed in a power framework. However, a character with his special effects defined as "luck control" or "probability manipulation" could design an array of other powers with luck based special effects, and load those powers into a Multipower or Elemental Control: Luck Powers.

CHARACTER DISADVANTAGES AND LUCK

Accidental Change: A character who can change forms always has to consider his surroundings. A lucky Hero might get a chance to transform into his superpowered alter ego when his life is in jeopardy. An unlucky hero has to worry about giving away his secret ID. For example, if contact with hot or cold water triggers the character's transformations, you can bet the unfortunate hero is nearly always next to some body of liquid.

Distinctive Features: Generally, a lucky or unlucky character with Distinctive Features will give off an "aura" detectable by those with magical senses. Even if the hero's Luck or Unluck is not magical in nature, forces of fortune and chance are tied to magical lore and literature dating back hundreds of years. In addition, luck, much like magic, manipulates the fabric of reality itself. This effect is very similar to magical spells, and in many cases, the two are closely related. Alternatively, a GM might consider that characters with significant amounts of Luck or Unluck can "sense" likewise blessed or cursed individuals much like themselves.

> **Example:** *Luck Aura: Distinctive Features, Not Concealable (Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses): 10 Character Points.*

Another form of Distinctive Features could be defined as the ability to influence gambling and games of chance in close proximity. The character's presence could be noted and followed by the effects of sudden mass winnings at a casino, for example.

Dependence: A character who uses his Luck to escape danger often enough may become addicted to the feeling. Much like the real world addiction of gambling, it is not difficult to conceive of a character with Luck powers growing more and more attached to using them daily. Such a character could become twitchy if he doesn't have positive proof that his Luck has not deserted him.

Example: *Luck Addiction: Dependence (character must roll a "6" at least twice on his Luck dice every day, or he becomes panicky and confused, suffering Incompetence. In addition, the longer he goes without being lucky, his Luck powers begin to fade, losing one dice per day.) (Common): 5 character points.*

Enraged: Generally, the comments listed under Accidental Change can be applied here. If it's beneficial for the hero to become Enraged, a lucky hero gets that opportunity more often. If it's not beneficial, the unlucky hero has to worry about it more often. It's just that simple.

DNPCs, Hunteds, and Reputation: Once again, rolls of Luck or Unluck should be examined to see if they can fit into the Hero's existing framework. A useful DNPC can show up to help a Lucky hero's investigation. An unlucky hero's Reputation can often interfere with his life. In general, the results of a Luck or Unluck roll can usually call for a re-roll on the DNPC, Hunted, or Reputation charts, depending on the situation. It is also acceptable for a character to have a Reputation for being chronically lucky or unlucky. An extreme reputation could have reporters eagerly following an unlucky character to see what happens to him next, or fortune seekers rubbing lottery tickets or dice on a hero with a history of amazingly good luck.

Rivalry: If there are more than one superhero in a campaign with Luck powers, it's only natural for them to wonder which one of them is truly more fortunate. A competition could spring up to see who can survive more accidents, or who can win more games of chance.

Vulnerabilities and Susceptibilities: Luck would be difficult to define as something one could be vulnerable or susceptible to, but Luck can play a part in discovering or exploiting these Disadvantages. A hero with Luck (and enough sixes on his roll) could find out a villain's weakness versus fire, for example, by finding a butane-welding torch close at hand during a battle in an industrial center. A lucky villain could end up hitting Salt-Man with enough knockback to send him hurtling into the local swimming pool.

COMBAT AND LUCK

In the *HERO System*, combat is already incredibly detailed… but in cases where there's a question of random chance, Luck and Unluck can be factored into the equation. Knockback and the *Bouncing An Attack* Combat Modifier will sometimes have an opportunity for Luck or Unluck to sway the direction of a supervillain's staggering body or a lucky banked shot. Players whose characters have significant amounts of Luck or Unluck should try to remind the GM when it seems appropriate for such random events to take place. However, changing the odds in combat should count as a use of Luck or Unluck for the game session. Extremely altering the fate of a character's life with Luck or Unluck ("Wow, that laser blast would've killed me for sure if I hadn't leaned down to tie my shoe!") would probably count as two or more uses.

PLOT HOOKS FOR KARMA

The first way that Karma can be used in a campaign is in any situation involving the Middle East region. She is often found crusading for Saudi Arabia, seeking to improve the lot of her country's people. Karma is well educated and has an open mind, meaning that she usually avoids any conflicts of interest or biased views. However, no one is perfect, and even someone as lucky as Karma is bound to be stuck one side or the other of a losing conflict. The PCs could easily find themselves in opposition to her if their goals involve Saudi Arabia and she misconstrues their good intentions. Likewise, she could easily be taken in by a charismatic villain or a hero team's bad reputation. Karma makes a good contact or ally for a hero seeking an open door into the tightly knit Arabic world community. She always attempts to secure some benefit for Saudi Arabia in any multicultural involvements she finds herself in.

Karma

Background/History: The Royal family has many children, but few have created and solved as many problems in such a short time as Princess Amelie Rashaad. She was born into wealth, into a world of religious fervor and political intrigue. Such an upbringing rarely prepares one to be a champion of the people, but perhaps a greater power was at work. Even as a child she was uncommonly fortunate, as accidents failed to injure her and she often ended up with the largest portion of treats and toys. It was in her presence when an assassination attempt failed miserably due to bad luck; this was the first that people began to wonder. The Royal family was of course concerned, and the best doctors money could buy tested the Princess. While an explanation for her abilities was lacking, it was clear that she possessed superhuman attributes.

The King worried about his young daughter, and knew that even with her potent powers over fortune, her luck would run out eventually. Busy with affairs of state and a large family, Amelie's father remained a distant but caring parent, and yet she felt stifled by his overprotectiveness. She took every opportunity to try and evade the bodyguards he had assigned to her, forcing the King to constantly upgrade his security forces.

With her heritage and wealth, many doors were open to her, and Amelie spent many years studying abroad. As her education grew, Amelie began to understand… her powers were a gift from some greater being, intended to be a sign that good comes back to good, and evil to evil. She took another name, Karma, to symbolize the certainty that she felt, and began to act on her convictions. It was not long before Saudi Arabia began to feel her influence, as terrorist cabals and smugglers earned her wrath, and those in need felt her mercy.

The Royal family of Saudi Arabia found her difficult to deal with, as she was a headstrong girl who rarely listened to anyone, much less her parents or siblings. Finally, the Royals were forced to accept her limited participation in the world of wealth and influence, preferring to treat her as the "black sheep" of the family upon whom many ills were blamed.

Although she regretted losing that special place in her family, Amelie knew what she had to do. She set out to prove herself as a guardian of Saudi Arabia, and wished to become the example for all that the greater good is worth serving, and suffering is the only fruit of an evil harvest.

Personality/Motivation: Karma is a child of the desert, and she loves her country dearly. This means that she often acts as a guardian of Saudi Arabia, opposing drug cartels and terrorist cells that threaten to destabilize an already shaky portion of the world. She believes her powers work in a reciprocal manner, that as long as she acts for the greater good, her luck will never fail her. Like her namesake, Karma believes in reciprocity, and affirms that evil acts will return to plague the one that performs them. Her beauty and forceful personality have made her famous to the world. Her support of her home country and her firm stance against evil have made her a legend in the Middle East. She often is regarded as a troublemaker, for she has a carefree, and sometimes selfish, manner of speaking and interacting with others. It takes a tolerant group to count her as a friend, but any friends she makes are friends for life. For fun, she enjoys singing and dancing, and she even has a considerable following in Europe and Asia as a pop rock star.

Quote: "This is *not* your lucky day."

Powers/Tactics: Karma possesses great power over the forces of probability. In short, she can control fortune, shaping the winds of luck. Her powers, she believes, are spiritual in nature, and she takes great pains to remind her allies and enemies that all actions have echoes. These echoes bring back positive or negative effects depending on the nature of each person. Some of Karma's abilities seem to be nothing more than random chance, allowing her to escape harm altogether or take only "glancing hits" from attacks. Additionally, she has a knack for "luckily" showing up where she is most needed. When she is truly lucky, a high pitched chiming sound will ring all around her location, and her influence can clearly be seen by those sensitive to magical auras. When she activates her most powerful abilities, violet energy crackles all over her body and then streams forward to lash at her target. Although nothing to seems to happen, immediately afterwards, strange events quickly befall anything she has blasted with her powers. Anything from gas mains exploding under her enemy's feet to pianos dropping from cargo planes to flatten opponents has been known to occur. Strangely, it appears she has little choice what form the "unlucky incidents" take. With enough Luck points, her special effects sometimes coincide with her opponent's vulnerabilities or susceptibilities. Occasionally, she has been known to imbue a person or thing with a probability-warping field, making it extremely lucky or unlucky for some time afterwards. Unfortunately, her abilities warp reality to some extent; this means that other powers that affect reality, namely magic, seem to have a much greater effect on her. Her survival instincts are well honed, which is one explanation why her Armor is far more reliable than her other powers.

Karma

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
15	CON	10	13-	
11	BODY	2	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 12-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
20	COM	5	13-	
3	PD	1		Total: 15 PD (12 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 16 ED (16 rED)
5	SPD	22		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
5	REC	0		
36	END	3		
40	STUN	16		

Total Characteristics Cost: 109

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

Cost	Powers	END
40	*Blessed By The Gods:* 10d6 Luck; Visible (A chiming sound rings out all around her when she rolls sixes on her Luck dice; -¼)	0
24	*Lucky Defense:* Armor (12 PD/12 ED); Activation Roll 14- (-½)	0
36	*Probability Manipulation:* Multipower, 90-point reserve, all slots Requires A Luck Roll (two levels; -1½)	
2u	1) *Luck Blast I:* EB 9d6, Variable Special Effects (any drastically unlucky event; +¼), Indirect (+¾); No Conscious Control (-2, this limitation only adjusts the Variable Special Effects advantage)	9
2u	2) *Luck Blast II:* RKA 3d6, Variable Special Effects (any drastically unlucky event; +¼), Indirect (+¾); No Conscious Control (-2, this limitation only adjusts the Variable Special Effects advantage)	9
4u	3) *Lucky Transformation:* 9d6 Minor Transformation (transforms anything into a very lucky version of itself which gives the target 3d6 Luck, heals 1 BODY per day or completely by contact with any unlucky item such as a black cat or broken mirror)	9
4u	4) *Unlucky Transformation:* 9d6 Minor Transformation (transforms anything into a very unlucky version of itself which gives the target 3d6 Unluck, heals 1 BODY per day or completely by contact with any lucky item such as a rabbit's foot or horseshoe)	9
23	*Probability Warp:* Teleportation 20", Fully Invisible (+1); Only Where She Could Normally Go (-½), Only While No One Is Watching (-½), Requires A Luck Roll (two levels, -1½)	2
13	*Fortunate Evasion:* Desolidification (affected by magic); Cannot Pass Through Solid Objects (-½), Requires A Luck Roll (two levels, -1½)	4

Perks

5	Fringe Benefit: Member of the Aristocracy (Saudi Princess)
10	Money: Wealthy

Talents

3	Perfect Pitch

Skills

3	Breakfall 13-
3	Bureaucratics 13-
3	Computer Programming 12-
2	Gambling 11- (cards)
5	High Society 14-
3	KS: Nobility and Royalty 12-
3	KS: The Middle East 12-
3	KS: The Political World 12-
2	Language: English (Fluent Conversation, Arabic is native)
2	Language: French (Fluent Conversation)
3	Oratory 13-
3	Persuasion 13-
3	PS: Dancer 12-
3	PS: Singer 12-
3	Stealth 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 210

Total Cost: 319

200+ Disadvantages

10	Distinctive Features: Probability-warping aura (Not Concealable; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
10	DNPC: Bodyguard Detail (Karma's father insists that a group of bodyguards protect her. These bodyguards end up requiring protection more often than she does) 11- (Normal; Useful Noncombat Position)
15	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, Kill)
15	Hunted: Enemies of Saudi Arabia 8- (Mo Pow, Kill)
15	Psychological Limitation: Overconfident (Very Common, Moderate)
20	Psychological Limitation: Protective Of Her Country (Common, Total)
15	Psychological Limitation: Showoff, Enjoys Being The Center Of Attention (Common, Strong)
10	Reputation: Lucky Do-Gooder, 11-

The second method that Karma can show up in a campaign is for her father, the King of Saudi Arabia, to hire the heroes to protect her! No easy task, as would-be bodyguards will soon find out. Karma intensely dislikes being protected, and her overconfidence can quickly catapult her into danger with her desire to prove that "she can take care of herself!" Her Luck abilities make her extremely difficult to deal with if she dislikes someone, and any hero who gets on her bad side will most likely suffer a rash of terrible misfortunes. However, she is not evil or cruel, and diplomatic PCs may be able to talk her into settling down and accepting some of her father's efforts to keep her safe as a sign that he cares for her. A truly influential PC may even be able to inspire her, and she will change her Overconfidence limitation into a desire to help the needy. Her new Psychological Limitation would replace Overconfidence with Generous, and she would shower her mentor with expensive gifts.

Finally, Karma is a princess of the Saudi Royal family, and will most likely appear at any large gathering of European political groups. If a worldwide concern was brought to light, and a meeting was held, odds are good that she would attend and possibly offer her help. It would of course depend on the impact to her beloved homeland….

15	Social Limitation: Public ID (Princess Amelie Rashaad)
20	Vulnerability: 2x STUN from Magic (Common)
10	Vulnerability: 1½x BODY from Magic (Common)

Total Disadvantage Points: 355

Karma relies on her powers to see her through any encounter. Her overconfidence makes her attack even in the face of formidable odds, trusting to her Luck to give her the victory. She likes to open up a hostile encounter by using her transformation blasts, rendering one or more opponents stricken with Unluck. After that, she acts as artillery, picking off stronger opponents at range with her luck blasts.

Campaign Use: Karma is a good example of a character with a strong spiritual basis for her actions and abilities. Her powers over probability and luck give her a great deal of versatility both in and out of combat, and her skills give her an unusual flavor as a rock star or political activist. She's also wealthy enough and influential enough to sponsor a hero team based in the Middle East.

Karma rarely Hunts anyone, as she keeps herself busy with her career in politics and music. Being a superhero is something that takes up a lot of her free time. On the other hand, she will take an active interest in any force that seeks to undermine or exploit Saudi Arabia. Political or corporate forces in particular are prone to draw her anger.

To make Karma more powerful, give her more Multipower slots, increase her DEX and SPD by a few points, and raise her Armor to 20 PD/ED. To scale her down, reduce her Multipower to 75 Active Points and lower her Luck to 8d6.

Appearance: Karma is an exceptionally beautiful Arabic woman. She has some western ancestry, so her features are subtly exotic. She has a bright, winning smile and gleaming green eyes. Her hair is bobbed short to her shoulders, colored a dark lustrous black. She is of average height and weight for an athletic woman, possessing a lithe figure and feline grace. She has no "costume" *per se*, instead she prefers to wear stylish and comfortable clothing. Most of the time, this includes skirts and tank tops in open defiance of the Middle East's normal taboos on women's clothing. She takes ruthless advantage of her noble blood to avoid having to cover her body like most Arabic women.

When using her powers, she is sometimes surrounded by jagged violet bursts of energy. At all times she gives off a subtle aroma of jasmine, and the scent only grows stronger as her powers manifest. To those who can sense magical energy, she radiates an aura of power. Her abilities warp reality and change fate, so it is only natural that magical senses can detect her presence.

Karma

Out of the Tavern, Onto the Road by Brenn Hill

You've seen it before. The GM prepares the greatest plot in the history of roleplaying. The players likewise create the most detailed, rich, and wonderful characters anyone could hope to play. They all sit down at the table and things go wrong. Without a strong opening and introduction, the carefully crafted creations of players and GMs alike go down in flames. To have a strong game, you need a strong beginning to unite the players and begin the story arc.

So where to begin? Lets start with a fairly stereotypical opening to an adventure where the GM tries to introduce his three characters – a knight, a street urchin, and a magician – to each other by putting them all in close proximity to a plot hook.

> **Example:** *GM: "So, you are all in the local tavern when three large threatening men enter through the doorway…."*

At this point, the street urchin decides to take advantage of the distraction and pilfer what he finds off of the wealthiest looking person around, the magician. The noble knight sees this and rushes to arrest the poor urchin. The urchin, distracted by the knight fails his Sleight of Hand roll and alerts the magician, who mistakes the charging knight as an attempt on his life. Immediately, the magician unloads his powerful fireball spell into the room, roasting all the hapless peasants, igniting the tavern, and alerting the town guard with the massive explosion. At this point, the players have completely forgotten about the threatening men and spend their time fighting each other and bickering. In the meantime, the dragon they were supposed to be slaying is happily munching on the nearest available princess, and the evil necromancer is building his army of destruction unopposed. Perhaps this is exactly what the GM and players had in mind, but probably not. How can this situation be saved?

There are a large number of possible answers. Specifically, there are three main categories of solutions: character solutions, setting solutions, and in-game solutions. Character solutions are solutions involving the type of characters that are allowed into the game and the characters' backgrounds. Setting solutions are introductory settings that make it unlikely or impossible for the characters to start fighting among each other or leave the course the GM needs them to take. Finally, in-game solutions involve quick thinking on the part of GMs and players alike to ensure the game doesn't suddenly degenerate into yet another failed campaign.

Character Solutions

Sometimes character concepts simply do not mix. Even if the characters are well designed and fleshed, they may not be able to get along. The knight and the street urchin form a good example. As the concepts stand, the two find it hard to like one another. What the characters need is a bridge, a way of getting past their differences so the game can move on. These bridges come in a variety of forms and are easy to insert into almost any character concept.

THE COMMON HOMELAND

With this option, the players create characters who were all raised in the same place. This place should be small enough or close knit enough that it is reasonable for the characters to all know each other. A country is too big in general as are most cities, but a town or village is fine. If being in a large city is important, perhaps characters came from the same area. This would probably be some area that has a pet name such as "the gully" or "the docks." Think of Manhattan or the Bronx in New York city. The characters know the same people, have similar mannerisms, and may have even met each other before. The characters know how to interact and how not to get in each other's way. Beyond this, a common origin can serve as an aid to players to create rich backgrounds, particularly when the GM gives his players lots of detail about the area.

This method does have a disadvantage though. Some concepts are hard to fit together in this way. A thief may come from the slums but it is harder to fit in a wizard. However, just because the fit isn't obvious doesn't mean it can't work. For instance, perhaps the wizard is hiding in the slums after a failed experiment and has slowly adopted the local culture. Nevertheless, the GM and players may come across character concepts that they want in their game but cannot find a way to fit together in this way. Before the game begins, all the players and the GM should come together and discover to what extent this option is viable.

THE COMMON JOB

Even if the players have characters from all over the globe or even the universe, it is possible that they could all end up doing the same job. Not a job like an armorer or blacksmith, but jobs such as administrators, guards, or any other sort of hireling, jobs that groups of people do. Generally, this method works very well for campaigns with an overall theme, such as war, love, or the unexplained. Not all characters need to have the same job because related jobs work

just as well. For instance, in a war campaign, characters could obviously be soldiers, but having a few be doctors or engineers would work as well. The sorts of jobs that characters might be holding in these campaigns should be somewhat obvious, but sometimes there are exceptions. Leave these exceptions to the players because players love to exercise their creativity. If a player can come up with a good job that fits with the campaign then the GM should allow it unless he thinks that it would cause plot problems or something similar. If so, the GM should suggest a variation on a theme or some other fix to allow the type of character the player wants but without the potential for problems.

The biggest advantage to this approach is characters begin the game working together for a common goal. The players know what is going on and the GM has no problem putting in any plot hooks he wishes. One disadvantage is the campaign has to be set up with the characters doing their jobs as a large part of it, and some jobs are more suited to this than others. Still, many campaigns are easy to adapt to this sort of beginning. A second disadvantage is the possible lack in variety of character concepts. People hold many different jobs in their life, and the type of jobs easily suited to adventuring such as soldiers, detectives, and so on usually draw a specific type or types of people. However, if the campaign is built with these limitations in mind then characters with common jobs are an excellent way of getting everyone on the same page and starting the real adventure.

THE COMMON GOAL

A third option is to have characters who all share a driving passion for something. This could be revenge against a certain person, an overall quest, or even a general objective such as fighting crime, getting rich, curing the sick, and so on. Characters from almost any possible walk of life can have goals that lead them down a path of adventure. Furthermore, few goals exist that cannot be achieved easier or more efficiently with others to help. Usually, goals that would start characters in the right direction are easy to insert into any concept and may even be there to begin with. Like common jobs, these goals do not have to be identical. For example, a character who is tracking an assassin will happily team up with someone who tries to destroy an evil cult if the assassin was either sent by the cult or worked with them in the past.

If a common goal sounds right for the campaign, it is generally best for the players to create the goal they want their character to have with light guidance from the GM. When a player cannot come up with a viable goal, then the player and the GM should brainstorm possibilities or try one of the other approaches to get the character to fit in smoothly. Sometimes the GM may want all the characters to start out with goals that are set in stone. If so, then the players should simply design characters accordingly or modify existing ones.

This technique often works the easiest of all the character solutions because most characters already have some goal that can be brought into the storyline. It also allows for some of the most freedom in character designs. Unfortunately, it also has a rather strong downside: the characters have to find out about each other's goals before they will work together. Therefore, GMs may decide to run a prologue where the goal is not to begin the story but instead to introduce the characters to each other. If a prologue or other device isn't used, but the characters are well suited to each other, then this technique often works wonderfully.

Setting Solutions

If creating characters designed to work together proves to be impossible or inappropriate for the campaign, then the way in which the characters meet each other determines their interaction. Therefore, it only makes sense to utilize this fact to make sure things go well. For most campaigns, a couple of basic setups work easily and well.

INDEPENDENT BEGINNINGS

With this setup, each character has his own individual beginning session. In the intro, the player gets a sense of how the character works for them and some time to settle into the role without being distracted. The GM on the other hand benefits by seeing how the character will function, and some idea of his capabilities. In addition, the GM can use this time to work the character into the storyline while the character finds personalized incentives and information that will aid roleplaying later. Therefore, the GM will want to begin a campaign this way when he wants the characters to have substantially different points of view and different starting knowledge. Using independent beginnings has the advantage of working with almost any in-game scenario. Unfortunately, it also has one large drawback: both the players and the GM must have time for the individual gaming sessions.

That condition satisfied, the GM should work out in advance how the different openings are going to connect. In doing this, the GM should keep in mind that all good beginnings like this come inevitably from characters' backgrounds. Once good links are found, the GM runs each player through the mini adventures. At the end of these, the real campaign begins and everyone knows what is going on and why. More often than not, this makes for excellent long-term campaigns.

UNKNOWN ENVIRONMENT

There is a simple and effective way of making characters work together: give them no other choice. Environments that none of the characters are familiar with achieve this goal. Thrown into an environment that is unfamiliar, characters band together against the world and quickly find themselves a team.

To achieve this unity of action, almost any sort of truly strange or unusual circumstances will work. Perhaps the characters are all sent, one way or another, to a different plane of existence, a different planet, parallel world, or even another country. The important thing is that the characters feel out of place and have a hard time communicating easily with anyone other than each other. The GM should be careful though, because this can be crippling to characters that are social animals. Unless that character is the one who is capable of communicating with the "natives" then the player will likely feel useless and bored.

ENCLOSED SPACE

Similar to being thrown into an unknown environment, putting characters in an enclosed space usually forces them to group together and work as a team. Unlike the unknown environment however, the characters know exactly where they are, but not necessarily how to get out. Therefore, areas like jails, ships at sea, or any dungeon work well. In addition to the tight enclosure, the characters need an obvious goal such as escape or not being noticed. This goal needs to be something the characters can realize directly, or if need be the GM can simply tell the players, "This is what you need to do…."

Unfortunately, not very many campaigns begin this way. The types of characters involved are usually very specific, like sailors on a ship or prisoners, and not all players want to deal with this sort of circumstance right at the beginning of the game. Still, this option is worth considering just in case it works for what the GM has planned.

In-Game Solutions

Even the best-laid plans can still fail. A character fails a critical test. The players completely miss what the GM thought was a blatant clue. In these circumstances, a quick fix must be found. These quick fixes are the in game solutions.

THE SUDDEN INTERRUPTION

Inevitably characters or players alike may suddenly start to fight and bicker, slowing the game to a crawl. Worse, when this happens the players or characters find themselves less and less likely to "play nice" with other players and characters.

This situation often brings an early end to many a campaign. More often than not, if players are going to fight they are going to start at the beginning of the game. Therefore, this is the time to keep that behavior from becoming a habit.

One of the better ways to go about this is an out-of-game interruption. Something happens that refocuses the player's interests on something that is helpful for the game instead of destructive. In many cases, those consumed in the distraction have no idea that they are causing a problem for others, so when another brings everyone back on topic, they appreciate it. Even better, any player or the GM may bring a quick stop to the silliness by simply announcing at the top of their lungs, "QUIT BICKERING!" or something similar.

The other option is an in-game interruption. A player or the GM boldly announces some event, forcing everyone's attention to be on that instead of the argument or confusion. This is normally great, but on occasion can backfire because whatever sparked the interruption may become the focus of a new argument.

THE PET NINJA

All-knowing and all-powerful, the pet ninja is the last best hope for a failing campaign. The ninja is an NPC who saves the PCs when things go wrong. Put simply, the ninja can do or know anything necessary to get the job done. In addition, the ninja is immortal. Even if "killed" the ninja can pop up again and say, "You thought I was dead? How foolish!" Beyond that, his job description is to dress stylishly, act mysteriously, and say, "So you wish to know who I am? Then you must <insert plot device here>! We will meet again!"

However, there are dangers in using the ninja. Often the GM will have so much fun acting the part of the ninja that he lets him overwhelm the importance of the characters. Just as bad, if the ninja is used too often the players may begin to rely on his help, creating just as bad a problem as the ninja was meant to solve. Therefore, like all great weapons of power, the ninja must be used wisely.

IGNORE IT

The last option in dealing with problems that suddenly appear and attempt to stall your campaign is to simply ignore it. Did a PC fail the easy perception check to see the ransom note? If this keeps the campaign from getting started, the GM can simply ignore it and let the PC see the ransom note anyway. For GMs, this is a simple and effective way of keeping things moving in the right direction. However, if a PC succeeds at some action that may cause problems, you should let them succeed. Many players hate being told that they cannot do something,

"because it will cause problems." Instead, find a different way to solve the problem, perhaps by calling in the pet ninja.

Applications

Few if any campaigns will want to use only one of the ideas presented here. Indeed, though all are viable tactics by themselves, these strategies become much more useful when used in tandem.

> **Example:** *Tilde the mercenary has been stationed as a guard at the keep of Faldunin. There, he falls in love with Elien, a wandering archer who has joined the mercenaries in order to make enough money to continue on her quest to find her father's killer. Journeying with her is Markus, a childhood friend. Meanwhile, Artiti who is a noble at the keep overhears the group talking and believes the man Elien is chasing to be the same that scarred him in a duel years ago. Seeking a rematch, he agrees to help the group with funds for their journey, and the group sets off.*

In the example, each character has a different reason for going on the adventure. This doesn't prevent the group from working together. Quite the opposite, it gives every character his own unique reason for doing so. Going back to the example at the beginning, the urchin wouldn't dream of offending his good friend the magician by robbing him, the magician won't think his fellow knight is an assassin, and the hapless peasants avoid being roasted. Instead, the three heroes spend their time slaying the dragon, rescuing the princess, stopping the evil necromancer's army of destruction, saving the world, and other such day-to-day activities. Hopefully, soon the characters in your campaigns will be doing the same.

Superpowers in Reality by Arthur Samuels

The *HERO System* defines two distinct types of games. One is "Superheroic," where all equipment must be paid for with points (I've always wondered why supervillains rob banks in that game; they can't possibly use the money for anything). The other is "Heroic," where commonly available equipment can be bought with money, but the characters cannot buy Powers.

The first option reflects Silver Age comic-book heroics quite well. Captain America, Daredevil, Batman, and others would never go buy an ordinary handgun and carry it.

The second option is used for James Bond, *The Bourne Identity*, and so forth. The characters are definitely non-super and do not have to pay points for ordinary devices (other than skills and familiarities to be able to use them).

However, there does exist a hybrid type of genre. In some stories, characters do have superpowers, yet they exist in what is recognizably our world (with the minimum amount of unreality necessary for superbeings). In this "realistic supers" setting, it makes no sense to charge points to carry ordinary items and weapons. Such characters can and do use commonly available weapons and equipment without it recognizably being part of their "shtick" a la Batman's utility belt.

Furthermore, not being able to buy and use ordinary items fails the reality check. Reality? For superheroes? Well, yes. The genre I am describing here is defined by taking the real world, injecting superpowered characters, and then exploring "what would it *really* be like?" Would they dress up in yellow spandex, form superteams, patrol the city for crime, and shout everything? Would you? Where do they get those costumes made? Where do they get them cleaned and repaired? Why would acquiring the ability to fly suddenly make it impossible for you to buy and learn to use a rifle?

A good example of this genre is the *Wild Cards* series, edited by George R. R. Martin. Steve Jackson Games' *GURPS Wild Cards* is an excellent sourcebook for this series. In one of the stories, Billy Ray carries an Uzi. He has superhuman strength, speed, regeneration, and a natural fighting ability a match for any martial artist. However, when he needs to carry a gun, he just checks one out and straps it on (he works for the Justice Department, so he has the appropriate Perks). It does not carry the stigma of "wrongness" of Batman carrying a .45.

To represent this sort of gaming in the *HERO System* requires a hybrid approach combining elements of both Heroic and Superheroic games.

A typical arrangement would be 100 base points, plus 50 points in Disadvantages. These characters tend not to have the massive Disadvantage totals of the four-color characters. Note that this approach precludes a character with a massive variety of powers, unless they are at a low level. This is deliberate: this sub-genre tends to feature characters with one distinct superpower, or a tightly linked group of minor powers. Furthermore, most of their Characteristics tend to be in the human range. Just because you have acquired a STR of 40 does not mean you have Olympic level DEX and SPD – it just doesn't follow.

Next, these characters can both buy Powers as though in a Superheroic game *and* buy mundane items with money (and associated skills such as Weapon Familiarity). At first glance, this may seem to make some Powers worthless. Why spend points on an EB or RKA when you can buy WF: Small Arms and carry an assault rifle?

However, the other aspects of realism must be taken into account. Set the campaign in any large American city. You try carrying an M-16 in downtown Los Angeles. See how long you manage it before the cops get real interested in why you are packing that much heat. Let me know how it goes, if you survive. Furthermore, where are you going to get something like that? Commonly, a natural 2d6 RKA is invisible until used, cannot be taken away, and is not illegal unless actually used, except in the most repressive countries.

Some players may want to make characters who are cops or Federal agents, just to get the appropriate Perks. This should be discouraged. Most of the time in this sub-genre, the paranormals are considered dangerous freaks and society has a hard time accepting them as authority figures.

The main difference between this style and the more standard Silver Age style power levels is the way the PCs have to interact with the "normals." A 350- or even a 250-point super typically can ignore the authorities unless they use military force – and some supers can ignore them even then. However, 150-point paranormals are not above the law.

Now, it may seem that 150 points doesn't even qualify as super. That's due to overall point inflation. In most *HERO System* gaming, in my experience, the so-called "normals" seem to almost all be at the level of elite special forces. You never seem to see agents or cops who are not at least 100 points. Agents built on 150

artwork by Blaine Taggart

points are about the norm. This is a natural consequence when the PCs are 300+ point monsters. The GM beefs up the normals so that they will be at least noticed by the supers who are plowing through them. This does restore balance, of a sort, but it is like the old pinball games compared to the new. Pinball machines of the 1970s typically scored in the five-digit range. Now, they typically score in the seven-digit range. It's no harder to earn a replay, but there are lot more zeroes! Why? What does it accomplish, other than more dice? Build most of your non-super NPCs in the 25-50 point range (as in the real world), and the 150-point paranormals will be more than adequately potent.

Next, you have to decide how the supers are regarded. Most likely, they would be feared and reviled. Humans don't have a good track record of tolerating those who are different. The entire campaign can be based around the reaction of the authorities to the emergence of paranormals. How far will they go? Lynch mobs? Concentration camps? When all supers are required to show up at Detainment Centers "for their own protection" (a very plausible scenario), the PCs as fugitives has as much potential for adventure and conflict as any supervillain filled Silver Age universe. Most paranormal characters should take a Social Limitation to reflect this.

Then there is the subject of super-names. I think such characters would acquire appropriate nicknames, like exceptional sports figures ("Magic" Johnson, "Refrigerator" Perry, "Ogre" from *Revenge of the Nerds*). However, it is unrealistic to expect people to use long colorful names. In reality, anybody with a name of more than two syllables quickly is tagged with a shorter version. Note that even Spiderman is often shortened to just "Spidey." Names such as "Presto Change-o Man" are just too stilted and unwieldy; he would rapidly be referred to as "Prez" or somesuch.

For this power level, it is recommended that a lower-powered version of Martial Arts be used. Design all maneuvers with 1 or 2 points. This is technically against the rules, but it does generate maneuvers more in keeping with lower-powered characters. I highly recommend this approach for pure Heroic games as well. The point minimum for Martial Arts goes from 10 to 5.

At lower power levels, there is also a problem with END costs. At lower SPDs, free Recoveries seem to come more often. It's not difficult to create a character who is tireless with just a few extra points of REC. Super-strong characters often don't even need that. There are two ways to handle this. Way One: increase base SPD by two points. In other words, SPD would be 3 + DEX/10. A hex should be set to 1 meter (GURPS maps become useful). Way Two:

Increase END cost to 1 per 5 Active Points (definitely to include STR).

Finally, a note about Knockback. The standard rules for Knockback are suitable for Silver Age comics, where supers would send each other flying around the battlefield with their mighty blows. For Realistic Supers, a good way to handle it is to roll for Knockback normally, then take the square root, and round down. Thus, 1-3" of Knockback is reduced to 1"; 4"-8" of Knockback is reduced to 2", etc. Damage should be based on the lowered value.

SAMPLE CHARACTER

Arnold "Sparky" Wilson

Background/History: In May of 2005, record-setting flares were observed on the Sun. Their duration and intensity were unparalleled in historical records. Less than a month afterward, the first paranormals began to appear. Arnold is an electrician who was exposed to a live wire due to an accident on a construction site. He can generate and discharge electricity. Furthermore, his mutation increased his nerve transmission impulse rate. He is one of the fastest paranormals ever produced.

The US government reacted to the appearance of superhumans by passing the Paranormal Containment Act, which created the OPN (Office of Paranormal Affairs). All paranormals were required by the Act to report to Detainment Centers "temporarily." Arnold refused, and became a fugitive.

Personality/Motivation: Arnold hates his powers, feels like a freak, and wants nothing more than to be normal again. He has had several confrontations with agents of OPN and a few with other paranormals (some paranormals avoided the camps by offering their services in rounding up fugitives). He makes a living doing odd jobs. If accused of being a "freak," he will deny it. His stay in any one area usually lasts only until the next attempt to capture him. His personal ethics have held fast so far, and he has never used lethal current on a person – yet.

Quote: "Just leave me be."

Campaign Use: If the PCs are fugitives themselves, they may talk Arnold into joining their group. If the PCs are working for the government, they could be assigned to track him down and bring him in.

Appearance: Arnold is a smidgen over six feet tall, and about 200 pounds. He has curly black hair, brown eyes, and a small bald spot. He is 31 years old, and has the rough callused hands of a journeyman electrician.

Arnold "Sparky" Wilson

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150 kg; 2½d6 HTH [1]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7 / DCV: 7
13	CON	6	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER: 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
10	PRE	0	11-	PRE Attack: 2d6
10	COM	0	11-	
4	PD	1		Total PD: 4 (0 rPD)
6	ED	3		Total ED: 8 (2 rED)
5	SPD	19		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
24	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 68

Movement: Running: 7"/14"
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
41	*Electric Discharge*: Multipower, 62-point reserve; Half Damage vs. Ungrounded Targets (-½)	
4u	*High-Amperage*: RKA 3d6+1, Reduced Endurance (½ END, +¼)	2
4u	*Low Amperage*: EB 10d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END, +¼)	2
10	*Absorb Current*: Absorption 2d6 (energy, to any of STR, DEX, PRE, SPD, REC, END, one at a time), Variable Effect (+¼); Only Versus Electricity (-¼)	0
4	*Current Resistance*: Armor (6 ED) Only Versus Electricity (-1)	0
3	*Energy Resistance*: Armor (2 ED)	0
2	*Quick:* Running +1" (7" Total)	1
3	*Electric Field Sense*: Detect Current (Sight Group)	0

Skills

2	PS: Electrician 11-	
3	Streetwise 11-	
1	TF: Small Ground Vehicles	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 77
Total Cost: 145

100+ Disadvantages

25	Hunted: OPN 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
10	Psychological Limitation: Wants to be normal again (Common, Moderate)
5(0)	Psychological Limitation: Quirks – Avid Poker Player; Football Fan; Likes Small Dogs; Likes Singing Karaoke; Sensitive about Small Bald Spot
10	Social Limitation: Paranormal (Infrequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 145
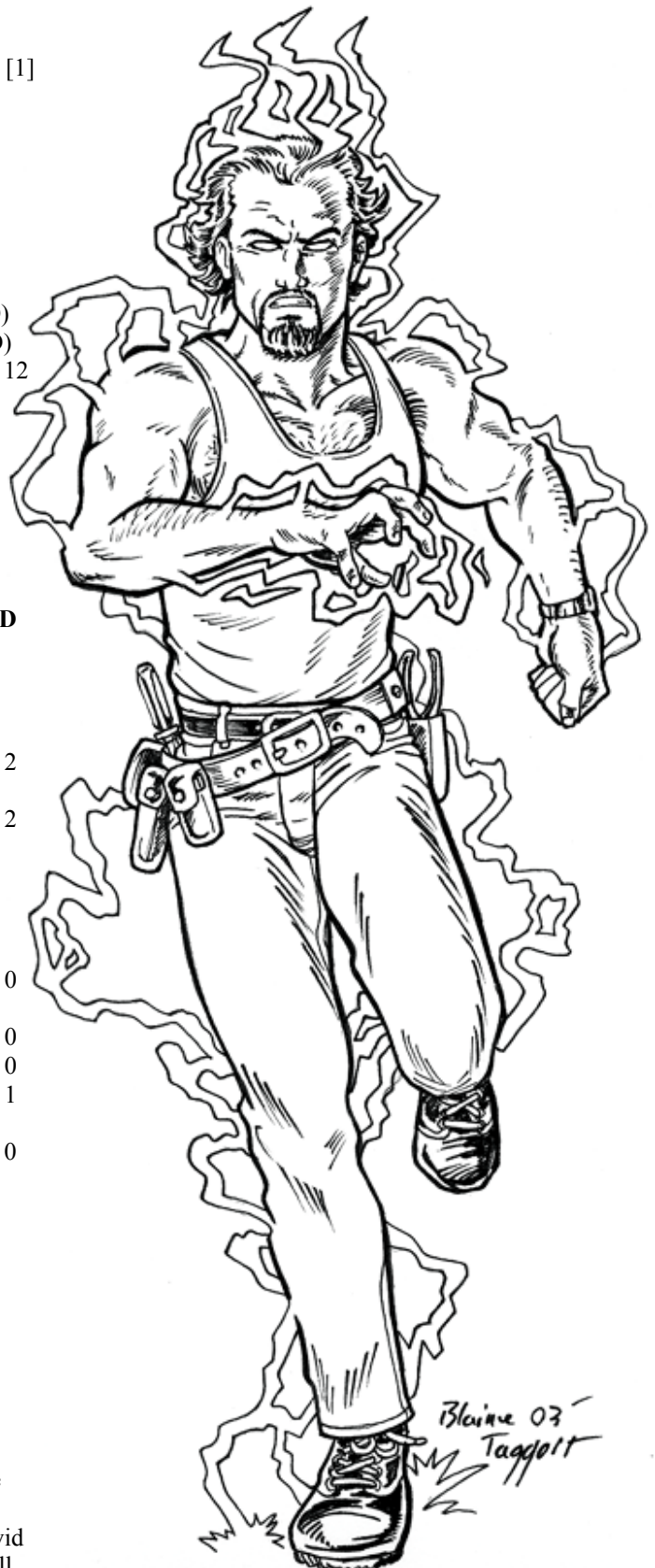
Creating a Sci-Fi Campaign by John Stevens

As a long-time GM, I'm familiar with the complications of trying to set up a long-term roleplaying campaign. No matter what the genre, this tends to be a long and time-consuming task, for which you will normally receive absolutely no thanks. For that matter, only rarely will you even get acknowledgement of your hard work. Nonetheless, the Campaign Universe that you create is the most crucial element of the entire game, for everything else hinges on it. This difficult task becomes even more difficult and more crucial in a science fiction campaign. This article will attempt to bring into focus the elements that make up this task, and the choices that are available to you as a GM, as well as the plusses and minuses of each option.

The first thing you have to decide is: do you want to use a "pre-packaged" universe or create one of your own? The "pre-packaged" option has much to recommend for it. Most of the work has already been done for you; sometimes a whole game exists just to play adventures in that setting; and your players, if they have similar tastes to yours, are probably already familiar with the universe. But on the other hand, you're locked into some one else's world and someone else's vision. If that's what you want, then go to it. You don't need me to tell you how; the game itself will give you plenty of ideas.

ALTERNATE UNIVERSE

There is also a third possibility. Let us say that you want to run a pre-packaged game, but all your players are familiar with both the game and the setting. In other words, there are no surprises lurking out in deep space for them. I ran into just such a situation once. I wanted to run FASA's *Star Trek: Klingons* set during Kirk's time. All my players are intimately familiar with this universe. I could have added in a new race that no one knew anything about, but I decided to go whole hog as it were, and completely revamp the universe. I decided that there where three key changes in my new universe: (1) The Vulcans never developed Surak's philosophy of non-violence, although his principles of Logic were there; (2) The Federation was never formed; (3) The Klingons are just now beginning to expand towards Earth after a war that lasted nearly 100 years. With these changes in mind, I started to work on my new universe.

I had to first decide the outcome of the Klingons' century-long war, then what government(s) existed in the Galaxy, how they interact, and so forth. Once I had a rough idea of things, I sat down to write the new history. As I like working with them, I used a timeline to do this, told from the viewpoint of the Klingons. My technology was still pretty much the same, with a few minor tweaks here and there. I then wrote up a brief explanation of the NPC nations, and I was ready to start working on the adventures. The new universe would challenge my players, but would still be passing familiar to them. The best of both worlds… don't you think so?

NEW UNIVERSE

If, however, you want your own unique universe, that's what this article is all about. Do you want your campaign universe to be starfaring, spacefaring, or planet-bound? Most campaigns opt for the starfaring approach, but some go with planet-bound. Almost none go with spacefaring, mainly because there are no aliens in our solar system. Don't fall into the temptation to ignore this approach. You can always set your campaign in another system (I had one set in the fictional Alpha Orionus system, 42 planets and three *known* sentient races), or leave it in the Sol System and throw in whatever alien races you want to be there. After all, it's *your* universe, you can customize it however you like.

PLANETARY

If you decide to go with a planet-bound campaign, you're going to have to make some changes to the world, or it will be too familiar to your players. Ask yourself what institutions are still in place, which have fallen, and what has arisen to take the place of the old? How far ahead has technology progressed, or conversely, how far back has it regressed? Do you want a bleak world, a hopeful one, or a golden age? Egalitarian or tyrannical? History tends to repeat itself, so look to the past for ideas and then update them with a futuristic twist. Is this the time of the Second Dark Ages, or the rise of a new Roman Empire, or perhaps an Age of Enlightenment that will surpass the original Renaissance? It's all up to you.

SPACEFARING

If you decide to go with spacefaring, you'll have other questions to answer. To start off with: our system or another? This is a key question. If you decide to go with another star system, you've got to create it out of whole cloth, but you're completely free with what you create. If you set it in our solar system, then you don't have to create the history of the first five thousand years of humanity – it's already done – just the years between when your world diverges and the campaign's current date. The spacefaring option limits you to sub-light drives, but just how fast are they? Do you want your PCs to zip around the system going from Earth to the Moons of Jupiter in a few hours, or do you want the speed of travel

to be much slower with such a journey taking several weeks or even months? Remember the speed of travel impacts on the size of the *perceived* universe. Two hundred years ago, a trip from New York to London would take you several weeks if the winds were with you; today it takes four hours by Concorde aircraft. You can reach almost any place in the world in a day, and call there in less than thirty seconds. This is what makes our world *seem* so much smaller, although it's actually the same size. Do you really want this for your campaign? On the same train of thought, what about communication speed? Can cheap, powerful transmitters reach everywhere in the system at the speed of light? Or are such transmitters only available at large population centers? In the former, the news would have a CNN or TV feel to it, while the later is more like a newspaper or the old movie newsreels of the thirties and forties. A network of telegraph-like relay stations exist, but once you're in transit, you're out of touch until you make planetfall.

Another important question to ask is: what kind of society exists out here? Are you looking at old, established worlds, or do you want more of a frontier feel? On established worlds, you're likely to have some sort of entrenched bureaucracy running things, "Here fill out these 17 forms in triplicate and come back for a hearing in three months;" while on frontier worlds things tend to be run by a select group of very powerful individuals or sometimes just one, "Around here the law is what **I** say. Since that's not clear to you… Ms. Carlisle will… explain it." <**punch-kick-kick-thud**> "There, I'm sure you understand now… don't you?"

STARFARING

If you decide to go with a starfaring campaign, you could choose to have all these things, by varying the tech and outlook of the starnations that inhabit your universe. But the first question to ask is, how big do you want that universe to be? Because this will have an effect on just about everything else. For example, let's assume that you want a large universe encompassing thousands of different worlds and a dozen or more nations. In such a universe, the speed of travel would almost have to be quite fast just to be able to hold such far-flung nations together. That means that running away from trouble is a viable option for your players if they're law-abiding types, but not so much if they're crooks – just like our real world, eventually they will be found. You'll have to take that into consideration in your adventures. On the other hand, a relatively small universe means there's a lot of unexplored space out there that can hide plenty of danger, which your players will have to deal with themselves. When you're off in unexplored space, help is a long way off. One

option is to run a fairly large universe where speed of travel is just a bit too slow for fast response. Such a universe would tend to be divided into Core Worlds, Developed Worlds, and Frontier Worlds, as the distance between the inhabited systems gets greater and the populations shrink. The Core worlds will feel like your major cities, while the Developed planets are good-sized towns, and the Frontier worlds are tiny villages out in the middle of nowhere. This lets you have your cake and eat it too, at least to a certain extent. When creating this kind of universe, the sheer scope of the task ahead of you can seem overwhelming. But this doesn't need to be so.

Take *Star Wars* for example. In the whole first trilogy, we only saw six planets (seven if you count the remains of Alderran). The Empire contained thousands of worlds, but we didn't need to see them, so we didn't. They were in the background; if the story had taken us there then we would have learned more about them. When you create your universe, try this time saving technique. Create one or two of each type of world; Core, Developed and Frontier, as well as a Desert World, Jungle World, Ice World, and Dome Colony World. Don't go into massive detail, just write down the general traits common to this type of world. Also create a list of planet names and some fluid mix-and-match style traits. When you need a world, pick a name off the list, take one of your general planets, add some unique traits, and you're set. The same dozen planets can be used over and over again; your players wont even realize you're doing it. Just make sure to change the names of your cities and landmarks. As for maps try using old D&D maps; there's like a million of them out there.

But what should you change, you ask? To start off, how about the local government, laws, and social taboos? And don't forget racial makeup – a Canine world will have an entirely different feel to it than an Avian one, although they might be otherwise identical. Certainly the tech level of a world will have an impact on its feel as well.

Tech Level is something you'll have to address in any campaign. And not just hardware, but also bio-tech. To give your campaign a near-future feel, keep the tech fairly close to what have now or what is projected for the next decade or so. Nothing anchors a campaign to the present better than keeping your hand weapons as chemical slugthrowers rather than some form of directed energy weapon. After all, how advanced can you be if you don't even have lasers? If on the other hand you want the campaign to be high tech then definitely go with energy weapons, force fields, and that *Star Wars* staple…the Light Saber.

Hopefully this will give you some ideas to get you started. Strap in, and make the jump to lightspeed….

Transworld Fantasy by Curtis Gibson

I Don't Think We're in Kansas Anymore

Why transworld fantasy? Perhaps your players are tired of doing the same old fantasy song and dance. Maybe you need a change. Everyone just read a transworld book and wants to do something like it. Great. How do you keep it from fading into the same fantasy palette you are used to, and instead make it vibrant and colorful? What are the differences between standard and transworld fantasy? What makes it such a unique and rewarding type of game?

In General

Transworld Fantasy is a subgenre that is fairly common in books, and quite often is someone's first exposure to fantasy, but is almost never addressed in gaming. The basic definition of *Transworld Fantasy* is a story where the main characters are from another world, and whose presence in that world is important to the resolution of the *conflict*.

The transworld story pattern begins with a short time spent on his home, setting the stage of where the hero is from, and helping define who he is by describing where he comes from. The hero is then transported to the new world, and he wants to go home, this is usually where the conflict is introduced and explained to the hero and reader. The hero then moves along the storyline, learning about his new world, making friends, and finding his place in it. The hero by this point has become comfortable in his new place, but is still planning on returning home after the conflict has ended. Then the hero is shown a slice of home, either by visiting it temporarily or by being exposed to an enclave of people that came over with him, and did not acclimatize themselves to their new surroundings. This exposure brings the hero to the realization that where he is now is better than where he came from. He lets himself be drawn completely into his new world, finally admitting to himself that he has fallen in love with this place, becomes the mythic champion with all his heart, and defeats the evil.

There are two different approaches to transworld fantasy gaming. The first thing to figure out is where the characters come from. Do they all come from the same world or are they scattered across the cosmos in their origins; there are benefits either way. If the PCs are all from one world, then the GM can spend quite a while on original world set up, running several sessions before the change happens. This allows a very solid and distinct definition of character and world pre-move, which helps the characters keep their otherworldliness flavor once they have crossed. Another thing this allows for, if the GM is of a devious sort is the transworld surprise: not telling the players what is going to happen. After all, the characters have no idea that the change is coming, why should the players? Have the players build their characters for the home setting, run for a while, and then **bam!** they are in a countryside looking at a dragon. Be warned, some players get offended at this, but if they roll with it, it really makes for true modeling of the source literature. If the PCs are all from different worlds or times, and arrive on the fantasy world in the same place you gain the benefit of all of these people with alternate perspectives and attitudes interacting with each other, which is a great roleplaying experience. The drawback to this is the lack of solid definition of where they came from. The GM, if he wants to do the extra work, can spend a solo session or two with each character to help set mood and home world for each player, to minimize that possible problem.

For the Player

As a player in a transworld fantasy, there are a number of things to consider when building or playing your character. You can play a simple archetype; because you are not in your home genre, that archetype will help define your difference of character, and can allow you as a player to reinvigorate a character type you have become bored with. If you come from a superhero world, a very basic minibrick or a low powered energy projector will be a very effective and unique transworld fantasy character, rather than just a character type that is a dime a dozen. The same holds true from other genres; a gunfighter from the old west, a street samurai from a cyberpunk setting, a pulp investigator from a horror setting are all clichés and common in their own setting, but are special in a transworld fantasy game.

While building the character, if you know you are going to be in a transworld fantasy game, remember that when coming up with background. Putting in a little bit to help with transition could be useful, but don't twist the character beyond recognition. Having a street samurai that knows how to ride horses could be a little much, but one that knows botany because they are planning to get into the business of drugs could lead into connections with druids and nature types when the character reaches that world.

When building powers, don't take Limitations or Disadvantages that won't be applicable in a fantasy setting. A character with powers that have "Not while in intense magnetic

A SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF TRANSWORLD FANTASY

The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant by Steven R. Donaldson

The Time of the Dark by Barbara Hambly

The Oz books by L. Frank Baum

Narnia Chronicles by C. S. Lewis

The Spellsinger Series by Alan Dean Foster

Doc Sidhe and Sidhe Devil by Aaron Allston

Legion of Videssoss by Harry Turtledove

Mordant's Need by Steven R. Donaldson

Witch World by Andre Norton

Jon Carter of Mars by Edgar Rice Burroughs

Wizard In Rhyme by Christopher Stasheff

Windmasters Bane and sequels by Tom Dietz

Farscape

Others that fit the transworld archetype

Shogun by James Clavell

Harry Potter books by J. K. Rowling

Ariel by Steven Boyett

Svaha by Charles De Lint

The Matrix

fields" wouldn't come up to much in a fantasy game. When selecting equipment, try not to go overboard with special equipment; having a railgun would be just a bit much in a fantasy setting. Also pay attention to things that have ammo, as once you transfer over, you won't be resupplying.

GM's Vault

When running a transworld fantasy the first question is why? What is the reason for having transworld heroes rather than native setting characters? In transworld books, the hero has some item, knowledge, or ability that no native has, and that is the necessary thing in solving the problem facing the world. This can be as simple a ring made out of material that is not native to the world, or as unusual as seeing a new addictive magical substance making its way through the world that the character can see as a modern style drug ring but that the natives do not see a problem with. There is also the transworld evil; the problem being one from another world, and that is the reason the characters are there, to directly combat this otherworldly menace.

A lot of the character advice is similar to standard GMing advice, but that is magnified when dealing with transworld situations. Give each character a chance to shine, and not just the character's skills or abilities, but his background as well. Set up situations that require not just a strong character, but that need a minibrick, or ones that don't just need a someone to infiltrate, but ones that need a spy like Bond. Let the character's special background shine through. It doesn't have to be directly related to the plot, it could be just color. In the author's campaign that had characters from four origin genres, the player of the cybernetic character uttered a line that became immortal. The individuals had just met each other, and given their stories. The street samurai keeps looking around and finally, disgustedly, says, "What is that stench?" The response was, "That's grass and trees, Edison." (That particular quote was stolen by the player almost verbatim from *Necromancer*.)

One of the beautiful things of the *HERO System* we love so much is the ease of the mechanical aspects of crossgenre playing. So when setting up the transworld game, you as GM can simply set DC and point limits for attacks and defenses, and let the players go. In general, it is usually a good idea to try and keep the personal weapons of the characters in line with whatever magical weapon DC and point limits you set. A light saber isn't that much off from a really nice magical sword, and it helps keep the character's individuality.

As the campaign grows the characters will be buying skills and gaining more native equipment, and becoming more and more like the people who have spent their whole lives on there. This is not a bad thing – acclimatization is a classic bit of transworld fantasy. The characters will also see interesting new ways to mix aspects of their old world and their new home. Enchanted guns that conjure and shoot hypervelocity sling stones when the trigger is pulled after the ammo runs out, light sabers with magical accuracy enhancement, and street samurai with fire enchantment on their cybernetic blades all add to the color of the character, and allow the character to keep reminders of their birth world. Characters learning magic can be an amazing chance for character development; having a science fiction character put aside his belief in the nonrational to be able to learn magic, or having the pulp horror investigator find out that those tomes he has been reading all his life really mean something, can have a strong and lasting positive impact on the character.

In Conclusion

Much like the characters in a transworld fantasy, the players and GMs of such a game may find themselves coming to love their new world, and prefer to stay there instead of going back, aside from the occasional visit, finding this bright new place a vibrant and interesting place to spend their time, and explore.

Saturday Morning Supers by Derek Hiemforth

Bringing The World Of Classic Cartoons To *Champions*

The classic superheroic cartoons of the late 1960s to mid 1980s seem dated and corny to our jaded 21st-Century eyes. With cheap animation, wooden voice acting, one-dimensional characterizations, paper-thin plots, and blindingly obvious moral messages, many of these cartoons embody all the worst aspects of the Silver Age comic books. Modern superhero cartoons are much higher quality, almost across the board. Characters in modern superhero cartoons have more depth, and the storylines are more sophisticated, introducing subtleties and shades of gray that the earlier cartoons totally lack. In truth, the world of the classic cartoons offers only one thing to *Champions* players and GMs….

It's an awful lot of fun to play in!

There's something refreshing about playing – if only for a while – in a world where the good guys are very good, the bad guys are very bad, and there's no problem so serious that it can't be resolved in a single episode.

In this article, we'll look at some of the common conventions of the classic cartoons, and how they can be applied to *Champions* for fun and profit. (Well, okay, maybe just for fun.)

The Classic Cartoon Game

In this section, we'll touch on defining the overall feel and tone of a Classic Cartoon game. In general, it shares many of the characteristics of optimistic Golden Age or Silver Age campaigns as described in *Champions,* but here we'll touch on some specifics.

RERUNS OR A NEW SERIES?

The very first thing to decide is whether you want to roleplay an existing classic cartoon (such as *Challenge of the Superfriends*) or whether you want to create an original "cartoon" in the classic style. Each decision has merit.

If you're planning to run a Classic Cartoon game as a one-shot (for an RPG convention, or for a one-time break from an existing ongoing campaign, for example), then there are a lot of advantages to playing an existing cartoon. The characters will be well known and the players will have examples they can follow for doing voices and such. Also, players will probably have seen the cartoon, so setting the tone will be much easier. Lastly, players don't have to invest a great deal of time in creating personalities and character sheets for characters that will see limited play.

If you're planning to run a Classic Cartoon game as a recurring "campaign" of its own, then you can really go either way. Some players will get into the feel of the genre more if they identify it with the cheesy cartoons of their youth. Others will prefer to create original characters if it's going to be a continuing game. Some of the discussion that follows tacitly assumes that you're playing a "real" cartoon, but you can certainly bring the same themes to a game with original characters.

KISS THE CHARACTERS

Whether you're going to do an existing cartoon or an original one, simple character constructions are best. Characters in the classic cartoons were usually very straightforward. Even characters that knew many subtle and tricky variations on their powers in their comic books tended to be much simpler in the cartoons. Spending a great deal of effort on defining the *HERO System* game mechanics of the character's abilities down to the last detail isn't really in keeping with the cartoon feel.

That said, characters in the cartoons frequently exhibited unexpected… even *unbelievable* abilities. This seemed to happen whenever it would be convenient for the cartoon's writers. To mimic this effect, see "Cartoon Cards" below.

CLASSIC CARTOON GROUND RULES

Importance Of The PCs

In most Classic Cartoon games, the PCs are the most important heroes in the world, and they face the most nefarious villains in the world. Classic Cartoon scenarios are high-stakes, and often world-spanning. Of course, we know in advance that the heroes are going to save the day, but that doesn't make the scope any smaller.

Morality (0)

Can a game be rated at 0 on the 1-5 scale? If so, then this is that game. Good vs. bad is excruciatingly clear-cut.

Realism (1)

Very Romantic. Real-world physics are brazenly ignored much of the time. Heroes with no known special ability to survive in a vacuum can somehow breathe (and talk!) in outer space. Airplanes can time-travel. The earth can be moved out of its orbit and back again, with no negative impact to its biosphere. Reality takes a holiday.

Outlook (1)

Everything Works Out. The heroes *always* win. In the Classic Cartoon game, the fun is not in finding out the end result; the end result is known all along. The fun is in finding out how you reach the end result. "The play's the thing."

Seriousness (2)

More Lighthearted Than Serious. It may surprise you that this isn't rated at 1, but Classic Cartoon games aren't *exactly* played for laughs. See "Homage vs. Spoof" below.

Continuity (1)

The classic cartoon series were episodic; stories began and ended within the confines of a single episode, and there were virtually never any long-lasting consequences of prior events.

HOMAGE VS. SPOOF

There is an essential silliness to a Classic Cartoon game. That's part of its charm. The cartoons are just so *earnest* that they're funny, and a properly done Classic Cartoon game will be funny too.

However, the best Classic Cartoon games are laughing *with* the cartoon sensibilities… not *at* them. They're homages… not spoofs. This can be a fine distinction.

The humor doesn't lie in making fun of how a character was portrayed in a cartoon by making jokes at his expense. The humor lies in playing the character *exactly as they were portrayed in the cartoon,* and relying on the camp and earnestness of the situation itself to provide the humor.

It's tempting to say that it should be a situational comedy instead of stand-up comedy, but even that comparison is misleading. It isn't really *comedy* at all. It's funny for the same reason a Joe Friday diatribe in *Dragnet* is funny. It's funny because it takes itself so seriously.

To put it another way, the *players* will probably see a great deal of humor in the proceedings, simply because they know how corny and straight everything is. But the *characters* are not trying to be funny at all… they're ever-so-sincere.

That's why they're funny!

Customizing The System

In this section, we'll examine some optional rules that help reinforce the cartoon feel.

NOBODY EVER GETS HURT

All superheroes must have *Psychological Limitation: Code Against Killing.* That almost goes without saying. Our bright and shiny heroes do not kill people.

There should be no Killing Attacks. Heroes certainly shun them, and even villains shy away from using lethal force.

To truly capture the Classic Cartoon feel, though, it should go even farther than that. Even when mighty bricks who can bend steel in their bare hands are fighting physically-normal mad scientists, the mad scientists somehow emerge without a scratch. They're subdued, but not wounded at all.

To enforce this convention, implement a rule that no attacks do BODY damage except when they're used on inanimate objects. Calculate Knockback based on the assumption that all attacks did one BODY per die of the attack. For example, to determine the Knockback done by a 10d6 Energy Blast, roll 2d6 and subtract the result from 10.

NOBODY EVEN GETS *HIT*

Some cartoons took this non-violence to extreme levels. Virtually no one was ever even *struck*. Bricks didn't punch foes, they wrapped steel girders around them. Cosmic power guys didn't whack enemies with big green energy fists, they trapped them in big green energy cages. Gadgeteers didn't smack adversaries with boomerangs, they entwined them in swinglines. In short, all "attacks" were just variations on Grab and Entangle.

And the enemies were stymied by this! Even incredibly strong brick villains were somehow unable to escape the flimsiest snares, being held fast by such daunting things as chandeliers, plain ropes, and plastic baggies.

This particular element of the Classic Cartoons probably wouldn't be a lot of fun to play, because it removes too many enjoyable aspects of comic-book combat from the game. However, if you want to simulate The Entangle Effect in your game without banning all other kinds of attacks outright, consider imposing *Vulnerability: 2x Effect From Grabs and Entangles* on all of the villains. This makes such attacks very effective, and encourages the heroes to use them without making them the only option.

SOLILOQUIES RUN AMOK

Classic Cartoon characters announce *everything* they do before they do it. This applies to both heroes and villains. In the cartoons, this was necessary to help children follow the plot. In a game, it's just fun!

All characters should have *Psychological Limitation: Broadcasts Intentions In Combat* from page 67 of *Champions*. Truthfully, all the characters broadcast their intentions all the time… whether in combat or not.

Combats in Classic Cartoon games are about talking as much as they're about fighting. To simulate this, and to help keep the action moving in large combats with many heroes and villains, try adopting the following rule.

When each character's Phase comes up in combat, they must immediately make a soliloquy. If they don't have a soliloquy ready to go when their Phase comes up, *they lose that Phase!* (You get no screen time if you've got nothing to say!)

This soliloquy can be announcing what the character is about to do, pontificating about how evil will never triumph, taunting the super-fools who will never stop your master plan, and so on. Signature exclamations, such as "Great Scott!" "It's Clobberin' Time!" or "Holy Moley!" frequently make appearances. As long as you have something to say, you can get your turn in the spotlight.

And don't forget… this applies to the *villains* too. This can be a challenge when running a Classic Cartoon game. The GM needs to think very fast to keep up with all the posturing and taunting the villains will do. Be fair… if you can't think of something for a villain to say when their Phase comes up, make sure they lose their screen time too!

IGNORE ENDURANCE

Characters in Classic Cartoons never get tired, and buying all of their abilities with *Reduced Endurance* overcomplicates the character sheets. It's easier to just ignore END completely.

If you want to ignore END, but still allow remarkable feats like Pushing, one option is to allow each character one Push per episode. Another option is to ignore Pushing as well, and handle these feats with Cartoon Cards (see below). One final option is to treat Pushing as if the character was out of END, and have the character burn 1d6 of STUN for every 2 END Pushed.

CARTOON CARDS

The writers of Classic Cartoons got quite imaginative in assigning superpowers to well-known comic-book characters. Ground-based speedsters could suddenly fly, amazon warriors could suddenly teleport, jet airplanes could suddenly time travel, and so on. This haphazard adherence to the comic-book canon of the character's abilities is one of the defining traits of these wonderfully bad cartoons.

To simulate this, we can use a concept called *Cartoon Cards.* A sample sheet of cards follows later in this article. Each hero gets one card per episode. Villains don't get cards; having them makes it too tempting for the GM to play the villains to win, and they shouldn't win. You don't actually have to use cards (or any physical token); the important thing is just that the heroes can manifest the effect once per episode.

When a Cartoon Card is played, the character can manifest any power they wish, *even if it's not on their sheet!* This effect lasts for 1 Phase, and the Active Points in the effect cannot exceed the Active Points of their most expensive ability.

The effect itself is usually an extrapolation of the character's existing abilities, albeit possibly a far-fetched extrapolation. But it doesn't *have* to be related to their existing powers at all… some truly bizarre powers popped up from time to time on these cartoons.

Gamemastering Classic Cartoons

In this section, we'll offer the GM some tips on things that they can do while running the game to help enhance the cartoon feel.

WATCHING EPISODES

Many of the classic cartoons are available on video and DVD. Before starting a Classic Cartoon game, watching an episode or two of a classic series can help get everyone into the spirit of things – especially if you're going to be playing that series. You can even do this for one-shot games at conventions if time allows.

Many players may not have seen the cartoons in years. Even if they have, a reminder of the source inspiration can often help get people in character.

If watching whole episodes is not an option, even playing the theme music can help set the mood. Many web sites specialize in providing sound clips from old TV shows.

AUDITIONS

Sometimes – especially at conventions – you may run into a situation where multiple players want to play the same character. One way to resolve this is to simply make some kind of random determination of who gets to choose their character first.

Another way is to hold auditions! If more than one player wants the same character, give them each a simple situation and have them react as that character. Whoever captures the feel of the character best (in the opinion of the GM or the group, whichever you want to do) gets to play that character.

KISS THE PLOT (BUT KEEP IT BIG)

Classic cartoon plots are written to be simple enough for grade-school children to follow. If a Classic Cartoon game is to capture the right feel, it also needs to have a simple plot. Subtle machinations and intertwining subplots are just much too sophisticated for this kind of game.

However, Classic Cartoon plots are usually epic in scope, despite their simplicity. The villains threaten to take over the world in virtually every episode. Only the mind-numbing obviousness of their schemes allows the heroes to foil them utterly in a single show.

Some classic types of cartoon plots include:

The villains discover a way to control the world's power supply (or food supply, or water supply) and they threaten to withhold it unless the world's leaders turn *all authority* over to them. Blackmail is the order of the day.

The villains invent some grandiose rubber science device that will allow them to mind control everyone on the planet, transform everyone on the planet, wipe the memory of everyone on the planet, and so on. They're forever wanting to do something nefarious to *everyone on the planet*.

The villains give up on trying to defeat the heroes, and try to avoid them instead. They throw the heroes into another time, or they travel to another time themselves, or they decide to *take over a different planet*. Whatever the case may be, they decide the grass in greener in a different pasture. (But the heroes foil them anyway, of course!)

The villains try to turn the public against the heroes by framing them in some way or *tricking everyone* into thinking they've turned to the cause of justice themselves. The Legion of Good!

THE NETWORK CENSOR

(Special thanks to Keith Curtis for suggesting this idea!)

If you run a Classic Cartoon game in a setting where you don't have control over the makeup of the playing group (such as at a convention), you will inevitably encounter players who don't seem to grasp the goals of the Classic Cartoon game. This generally doesn't cause too much of a problem as long as most of the players "get it" and are having fun.

Occasionally, though, you may run into a player who *really* doesn't "get it," and insists on having his character act in very inappropriate – or even offensive – ways. In such a case, try invoking the power of The Network Censor.

The Network Censor "bleeps out" any material that is clearly inappropriate for a Saturday-morning children's cartoon. This bleeping can take many forms, from a silly horn or buzzer sound effect the GM can play, to the GM and/or players blowing New Years' party horns.

In any case, the *effect* of being bleeped by The Network Censor is that the character loses that Phase or action.

In Conclusion

The Classic Cartoon game can be a tremendous amount of fun both to run and to play in, for gamers who appreciate the wonderful badness of the old Saturday morning superhero cartoons.

Accompanying is a sheet of Cartoon Cards, suitable for printing out on cardstock.

Cartoon Card!

When you play this card, your character can manifest any power for 1 Phase – even a power they don't have! The power level cannot exceed the active points of the character's most expensive ability.

Cartoon Card!

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"It's Alive" by Michael Surbrook

Constructs from Fiction and Folklore

Throughout folklore and mythology, one finds many examples of artificial life. Some are formed from clay, carved from wood, or cast from metal, and others are made with a combination of materials. Once given life, these creations are often servants to gods, heroes, and kings, or the guardians of a sacred location or treasure, and used for purposes ranging from benign to malevolent.

The invention of these constructs varies greatly. Some are the result of magic, such as the Jewish golem or the South American *bakru*. Others have their origins in the realm of alchemy, such as the *homunculus* or Frankenstein's monster. More modern constructs may be mechanical in origin – such as the many clockwork animals produced in China and during the European middle ages in the real world, or may be the result of surgery, as seen with the creatures of the fictional Dr. Moreau.

Such creations can add color to many different settings and genres. Most *Fantasy Hero* settings should have little to no problem with alchemically created men or magically constructed golems. A Chinese sorcerer might pit a clockwork swordsman against a group of heroes in a *Ninja Hero* adventure. If your pulp-era game allows for magic, then an animated scarecrow might be just the thing. The superhero genre is rife with artificial life forms, from revitalized corpses to mechanical men. And, of course, where would our *Star Hero* adventurer be without his trusty robotic sidekick?

ASSORTED CONSTRUCTS AND ARTIFICIAL PEOPLE FROM AROUND THE WORLD

The following list describes a number of constructs from around the world, taken from fact, fiction, and folklore. They can either be adapted into a campaign directly, or be used as the basis for original creations.

Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon: A pair of thirteenth century monks, these two men are well known for their forays into the world of science. In addition, they both were reputed to own mechanical brass heads capable of speaking and able to predict the future.

Artificial Animal Constructs

Throughout history, many people have created fraudulent animals with which to fool the gullible. A few well-known examples include:

Fur-Bearing Trout: A fabulous creature of North American lumberjack folklore, the fur-bearing trout is a fish with a stitched-on fur coat. As the trout is reputed to inhabit cold northern waters, the fur is usually white.

Jackalope: A jackalope is a rabbit or hare with a set of deer's antlers attached to the skull. This example of a taxidermist's skill can be found both in the American West and in Europe, specifically Germany.

Jenny Haniver: Made from the dried sun-dried remains of skates and rays, jenny hanivers are strange-looking monsters that in the late Middle Ages were passed off as miniature dragons or basilisks. Modern versions of the jenny haniver are usually said to be examples of the "devil fish," mermaids, or even the dried corpses of space aliens. The origin of the name "jenny haniver" is a complete mystery (although there is some speculation it is derived from the city of Anvers [Antwerp] in Belgium).

Mermaid: Fabricated examples of the legendary mermaid have been around since the Middle Ages. Most are horrible-looking combinations of a monkey and a fish, although larger ones use one of the great apes and a porpoise. Modern versions have used various fish, lizards, and even small crocodiles. One of the most famous of these constructs was the Fiji Mermaid, exhibited by P. T. Barnum in the late 1880s.

Bakru: Made from flesh and wood, these humanoid beings stand only about 18 inches tall, and are found in the folklore of Surinam. *Bakru* have childlike bodies with large, oversized heads, and are created by magicians, who bargain their souls for the riches these creations will provide.

Clockwork Animals: Many cultures have created clockwork animals. The ancient Romans and Chinese, as well as medieval Europeans, are all known to have created a variety of mechanical clockwork animals. Powered by such means as weights and springs, they were usually used as entertainment for royal courts or as spectacles for festivals and tournaments. In Europe, these creations become more involved over time, eventually giving rise to various mechanical men and gear-driven toys in the 18th Century.

Henri-Louis Jaquet-Droz: A Swiss clockmaker, Henri-Louis used cams of various sizes to program his automatons, allowing them to draw pictures and play musical instruments.

Jacques de Vaucanson: Jacques created some of the most complicated mechanical men in all of Europe. He started with a flute player, and

artwork by Derek Stevens

then a boy with a pipe and a drum. His most famous creation was a duck, which could eat, drink, walk, and quack.

Wolfgang von Kepelen: In 1770 Wolfgang built a clockwork chess-player he called "the Turk." A human-sized figure seated behind a cabinet, the Turk was the sensation of Europe, and defeated virtually all its challengers at chess. Although the Turk was, in fact, a hoax and unable to play chess, the device was a marvel of mechanical engineering and received widespread acclaim.

Dr. Moreau: Found in H. G. Well's novel *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Moreau is an Englishman involved in experiments with vivisection and the grafting of body parts from one test subject to another. En route to perfecting his methods, Dr. Moreau creates a wide variety of humanoid animal-hybrids to populate his remote island.

Galatea: Pygmalion, a king of Cyprus, crafted a female stature of ivory so beautiful that he fell in love with it. After courting the statue much like one would romance a human female, Pygmalion prayed to Aphrodite to be granted a wife much like this statue. Aphrodite responded by bringing the statue, now named Galatea, to life.

Gingerbread Man: This popular fairy tale describes the adventures of a gingerbread cookie who comes to life after being baked in the oven. Running free, his refusal to listen to others results in his being eaten by a fox.

Gulinbursti: Found in Norse myths, Gulinbursti is boar with solid gold bristles (hence the name *Gulinbursti* or "Golden-Bristles"). Made by the dwarves, Gulinbursti drew the god Frey's chariot over air, land, and sea. Gulinbursti could also be eaten if needed, and would reform whole and sound by the next morning.

Hephaestus: The Greek god of the forge and volcanoes, Hephaestus wasn't himself a construct, but instead created several different artificial humans out of various metals, and is credited with creating the first woman, Pandora, from clay. His most famous creation was the bronze man Talos (see below), although he was also said to have built two gold women to help support his body while walking. To the Romans, Hephaestus was known as Vulcan.

Homunculus: There are several version of the *homunculus*. The philosophical *homunculus* is a minute man said to inhabit sperm cells and to dwell in the brain, governing emotions and the making of decisions. Of course, one then wonders what sort of *homunculus* inhabits the brain of man's *homunculus* and governs *its* actions. The more familiar version of the *homunculus* is the artificial man of alchemy.

Created from a mixture of water and wheat (or other compounds) placed in a glass vial, the vial is then incubated in horse dung for forty days, at which point the contents will have transformed into a little man. This little man (*i.e. homunculus*) must then be fed blood for upwards of forty weeks. Other "recipes" for creating a *homunculus* are far more involved (requiring the contents of the vial to be repeatedly distilled), but the end result is a substance capable of renewing life and youth once eaten.

L. Frank Baum: Creator of the fantastic world of Oz, L. Frank Baum populated his fairy-tale creation with a whole host of artificial people and constructs. A short list includes:

The Glass Cat: Formed from spun glass, with emeralds for eyes and a ruby for a heart, the Glass Cat was the creation of Dr. Pipt and his Powder of Life. Known to be extremely vain, the Glass Cat lives in the Royal Palace of Oz.

Jack Pumpkinhead: Jack is the creation of the boy Tippetarius, who desired a playmate. Jack's body was carved from wood, his head was carved from a pumpkin, and he was dressed in cast-off clothing. Jack was brought to life by the sorceress Mombi, who sprinkled the Powder of Life on his body.

Nick Chopper The Tin Woodsman: Originally a Munchkin woodcutter, Nick was cursed by the Wicked Witch of the East to have constant accidents, which resulted in his cutting off various body parts. As he lost each part, it was replaced by one made from tin, until he was a being made entirely from metal. However, he lacked a heart, and was thus unable to love anymore.

Scraps The Patchwork Girl Of Oz: Patches is a girl made from a patchwork quilt, cotton stuffing, brown yarn, and similar materials. Sewn together by one Margolotte, who intended her creation to be a servant, Scraps was brought to life by Dr. Pipt and his Powder of Life. Scraps, however, proved to be far too intelligent to settle for being a simple servant.

Saw-Horse: Created by Tippetarius when he sprinkled the Powder of Life on a wooden sawhorse, the Saw-Horse then served as Tippetarius' mount through the course of many adventures.

The Scarecrow: Made from straw, the Scarecrow was one of Dorothy's companions on her journey to see the Wizard of Oz.

Tiktoc The Clockwork Man: Tiktoc is a mechanical man made from copper. He is powered by a wind-up mechanism that allows him to talk, walk, speak, and think.

Pinocchio: Created by Carlo Lorenzini, the story of Pinocchio was serialized in a Roman newspaper in 1881-1882. It is the tale of a

THE JUGGERNAUT

The word "juggernaut" usually brings to mind a huge unstoppable machine. The word itself sounds Greek (*naut* means "sailor") and some people think it to be another of Hephaestus' creations. Actually, "juggernaut" is derived from Jagganath, the Hindu "Lord of the World." The Jagganath is an idol said to contain the remains of Krishna. During festivals, it is pulled through the streets and the faithful will throw themselves under the cartwheels of the idol.

wooden puppet – carved by the poor cobbler Geppetto – who wishes to become a living boy.

Robots: Webster's Dictionary defines a robot as "an automatic device that performs functions normally ascribed to humans or a machine in the form of a human." The word's origin comes from the Czech word *robota* meaning "forced labor" and first appeared in Karel Capek's play *R. U. R.* (Rossum's Universal Robots), which opened in 1921. Interestingly, Capek's robots weren't mechanical creations, but *chemical* ones! Since then, robots have become a staple of the science fiction genre, and are often used to examine the nature of humanity and what it means to be human in many science fiction stories.

Several famous cinematic robots include:

Gort: This giant, hulking, silver robot appeared in the 1951 film *The Day The Earth Stood Still.* Capable of vaporizing a main battle tank with a single blast from its visor, Gort's purpose is to ensure peace among all the peoples of the Galactic Federation.

R2D2 and C3P0: Possibly the two most famous robots (or, in their case "'droids") of all time, these two robots first appeared in the film *Star Wars* in 1977. Inspired by the two bickering farmers in Akira Kurosawa's film *The Hidden Fortress,* the pair consists of an astromech unit who can only communicate via electronic beeps (R2D2), and a stuffy protocol android (C3P0).

Robbie The Robot: Featured in the film *Forbidden Planet* (1956), Robbie became the prototypical 1950s cinema robot. He's appeared in several films over the years, and a replica of Robbie often appears at Star Trek and science fiction conventions.

"Robot": Seen as part of the television series *Lost In Space,* "Robot" (it had no other name), tended to serve as a foil to Dr. Zachary Smith's (Jonathan Harris) dialogue, as well as a constant companion to Will Robinson (Bill Mumy). In addition, Robot's design bears more than a passing resemblance to that of Robbie's, strong evidence of the earlier robot's influence on Hollywood.

Talos: A large man formed of bronze, Talos was created by Hephaestus to be the guardian of Crete. Tireless, he circled the island three times a day and would hurl stones at any ship that threatened the island. Three times a year he was to go through all of the villages of Crete, and display the laws of King Minos on large tablets. When invasion threatened, he stood in a great fire until he was red hot and then grappled with his foes, crushing them to his chest and burning them to death.

Talos met his end at the hands of Medea, Jason's wife. She knew Talos had a single vein running from his ankle to his neck containing his *ichor*, or lifeblood. This vein was stoppered by a bronze nail, which Medea removed, at which point all of the *ichor* drained out and Talos fell over dead.

A character named "Talos" also appears in Edmund Spenser's book *Faerie Queene*. This Talos is a metal man who goes about smashing his opponents to bits with a large hammer.

Tupilak: This creation is found among the folklore of the Inuit. It is made from a variety of animal and human parts and is sent out by a sorcerer to kill his enemies. The *tupilak* is usually made to look like a seal and is constructed from animal hides, flesh, animal and human bones, peat, and cloth. Given life by a ritual song, the *tupilak* is put in the ocean, at which it point will become a seal, swim after its target, and kill him (or them). The creator of the *tupilak* needs to be careful the intended victim doesn't use powerful magic of his own to turn the *tupilak* around and send it back at its maker.

Other names for the *tupilak* include *kikituk, tupilaq, tupilat,* and *qivittoq.*

Wulgaru: A giant humanoid found in Australian myth, a man named Djarapa carved Wulgaru out of wood. Djarapa then made joints from wood and stone, used flint for the teeth, pebbles for eyes, and human hair. He chanted over the figure for two days to no avail. Upon leaving the figure, it came to life and followed Djarapa back to his village. Unable to be destroyed, Wulgaru became an enforcer of village laws, devouring those who broke such laws, while leaving those who led good lives alone.

WRITE-UPS OF ASSORTED CONSTRUCTS

This section presents character sheets for three different constructs. The first is the Ebony Horse, found in the pages of the *Tales of the Arabian Nights*. The second is the world-famous Frankenstein's Monster, although this version is the *real* monster, as seen in the novel *Frankenstein,* and not the Hollywood version. The last write-up is for the Golem of Jewish folklore, the precursor of all the fantasy golems to follow.

The Ebony Horse

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
2	Size	10	1.6"x.8"; -2 KB; -1 DCV
25	STR	5	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 HTH [0]
15	DEX	15	
16	BODY	4	
5	DEF	6	Does Not Protect Occupants (-½)
3	SPD	5	Phases: 4, 8, 12

Total Characteristics Cost: 45

Movement:	Flight:	37"/296"
	Running:	0"/0"
	Swimming:	0"/0"

Cost	Powers	END
67	*Filling Up With Air:* Flight 37", 8x Noncombat; Cannot Move Backwards (-¼)	7
-12	*Only Flies:* Running -6" (0" total)	0
-2	*Only Flies:* Swimming -2" (0" total)	0

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 53

Total Vehicle Cost: 98

0+ Disadvantages

| 15	Distinctive Features: Flying Horse Made From Wood And Set With Gold And Jewels (Not Concealable)
20	Vulnerability: 2x BODY from Fire-Based Attacks (Common)

Total Disadvantages Points: 35

Total Cost: 63/5 = 13

Description: Described in the *Tales of the Arabian Nights* (a.k.a. *One Thousand Nights and a Night*) this creation is a horse made from the blackest ebony wood. It is set gold and jewels and equipped with a bridle, saddle, and stirrups.

The horse is capable of flight, and moves by filling up a tank in the body with air. Once this is done, it can cross in a single day what a normal horse would cross in a year.

In order to make the horse fly, one turns the knob on the right shoulder. A similar knob on the left shoulder allows landing. Steering is accomplished by turning the horse's head.
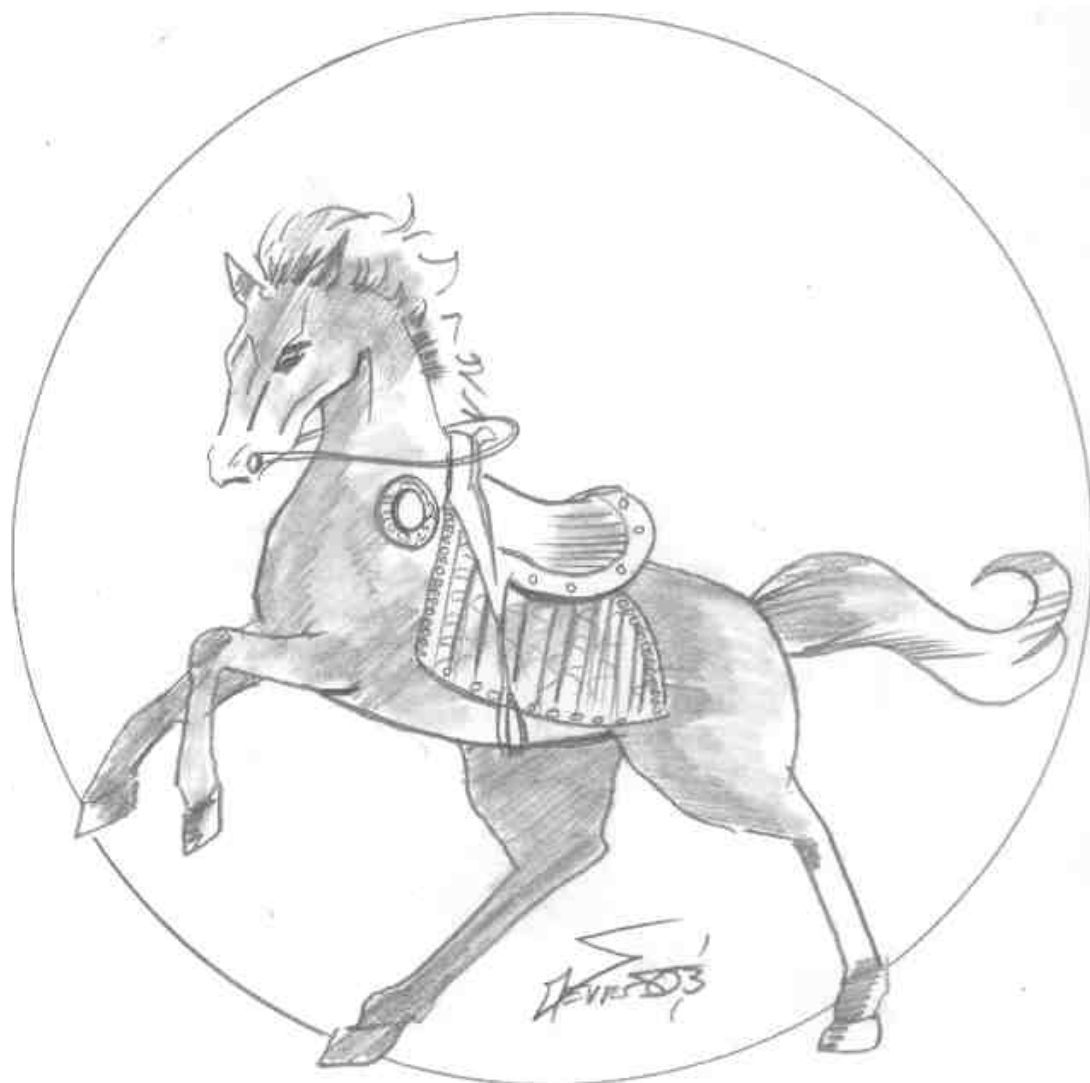
Frankenstein's Monster

Background/History: Frankenstein's monster was the creation of Victor Frankenstein, who sought to gain full and complete understanding of life and death by discovering a way to animate dead tissue. Creating a human of immense proportions, Frankenstein worked for several years to bring it to life, only to immediately shun his creation the moment he succeeded. Fleeing from his lab, Frankenstein collapsed in his bedroom, leaving the monster to wander free.

Unable to truly see, and having no understanding of his surroundings, the monster left Frankenstein's lab and eventually ended up in a forest, where it slowly became aware of its environment. Learning to feed itself, the creature made the mistake of wandering into a local village, only to be driven off by a hail of stones. Lost and alone, the creature then took shelter in a small shed set next to a tiny cottage.

Spending almost two years in this shed, the creature observed the actions of the people who lived in the cottage and thus learned to speak. He also learned to read, and perused at length a number of books he discovered in a lost suitcase. Desiring companionship, he aided the cottagers in the night, cutting wood and clearing the ground as needed. Eventually, he attempted to befriend them by speaking with the eldest of the inhabitants, a blind man. Interrupted by the rest of the family, he was beaten and chased off.

Realizing he was truly alone, the creature retreated to the Swiss Alps, encountering Victor's younger brother along the way. He murdered the child and implicated Justine, a servant for the Frankensteins, for the crime, which resulted in her execution. Discovered by Victor himself, the creature asked for forgiveness, and negotiated a deal with him. If Victor would build a mate for the monster, he promised to leave human habitation for some desolate place. Victor, torn between guilt at his creation, and hatred for the monster's actions, agreed.

Victor traveled to the Orkney Islands to make his creature and was about halfway finished when he decided he could not inflict a second monster on the human race, and destroyed his latest creation. The monster, enraged by this, informed Victor "I shall be with you on your wedding-night."

Victor then left the island, spending time in Ireland before returning to his home in Geneva, Switzerland. There, he married his fiancée, Elizabeth, only to have the monster murder her that same night.

Stricken with grief, Victor pursued the monster across Europe and into Russia, eventually following his creation out onto the Arctic ice. There, lost and ill, he was discovered by the crew of a trapped sailing ship, who brought him aboard and tried to nurse him back to health. Their efforts were in vain; Frankenstein eventually dies, but is visited one last time by his creation. The monster, seeing his creator is dead, informs the captain of the ship he will journey far out onto the ice, build a pyre, and immolate himself.

The creature is last seen loping across the ice, his final fate unknown.

Personality/Motivation: The monster is driven primarily by a desire for companionship, specifically with a female of his same size and appearance, who he can share his existence with. He also desires to do no harm to anyone, and even goes so far to subsist on nuts, berries, and roots, shunning meat. However, his continual rejection by society, coupled with Frankenstein destroying his incomplete female creation, drives the monster to take vengeance on the human race in general, and Frankenstein in particular. He swears to make the rest of Frankenstein's life one of misery, and vows to destroy all he loves, killing Frankenstein's oldest friend, his wife, and indirectly causing the death of Frankenstein's father. The monster also begins to simply take what he needs, regardless of the consequences, and doesn't finally repent his ways until he sees Frankenstein dead on board ship, at which point he realizes how empty his life has been.

Quote: *"I am malicious because I am miserable."*

"...if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear...."

Powers/Tactics: Of great size and strength, the monster is more than a match for any single human. He is also very agile, and both the monster and Frankenstein comment on the creature's "suppleness" of limb. Frankenstein also notes how the creature "bounds" across an ice field with superhuman speed, and climbs down a mountain faster than an eagle can fly. Even if we discount some of this description as mere hyperbole, it is obvious the creature is quite fast, both in terms of agility and movement. The monster himself also states he is quite capable of existing on the coarsest of foods and can bear extremes of heat and cold normal humans would find quite unpleasant.

Not only is the creature physically powerful, he is also extremely smart and quick of wit. He learns French simply by observing others speak the language, and similarly teaches himself to read. When he talks with Frankenstein, he is very articulate in his arguments, and both Frankenstein and the ship captain the creature meets at the end of the novel comment on his persuasiveness.

If angered or attacked, the creature tends to flee, usually returning at a later time to inflict harm on an unsuspecting victim. His favored form of attack is to strangle his foes to death, and he kills several of Frankenstein's friends and family members in this manner. The monster will also use other tactics, such as burning down the home of a family who attacked him, or arming himself with an assortment of firearms and similar weapons.

Campaign Use: One of the original gothic horror novels, the creature found in Mary Shelly's Frankenstein is a far cry from the stiff-jointed and mute monster who shambled across movie screens in the 1930s. Aside from the differences in speech and movement, Shelly's monster is almost certainly not a stitched-together collection of body parts with the brain of a criminal. Shelly never actually says how Frankenstein brings his creation to life, although we have hints of the process based on Victor Frankenstein's use of chemical apparatus and study of old alchemical texts. It is highly likely she envisioned Frankenstein growing his creation much in the same manner as the *homunculus*.

Frankenstein's Monster

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	20	14-	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 HTH [2]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
25	CON	40	14-	
14	BODY	8	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
16	EGO	12	12-	ECV: 5
23	PRE	16	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
9	PD	5		Total PD: 9 (0 rPD)
9	ED	5		Total ED: 9 (0 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
10	REC	0		
50	END	0		
40	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 146

Movement: Running: 11"/22"
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
10	*Pain Resistance:* Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%; STUN Only (-½)	0
10	*Can Bear Extremes of Heat And Cold:* Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%; STUN Only (-½)	0
4	*Great Size:* Knockback Resistance -2"	0
12	*Superhuman Speed:* Running +5" (11" Total)	2

Skills

2	AK: Europe 11-	
5	Climbing 14-	
1	KS: History 8-	
1	KS: Literature 8-	
1	KS: Philosophy 8-	
4	Language: English (completely fluent; literate)	
4	Language: French (completely fluent; literate)	
4	Language: German (completely fluent; literate)	
3	Persuasion 14-	
3	Shadowing 13-	
5	Stealth 14-	
4	Survival (Mountains, Temperate/ Subtropical) 13-	
3	TF: Dogs, Sleds, Small Rowed Boats	
3	Tracking 13-	
3	WF: Small Arms, Ax	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 82

Total Cost: 228

100+ Disadvantages

20	Distinctive Features: Hideous Appearance (Concealable, Causes Fear)
20	Hunted: Victor Frankenstein 14- (As Pow, Kill)
10	Money: Destitute
5	Physical Limitation: Large (Roughly 8' tall and weighs 600 lbs) (Infrequently, Slightly)
5	Psychological Limitation: Lonely, Desires Companionship (Common, Strong)
5(0)	Psychological Limitation: Vegetarian (Uncommon, Moderate)
20	Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Very Common, Strong)
15	Social Limitation: Outcast (Very Frequently, Minor)
33	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 228

Frankenstein's monster is also the prototype of many similar artificial men to follow later, a number of which should be familiar to fans of the superhero genre. In fact, this sort of origin is quite common in the superhero genre, although the resulting character is just as likely to be mechanical as organic. Thus, Frankenstein's creation can be adapted to virtually any genre, be it fantasy (as the ever-popular "flesh" golem), horror, the pulp era (as the servant of the required mad scientist), superheroes (as previously mentioned), or even science fiction (as an android). Regardless of how the monster is used, it is almost certain any PCs expecting a lumbering, green-skinned giant with bolts in his neck will be greatly surprised upon encountering *this* version of the creature.

Appearance: Frankenstein's creation is of great size, standing eight feet in height and proportioned accordingly. The creature has long, flowing, shoulder-length hair a glossy black in color, watery eyes, pearly white teeth, straight black lips, and yellow skin transparent enough to show the muscles and veins underneath it. The combination is such that Frankenstein repeatedly describes his creation as "hideous" and feels revulsion and horror at what he has created. Although initially naked, the creature eventually manages to clothe himself, wearing a mixture of castoffs with a great cloak thrown over top. His feet, however, are bare, and allow him to be tracked with some ease across soft ground and through the snow.

The Golem

Ecology: The creation of a golem requires extensive knowledge and study of the Jewish mystical work the *Sefer Yetzirah*. It also requires two or more persons, working as a group, to create the golem. Creation is accomplished in several ways, including: different combinations of letters of the Hebrew alphabet (called "gates"); the pronunciation of Divine Names, including the names of God; or inscribing the word *emet* ("truth") on the forehead of the golem. This latter method is the most common form of golem creation.

In order to destroy the golem, the creator needs to erase the letter *aleph*, the first letter in the word *emet*. This will leave the word *met*, which means "death," resulting in the golem turning to dust.

When creating a golem, the motives and materials must be pure, or else the golem will not rise, or will rise flawed and dangerous. The participants must wear white robes, and the water and clay used to form the golem must be pure and clean.

Regardless of how the golem is created, it must be watched carefully. It will grow larger day by day, and if allowed to grow unchecked, will become too large for its creator to unmake it. Also, the larger the golem gets and the longer it exists, the greater the chances are of the golem eventually becoming uncontrollable, and turning against its creator.

Personality/Motivation: As the golem has no soul, it has no real motivation or self-will. It does only what its creator tells it to do. It will follow all instructs precisely, and if not watched, can cause a great deal of harm by carrying out its orders exactly as given.

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The Golem

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1½ ton; 6d6 HTH [0]
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
10	CON	0	11-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll: 11-
0	EGO	0	—	ECV: N/A
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
9	PD	21		Total PD: 9 (9 rPD)
9	ED	24		Total ED: 9 (9 rED)
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
8	REC	0		
0	END	-10		
—	STUN	—		

Total Characteristics Cost: 84

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Swimming: 0"/0"

Cost	Powers	END
25	*Grows Day By Day:* Growth (at full power the Golem will be roughly 12" tall, weigh 100,000 kg, and have +50 STR, +10 BODY, -10" KB, +5" reach, and is at -7 DCV, +7 PER Rolls to perceive it), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½), Inherent (+¼); Always On (-½), Gradual Effect (5 Years, One Level of Growth every 6 months; -3)	0
15	*Body Of Clay:* Does Not Bleed	0
10	*Body Of Clay:* No Hit Locations	0
60	*Body Of Clay:* Takes No STUN	0
2	*Great Size:* Knockback Resistance -1"	0
15	*Tireless:* Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on STR	0
6	*Tireless:* Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on Running	0
90	*Body of Clay:* Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75%; Only Versus Edged Weapons (-1)	0
27	*Indestructible:* Damage Resistance (9 PD/9 ED)	0
50	*Body of Clay:* Life Support: Total (Including Longevity: Immortality)	0
-2	*Does Not Swim:* Swimming: -2" (0" Total)	0

Skills

| 12 | +4 with Haymaker, Grab, and Punch |
| 1 | PS: Common Laborer 8- |

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 319

Total Cost: 403

75+ Disadvantages

15	Physical Limitation: Ceases Functioning If The 'E' On His Forehead Is Erased (Infrequently, Fully)
5	Physical Limitation: Large (Roughly 8' tall and weighs 800 lbs) (Infrequently, Slightly)
15	Physical Limitation: Machine Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly)
10	Physical Limitation: Mute (Infrequently, Greatly)
5	Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, cannot leap (Infrequently, Slightly)
20	Psychological Limitation: Takes All Orders Very Literally (Common, Total)
258	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 403

Powers/Tactics: A golem attacks with its massive fists, smashing and battering its opponents. As it does not feel pain or injury, it will not retreat unless ordered. It is possible that a golem could be given a weapon of some sort, and sent into battle so armed.

Campaign Use: The golem is found in many ancient Kabbalistic texts, and is closely related to the fabled *homunculus* of alchemical lore. Its creation is alluded to in the *Talmud*, or Jewish Bible, and there are many stories about the use and misuse of different golems. In many ways, the golem and its creation are analogous to the creation of the monster in the novel *Frankenstein*, and it is highly likely Mary Shelly was influenced by the legends of the golem when writing her novel.

As written, the golem character sheet is best suited for *Fantasy Hero* games. It could also be used in a pulp-era or horror setting with little or no modification. For use in a *Champions* campaign, the golem should be made stronger, faster, and tougher. As a side note, many published comic book characters can be considered golems of one sort or another, and the number of times a laboratory-created creature has run rampant through a city is almost uncountable.

Appearance: Golems are large, humanoid figures made from clay. Their appearance is usually of a large human male, crudely shaped and with a rough approximation of normal facial features. The golem may be dressed in normal clothing. Written on the golem's forehead is the word *emet*, meaning "truth."