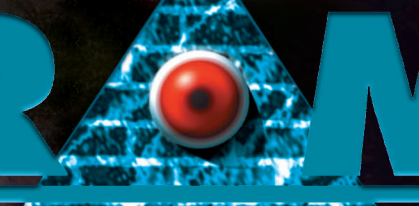


# PYRAMID<sup>®</sup>



Issue 3/89 March '16

## ALTERNATE DUNGEONS II

### HAVENS AND HELLS

by Sean Punch

**EASTERN ADVENTURES**

by Christopher R. Rice

**FIVE BEST PLACES TO NEARLY  
GET KILLED BEFORE YOU DIE!**

by Matt Riggsby

**THE TITAN'S HOUSE**

by David L. Pulver

**THE SECRET OF  
THE EXPLORERS**

by Steven Marsh

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### ARTICLE COLORS

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

*Pale Blue:* In This Issue

*Brown:* In Every Issue

*Green:* Columnist

*Dark Blue:* GURPS Features

*Purple:* Systemless Features

#### COVER ART

*Bob Stevlic*

#### INTERIOR ART

*Brandon Moore  
and Nikola Vrtis*

For years, *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* has delighted fans of crypt-crawling hack-and-slash fantasy. But sometimes you want to push the limits of what that game can do, while sticking with most of the *Dungeon Fantasy* framework. Fortunately, *Pyramid* is here to help, by providing alternate ways of looking at swords and sorcery. This month, we offer *three* meaty features – each of which could be a supplement unto itself! – along with other bite-sized goodies.

What if the battle between humanity and monsters was all part of some cosmic game, a diversion of the Gods, a clash betwixt *Havens and Hells*? *Dungeon Fantasy* mastermind Sean Punch offers a complete epic campaign setting. Imagine a world where death in battle isn't permanent, money doesn't exist, and the heroes' actions could ultimately threaten to uncover a secret that strikes at the heart of creation itself. In addition to its history to explore and enigmas to unravel, this campaign includes a detailed breakdown of what advantages, disadvantages, and skills are most appropriate for such a game, plus insight into how magic reacts differently (regardless of *what* magic system you choose)!

Size isn't everything, but it's pretty darn important . . . especially when you find yourself in *The Titan's House*! This month's Eidetic Memory offering from David L. Pulver – author of *GURPS Banestorm: Abydos* – turns the notion of scale on its head as the heroes explore the gargantuan domain of the titan Gromm. This adventure – suitable as a side trip for any *Dungeon Fantasy* campaign – supplies details on the two-story house and its dungeon below, maps of the area, and seven new monsters to challenge heroes who poke where they're not welcome . . .

The original *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers* explored the idea of the "Mysterious East," with its deadly martial artists. This notion was expanded in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 12: Ninja*, introducing the titular sneaky assassin. Now, we can offer the possibility of even richer *Eastern Adventures*. Longtime *Pyramid* contributor Christopher R. Rice shows how to craft a campaign that revolves around Eastern realms. It includes notes on how to translate existing templates, plus a new lens – the samurai – and new races, power-ups, and more.

This issue also features a Random Thought Table that presents an easily added campaign hook to shake up a fundamental concept in dungeon fantasy, plus another new *Car Wars* vignette from Matt Riggsby that sets the stage for the coming new edition. You'll also get a player-usable map from *The Titan's House*. With this month's *Pyramid*, everything "Ye Olde" is new again . . . and cooler than ever!

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT?

I first got into *Dungeons & Dragons* – with or without the *Advanced* – when I was about eight or nine years old. I'm sure it comes as a surprise to no one that it had a big impact on my childhood and early adult years. (Did you know that a “Steve Marsh” was listed as the editor for the *Expert Set*? That was a big deal for preteen me.)

Yet of all the memories I have of that venerable system, the ones that stick with me most strongly are those where the game was forced to do something *different*: Traveling to another plane of existence – or to Hell itself – with its own strange rules. Flying into space using *wooden ships*. An entire plane of existence devoted to horror.

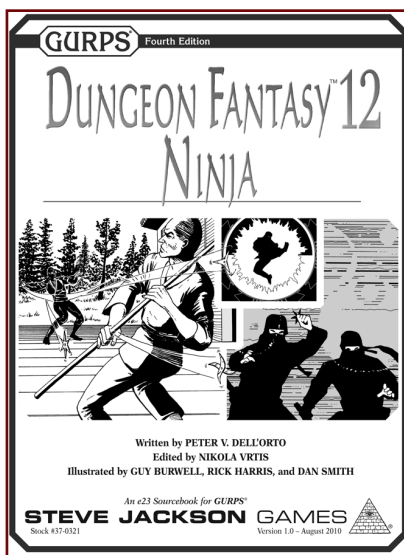
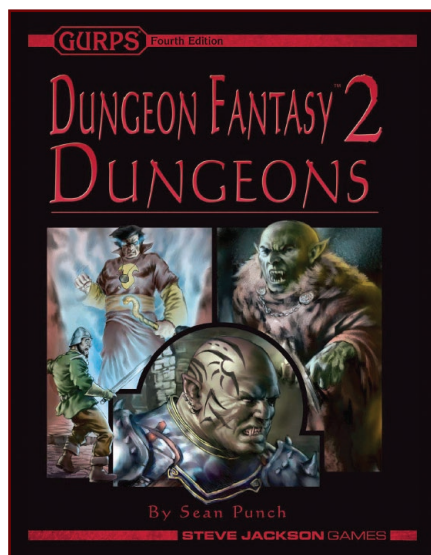
Even the sillier delves into oddness burned brightly in my mind, like the gray infinite featureless plane Nogard from the April Fool-themed magazine *Dragon* #96. (I confess it took me many years to understand the pun in the name “Nogard” . . .)

So it's no surprise that the “Alternate Dungeons” issues of *Pyramid* are some of my favorite. These features keep the pick-up-and-play style of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* while allowing for whole new realms of adventuring.

This issue is a bit different, in that we have focused on three large articles. Each one could practically be a supplement on its own. (And if you enjoy any of them enough to see that happen, let us know!) In this way, we're delivering something that's different both for *Dungeon Fantasy* and for *Pyramid* itself.

## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

So, do you like what we've done differently this month? Did something herein leap off the page and grab you by the lapels? Is there something we should leave to the goblin hordes to tear apart? Let us know privately at [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com), or join forces with like-minded adventurers online at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).



*Additional Material:* Peter V. Dell'Orto, Jason “PK” Levine, and Sean Punch

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# HAVENS AND HELLS

BY SEAN PUNCH

In fantasy gaming, the very existence of “dungeons” implies the kind of setting where the adventurer’s life is defined by greed and mortality, and where society is characterized by mortal conflict: banditry and assassination, guild and temple rivalry, the machinations of megalomaniac wizards, and

good old warfare. But what if everybody *had* to get along, gold meant nothing, and death was just an inconvenience? What if each day was a battle not for one’s own survival, but for that of civilization?

Welcome to the world of Havens and Hells!

## THE COSMIC BACKDROP

*There are Gods.* No mortal seriously doubts that. The truly devout can work miracles and – on rare-but-memorable occasions – a divine avatar stops by.

There are Gods, and they’re constrained by Divine Law. Theologians have formulated arcane theories regarding this cosmic code, but the truth remains elusive. What’s widely accepted is that Divine Law isn’t somehow imposed upon the Gods but rather emanates from consensus among them (nobody knows whether this means unanimity, majority, or some ineffable third option), that it reins in even the mightiest deity’s power, and that its dicta prohibit *unmaking*. Creation can undo itself, but Gods cannot erase parts of it on a whim.

What isn’t as commonly theorized (though some mortals do have suspicions) is that the Gods use their vast powers to alleviate the boredom of universal guardianship – that is, to entertain themselves. This is, in fact, true. Gods *do* play dice . . . and that’s just for starters. Their favorite games involve creating unstable complex systems and wagering (for who-knows-what stakes) on the answers to “How long will it last?”, “What will be its fate?”, and “What will adding this do?”

The Gods’ most ambitious game – *the Game* – is “Civilization vs. Chaos”: Creating a world in which free-willed, resourceful mortals, motivated by life and love, face off against terrifying monsters driven by the desire to slay and consume. Each “team,” men and monsters, has a divine faction rooting for it. Divine Law even permits Gods to offer their side support, provided that all such intervention involves adding to Creation

(not wiping things out) and leaves its inhabitants to make their own decisions.

The first match of Civilization vs. Chaos got badly out of hand. The Gods exercised little restraint and poured their might into the world with abandon. Their creations grew too strong. Civilization amassed near-deific levels of “Ancient Magicks,” while Chaos spawned the cosmically powerful “Elder Things.” Mortal wizards and monstrous Things annihilated vast swaths of Creation with their wars, and were about to turn on the Gods when they abruptly ended the Game by wiping one other from existence. Divine Law ruled the outcome a draw.

*Be true to the game,  
because the game will be true  
to you. If you try to shortcut  
the game, then the game will  
shortcut you.*

– Michael Jordan

## SECOND CREATION

The Gods found this experience an exhilarating change from the monotony of cosmic responsibility, and decided to set up a rematch that would have an unambiguous winner. All concurred that more safeties would be prudent – an agreement

that amended Divine Law. To keep things interesting, the Gods designed a more refined version of the Game to be played out in a new Creation (the *only* Creation known to mortals).

## HELL

*Hell* is the greater world of the new Game. It is the dominion of Chaos, a vastness of storm-churned oceans, primeval forests, jagged peaks, and seething volcanoes. It is a real place, not “another dimension” – the very concept of other planes of existence is alien to monsters and men, and beyond the reach of their mightiest magic. Still, demons *do* dwell here, and there are definitely bottomless fissures, frozen lakes, and lava pools. A visitor somehow transported from a traditional fantasy setting could be forgiven for believing that this is the kingdom of devils who rule over lost souls.

And there *is* a palpable air of eternal damnation here, because nothing that dies in Hell remains truly dead. Monsters of Chaos “respawn” after a time. Some reconstitute bodily in the nearest suitable habitat. Others return as undead, their indestructible spirits joined with broken bodies (often of a completely different kind!) reanimated by divine magic instead of life . . . an attempt by the Gods wagering on Chaos to eat away at the morale of Civilization.

The agents of Civilization don’t stay dead, either. Those who die in Hell reappear at the nearest Haven, awakening naked on the altar in the center of town.

## HAVENS

Civilization’s home base is the *Havens* dotted across Hell. These are splendid discs of sunlight ranging in size from hamlets to villages, surrounded by ever-fertile fields and quenched by gentle showers and inexhaustible springs. They enjoy perpetually clement weather – no storms, droughts, or deep freezes – and provide a modest population with enough to eat and drink.

Even better, no being of Chaos can cross or project effects inside a Haven’s borders. An invisible wall of divine power repels monsters and their abilities. No exception has ever been recorded.

Perhaps best of all, within a Haven, mortals can die only of old age (no known magic can halt or reverse aging) or by their own hand (accident or suicide). Attempts to injure others simply fail: weapons stop short, traps don’t trigger, curses fizzle, poisons prove harmless, and even roundabout schemes somehow miscarry. Deities on both sides of the Game judge the intent of potentially lethal actions and uphold this rule, according it the strength of Divine Law. Consequently, mortals tend to be pacifists with a firm belief in the Gods’ inherent goodness.

The catch, and what makes the Game a game, is that Havens harbor only modest plant life (grains, herbs, and vegetables) and small animals (bees, cats, chickens, rabbits, etc.), and offer neither the space nor the resources for herding. This means the inhabitants have no indigenous source of large-animal products (e.g., horn, leather, and sinew). As well, Havens are devoid of large trees, good-quality building stone, minerals (ores, petroleum, sulfur, and so on), and magical assets. And since Havens are endlessly fertile and most residents see old age, their populations grow, increasing the pressure to somehow obtain the missing necessities. Thus, as tools break, buildings fall to ruin, and both space and magic run short, mortals have no choice but to venture into Hell to seek what they need. This task falls upon *Collectors*.

## COLLECTORS

Civilization’s fittest, most cunning, and most magically gifted souls are chosen from an early age to become their Haven’s Collectors. Most learn the way of arms, improving quickly because mortal invulnerability *within* Havens allows them to spar as if fighting for keeps (though this does breed dangerously overconfident fighters). Others are taught magic, handed down from the Gods themselves at the dawn of Creation; such training is limited due to the fact that magic is a finite resource in the Havens, but the unrestricted power in Hell makes wizardry a weapon worth mastering. A few are taught the prayers for petitioning the Gods directly, and become priestly miracle-workers, limited only by what Divine Law decrees the Gods may do for their servants.

Once trained, these adventurers strike out into Hell to battle Chaos and win resources. Capturing enough to supply a Haven is a full-time job; Collectors spend more time away than at home, exploiting magic, muscle, and ruthlessness (sometimes including enslaved fiends) to transport the spoils.

## COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Mortals and monsters are aware of almost nothing discussed in *The Cosmic Backdrop* (p. 4) save for the existence of the Gods and of Divine Law that prohibits unmaking. They’re conscious of only those parts of *Second Creation* (pp. 4-6) which they can observe firsthand: the relative harshness of Hell and safety of Havens, Civilization’s need for resources and thus Collectors, the fact that mortals cannot murder one another in Havens, the impermanence of death in Hell, magic’s inability to stop aging (or interact with other dimensions), and the escalating intensity of conflict between men and monsters. In particular, nobody but the Gods knows that the Game is a game – and not the first one – and even the Gods are blind to the truth about Ancient Magicks and Elder Things.

### *Good and Evil*

Perhaps the hardest thing to grasp is that Civilization sees its Gods as “good” and locked in an eternal cosmic struggle with the “evil” deities of Chaos; sapient Chaos denizens have a similar mythology; and both perceptions are inaccurate! *All* Gods are friendly rivals playing a game. In an ineffable spirit of “Hey, wouldn’t *this* be fun?”, they sometimes even answer the opposing side’s prayers or agree to switch teams. Thus, “good” and “evil” describe loyalties in an utterly temporal conflict, and have nothing to do with any kind of divinely mandated morality.

Which isn’t to say that there’s no cosmic sense of right and wrong. From the Gods’ perspective, Divine Law is *good*. Elder Things and Ancient Magicks – by dint of lying outside Creation and Divine Law – would be *evil*. Godly omniscience fails around the latter phenomena, however, meaning that agents of Civilization and Chaos can openly dabble in matters that their deities would call evil in the name of doing what they themselves would call good. It’s all very confusing!



Those who die in the process awaken naked at the nearest Haven, where the local elders pick them up off the altar, reequip them as best they can, and send them back into the fray. Thus, Collectors harbor a blasé, even slightly deranged mentality which distances them from settled folk.

## VICTORY CONDITIONS

Ultimately, the Game is about seeing whether Civilization (with its Gods' permitted assistance) manages to devise a way to tame Chaos, expand the Havens' boundaries, and conquer Hell before Chaos (with *its* Gods' allowed aid) works out how to invade and destroy the Havens. Civilization grows its powerbase by sending Collectors to pillage Hell for resources that could possibly enlarge the Havens and equip armies of monster-slayers . . . but whenever mortals die in Hell and are whisked off for resurrection, Chaos keeps any goods left behind *and* a fraction of the escaping life force, and each crumb of the latter rewards the fiends with a jot more magic and cunning with which to crush Civilization.

Consequently, as time goes by, the arms and armor of Collectors improve, while the Havens can afford the resources to feed and train them better, resulting in new heights of

strength and skill. However, the legions of Chaos increasingly wield weapons, employ intelligent tactics, and master innate magic. The stakes creep upward as the Gods inject support on both sides. And men and monsters alike must bear in mind that their rivals *don't stay dead*. Neither Chaos nor Civilization can win by attrition, only by growing powerful enough to diminish or expand the Havens – *that* is the real contest, left in the hands of strongest in each camp. Divine Law prohibits the Gods from giving out hints.

## WILDCARDS

Unknown to the Gods – a flaw in the current Game – are shards of the *first* Game, a consequence of the fact that Gods can't *unmake*. Ancient Magicks float around Creation, waiting for Civilization or Chaos to stumble upon them. Far worse, Elder Things still survive outside Creation and remain bent on victory, which these entities see as casting down the Gods and destroying their work, including every mortal and monster. Either factor could become a Game-changer, leading to mortals killing their own, permanent death for either or both sides, a cakewalk for Chaos or Civilization, and possibly even the Gods' demise.

# THE CAMPAIGN

In this background, the PCs are Collectors who brave Hell, fight Chaos denizens, and bring back whatever the Havens require. Sometimes they die . . . only to revive, naked, at the nearest Haven. The real fun starts when they encounter the unexpected in the form of old enemies, newly strengthened monsters, Ancient Magicks, or Elder Things.

## LIFE IN A HAVEN

Havens are always perfectly circular, with visible boundaries. These borders are often unreal and illogical: fields or vineyards or cool brooks giving way abruptly to the local variety of Hell. By the Gods' will, conditions on one side cannot influence those on the other. Cunning fiends don't camp just outside because although their attacks can't strike *into* a Haven, the people inside are free to send missiles and magic *out* at them. Haven residents don't loiter in frontier areas, either – monsters know where mortals live, and the swiftest horrors like to hit and run.

A Haven can be as small as a bowshot around the handful of cottages that shelter an extended family, or as large as a medieval-type village of 400 souls, ringed by crops for a mile in all directions. Some may be larger, at the GM's discretion – say, up to a bustling 10,000-person town within a five- or six-mile circle of fields. In any case, the bountiful conditions within a Haven support about 120 people/square mile, meaning that the radius in miles is *roughly* the square root of (population/375). Slightly overpopulated Havens are common.

Almost everybody in a Haven carries out the work of staying alive: raising crops and poultry, fetching water, cooking and cleaning, caring for children and the elderly, and of course doing their desperate best to keep tools in working condition

and dwellings from collapsing. As travel outside Havens is rare and herding is impossible, there's a notable absence of efforts tied to large animals, such as tanning and stable-keeping. Likewise, the deficiency of significant trees and mineral resources makes vocations like carpenter, smith, and mason part-time at best, and means that lumberjacks, miners, and quarrymen are scarce indeed – usually practical-minded Collectors rather than ordinary citizens.

Perhaps the oddest thing about Haven society is that it has neither money nor social rank. Goods are owned collectively – though families do have “their” homes and people, “their” clothing. While there are elders (*Important People*, p. 7), there's no nobility, military, or formal priesthood. To date, nobody has come close to changing this situation, and there's an unspoken belief that the Gods don't want it changed. Anyone proposing the likes of coinage and kings would be deemed mad.

## Technology

The technological development of the Havens is decidedly odd. Population densities are so low – and life, so subsistence-based – that by rights, society shouldn't rise above TL2 (if that!) on its own merits, and there are indeed many de facto TL0-1 settlements. However, between advanced knowledge gleaned from magical divination and the Gods (who sometimes pop in as avatars to teach new crafts, magic, and medicine), and the “evolutionary pressures” of having to pry resources out of a hostile Hell and the hands of monsters, *effective* TL3 bordering on TL4 is widespread. Which tech is advanced varies by Haven, but as the Gods find battles entertaining, arms and armor are on the cutting edge – a perverse situation for a culture of pacifists.

## Magic

The Gods want magic-working to be part of the Game, too. Exactly what this means depends on the GM's preferred magic systems – but whatever those are, they're available for people to learn and use. The only forbidden effects are ones that halt or reverse aging, raise the dead (those who die of old age, accident, or suicide within a Haven are simply dead), reach across time or other dimensions, or permanently despoil or enrich Havens (created resources vanish after a day at most). Everything else, even blasting monsters from the safety of a Haven and mass-teleporting tons of raw materials from Hell into a Haven, is acceptable.

However, magic other than theurgy is a limited resource within Havens, which are areas of no mana in **GURPS Magic** terms, utter desecration for the purposes of **GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic**, and so on. No wizardly casting or magic-working can produce any effect unless sufficient magical resources (p. 12) are imported into the Haven from Hell. With these present, the Haven functions as a region of normal mana, consecration, or whatever . . . but each use of magic depletes the supply on a point-for-point basis. This *doesn't* provide the energy – it just allows the wizard to spend it. For instance, if a Haven has 500 points of magic for standard mana-based casting, wizards can cast spells that cost a total of 500 energy, before reductions for high skill, as if in a normal-mana area, whereupon the place instantly becomes a no-mana zone (with the twist that spells that have already been paid for will last their full duration).

Divine magic is subject to the same limitations on *what* it can accomplish but not on resources (which the Gods provide). It, too, uses whatever system(s) the GM prefers – whether that means the clerical spells of **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** or the advantage-based approach of **GURPS Powers: Divine Favor** – provided that the Gods decide that the specific casting makes the Game more fun. Attempts to cheat fail, which flat-out prohibits any working that unmakes its target or deals with Ancient Magicks or Elder Things. Playing by the Gods' rules, *not* heartfelt faith, is what matters!

## Landmarks

Aside from the border – always visible in its own right, and frequently enhanced with a visible ring of plants, stones, or the like for good measure – every Haven has two other noteworthy features:

**Altar:** In the very center of the Haven is an “altar,” which might look like anything from a lichen-covered obelisk to a good-sized ring of standing stones around a large slab. This is where mortals who die in Hell reappear (*Death and Rebirth*, p. 10), where Gods visit as avatars, and where elders (p. 7) conduct religious rituals. No civilized person would harm an altar, even if building stone were in perilously short supply. This is a good thing, as the attempt would mean a trip to a random part of Hell via divine teleportation (no resistance roll!).

**House of Heroes:** A Haven always has a place where local Collectors study and train, resurrected ones are taken to recover and reequip, and those visiting by conventional means are domiciled and fed. This “house of heroes” is part barracks, part hospital, and part inn. Lest that sound impressive, be aware that it rarely is. In tiny Havens, it amounts to an empty yurt with straw on the floor and a few spare weapons standing

against the wall. Even in the biggest towns, it's rarely more than a modest building. Still, it always contains whatever supplies the Haven's inhabitants can spare for deprived Collectors.

## Important People

There are two main classes of people of interest in a Haven:

**Elders** are community members who are too old to perform manual labor or serve as Collectors. Their primary responsibilities are teaching practical skills to the young and acting as the Haven's prayer leaders – and, if former Collectors, training replacements. Not every elder is versed in spells and miracles; many are simply aging farmers who've memorized a bit of folklore. Inasmuch as a Haven has leadership, though, the elders are it – and while their authority is limited, they *are* the ones who decide who enjoys access to the Haven's limited magical resources. Their decisions on this matter are backed by Divine Law, meaning that visiting wizards cannot work magic without the blessing of the local elders.

**Collectors** are a lengthy topic in themselves (pp. 7-10). It suffices to say here that if Collectors visit a Haven other than their home – whether by conventional travel or by dying nearby and appearing there – they'll be expected to serve the new Haven if asked. Those who refuse will find that the elders have cut off their access to magic and material goods, and the Gods aren't listening, either . . . and as they can't harm others, there's little they can do about this.

*Every experience, good or bad,  
is a priceless collector's item.*

– Isaac Marion

## COLLECTORS

Collectors – unlike most of Civilization – are skilled at using mundane, magical, and theurgic methods to survive in Hell, battle monsters, and bring back the spoils. They're trained from childhood by senior Collectors retiring to serve as elders, and rarely know much about such subjects as farming and practical crafts. On the other hand, they fight full-contact, and their final “initiation” consists of leaving the Haven and being killed in order to understand death. Thus, most are tough and nigh-fearless.

## Traits

The GM sets the campaign power level. This should be *at least* 150 points for newly initiated Collectors, 250 points for typical specimens, and 400+ points for real legends. Endless training – including the lessons of death – means that there are no low-powered Collectors! However, their unusual circumstances influence the traits they possess.

## Social Traits

Two social traits are mandatory for all Collectors:

**Claim to Hospitality (Collector's):** Collectors are automatically recognized and given food, shelter, and replacement gear (if needed) at any Haven. *10 points.*

*Duty (To Havens; 15 or less):* Collectors are almost always at work. Their Duty is *not* Extremely Hazardous because death is temporary and magic can cure most injuries. -15 points.

Others are subject to special conditions:

*Associated NPCs:* All Collectors are about equally favored by dint of their Claim to Hospitality, and *cannot* possess personal **Allies**, **Contacts**, **Contact Groups**, **Favors**, or **Patrons**. Many have small-d dependents – but being safe in Havens, these *don't* count as **Dependents**. **Enemies** are allowed; jealous mortals are Rivals, while monsters seeking a rematch are Hunters.

*Cultures:* Civilization has a homogeneous culture while Chaos is devoid of culture, making **Cultural Familiarity** meaningless.

*Identities:* Without social rank or property ownership – and with Collectors viewed as interchangeable servants – **Alternate Identity**, **Secret Identity**, and **Zeroed** don't exist.

*Languages:* Collectors begin with **Civilized**, common to all the world's Havens, as their free native language. They may learn **Chaotic**, used by all IQ 6+ monsters, at any level of fluency. **Ancient** (associated with Ancient Magicks) and **Elder** (tied to Elder Things) are available only at Broken level, and only in written (runic) form.

*Position:* Collectors often have **Reputation**, while all elders (who aren't PCs) possess **Social Regard (Venerated)**; both cost the full 5 points/level. These concepts completely supplant **Clerical Investment**, **Legal Enforcement Powers**, **Legal Immunity**, **Security Clearance**, **Status**, **Rank**, and **Tenure**, which don't exist. The only meaningful **Social Stigma** is Minor.

*Tech Level:* Most Collectors use TL3 skills and gear, but those from primitive Havens may take up to three levels of **Low TL**. Nobody is advanced enough for **High TL**.

*Wealth:* Sans money, nobody has **Debt**, **Independent Income**, or **Wealth** (positive or negative). Accordingly, ostentatious dress impresses no one, rendering **Fashion Sense** meaningless.

## Advantages

Advantages not called out below are as common or as rare as the GM wants them to be. Only one non-social advantage is mandatory:

*Extra Life:* Every Collector starts with a level of this trait and may buy more. Those with no levels remaining still revive, but in a severely weakened state; see *Death and Rebirth* (p. 10). 25 points.

Several other advantages require notes:

*Magical Abilities:* Wizards may possess **Magery**, **Realms**, **Ritual Adept**, or whatever else enables magic-use, plus whatever level of **Fatigue Points**, **Energy Reserve**, etc. the GM permits.

*Theurgic Abilities:* Collectors who've studied holy magic may purchase whichever of **Blessed**, **Divine Favor**, **Oracle**, **Power Investiture**, **True Faith**, etc. the GM likes. This works everywhere but fails if the user violates Code of Honor (Collector's) (see *Disadvantages*, below).

*Other Superhuman Gifts:* In this setting, **Signature Gear** is a common supernatural ability that bestows items which accompany the Collector's body when he's resurrected. The GM decides what other special abilities Collectors can acquire. However, the GM should forbid **Allies (Summonable)**, **Jumper**, **Snatcher**, and anything else that reaches across worlds; **Shapeshifting** into monstrous forms (the line from Civilization to Chaos cannot be crossed); and **Super-natural Durability**, **Unaging**, and **Unkillable** (the Gods have strict rules for death).

*Common Advantages:* **Combat Reflexes**; **Danger Sense**; **Daredevil**; **Destiny**, **Luck**, and **Serendipity** (the Gods just love these three); **Enhanced Defenses**; **Fearlessness** or **Unfazeable** (one or the other is near-universal); **Hard to Kill** (to prevent *inconvenient* death); **Lifting ST**; **Outdoorsman**; and **Racial Memory** and **Reawakened** (it's an open secret that the Gods "recycle" dead souls).

*Rare Advantages:* **Animal Empathy**, **Animal Friend**, and **Speak with Animals** are for ordinary beasts, not monsters, and mounts are unknown. **Channeling**, **Medium**, and **Spirit Empathy** work only on the spirits of mortals, and thus are mostly useful to elders contacting dead peers.

*Forbidden Advantages:* **Business Acumen**, **Cultural Adaptability**, **Social Chameleon**, and anything else that assumes a complex society with classes, cultures, and currency; **Illuminated** (the Gods don't let mortals have this); and inherently high-tech traits like **Digital Mind**, **Gunslinger**, and **Radiation Tolerance**.

## Disadvantages

The GM likewise decides what disadvantages fit. One is mandatory:

*Code of Honor (Collector's):* Serve the Haven that hosts me. Share spoils won in Hell with the rest of Civilization. Keep only those goods I need to do my job. Respect elders. Obey the Gods. -15 points.

Many other problems merit comments:

*Common Disadvantages:* Low **Appearance** can represent scarring from past deaths; **Chummy** and **Sense of Duty (Fellow Collectors)** describe the spirit of most Collector teams; and **Curious**, **Impulsiveness**, **On the Edge**, and **Overconfidence** are all natural consequences of death being temporary.

*Rare Disadvantages:* **Addiction** (there's little to abuse); **Cowardice**; **Fearfulness**; **Overweight**, **Fat**, and **Very Fat** (unlikely on limited resources); **Secret** (in this setting, dark truths usually lead to **Divine Curse**); and **Xenophilia** (the Fright Check bonus acts as a *penalty* to reactions from civilized folk!).

*Forbidden Disadvantages:* **Cannot Learn**; **Code of Honor** or **Duty** other than the required traits; **Honesty** (redundant with mandatory Code of Honor); **Intolerance** of class, ethnicity, or religion; **Pacifism** (a Collector *can't* physically harm mortals and is *expected* to kill monsters); **Selfish** and **Selfless** (there's no social position); **Terminally Ill**; serious physical disabilities such as **Blindness**, **Deafness**, **Lame**, and **Quadriplegic** (Collectors with these issues retire); and traits tied to money (**Compulsive Gambling**, **Compulsive Generosity**, **Compulsive Spending**, **Greed**, and **Miserliness**).

*Unusual circumstances  
influence Collector traits.*



## Skills

Collectors customarily have skills for fighting, stealth, survival, and travel, plus a small range of knowledge skills. Some of these work differently, unless the GM rules otherwise.

### **Alchemy, Herb Lore, Ritual Magic, and/or Thaumatology:**

At the GM's option, any of these might be useful for identifying magical resources in Hell. Multiple varieties of magic mean *several* skills.

**Archaeology:** The skill of identifying leftovers from past Games – especially Ancient Magicks and signs of Elder Things. Replaces all Hidden Lore, History, and Literature rolls for *items* or *writings* in this setting.

**Area Knowledge (Civilization) and Current Affairs (Civilization):** Only these specialties are available. Knowing about just *one* Haven isn't worth points.

**Boating:** Only the Unpowered specialty exists, for improvised rafts.

**Camouflage, Survival, Tracking, and Weather Sense:** Despite its name, Hell is more-or-less Earth with an unforgiving landscape. Outdoor skills work normally and are indispensable.

**Esoteric Medicine:** Replaces and is as effective as Physician/TL3 at all TLs.

**Exorcism:** Used to drive evil spirits from Collectors who are possessed in Hell. Such spirits, being monsters, are also expelled if the victim enters a Haven.

**Geography:** Only the Physical specialty exists, as there are no true polities.

**Hazardous Materials:** Only the Magical specialty (with no TL) exists, for handling things like Ancient Magicks and cockatrice corpses.

**Hidden Lore:** Specialized by monster type, and provides information identical to that of Physiology and Psychology for that type. The GM decides how extensive specialties are; they may be broad (Giant Reptiles), narrow (Dragons) or specific (*Red* Dragons).

**Leadership and Tactics:** Collector teams value these skills, but would suffer -2 for unfamiliarity if asked to use them in an organized military situation.

**Lockpicking and Traps:** Useless in Havens but handy in Hell, where deep places with ancient and mysterious mechanisms abound (*Dungeons*, p. 11).

**Naturalist:** Works normally, and is the go-to skill for identifying nonmagical plant and monster resources in Hell.

**Occultism:** Valuable for identifying what broad *kinds* of powers unknown monsters or phenomena exhibit – magical, unholy, cosmic, etc.

**Prospecting:** Used to identify inorganic resources in Hell.

**Theology:** If there's any doubt about the Gods' intent, what Divine Law requires in a situation, etc., a successful roll may clear it up.

*Low-Value Skills:* Many workaday skills used by Havendwellers aren't much good to Collectors; these include **Architecture, Carpentry, Engineer, Farming, Gardening, House-keeping, Leatherworking, Masonry, Mechanic, Metallurgy, Sewing**, and most **Professional Skills**. Animals skills – such as **Animal Handling** and **Veterinary** – fall into the same category, as Collectors lack pack beasts, while the denizens of Hell aren't animals. **Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Public Speaking**,

and **Sex Appeal** aren't widespread among Collectors because monsters can't be negotiated with (only **Intimidation** works) . . . though such skills are helpful in dealings with elders. Speaking of which, **History, Literature, Philosophy, Religious Ritual, Research, Teaching, and Writing** are used by elders – who keep written records – but don't do much in Hell. Finally, **Jeweler** is an obscure artistic skill in a society that doesn't value precious metals or gems.

*Unknown Skills:* A few skills are completely unknown, including **Physician** (replaced by Esoteric Medicine); **Physiology** and **Psychology** (replaced by Hidden Lore); **Urban Survival** (no cities!); anything associated with stratified, property-conscious societies (**Accounting, Administration, Counterfeiting, Economics, Finance, Gambling, Heraldry, Law, Market Analysis, Merchant, Panhandling, Politics, Propaganda, Savoir-Faire, Smuggling, and Streetwise**), large-scale warfare (**Artillery, Soldier, and Strategy**), or social studies (**Anthropology, Linguistics, and Sociology**); most sciences (**Astronomy, Bioengineering, Biology, Chemistry, Criminology, Forensics, Geology, Paleontology, Physics, and Weird Science**); skills for beasts of burden or big vehicles (**Crewman, Freight Handling, Packing, Riding, Shiphandling, and Teamster**); and of course high- and ultra-tech skills.

## Collector Meta-Trait

All Collectors begin with a group of traits that could be treated as a meta-trait:

*Collector:* Claim to Hospitality (Collector's) [10]; Duty (To Havens; 15 or less) [-15]; Extra Life 1 [25]; Code of Honor (Collector's) [-15]. 5 points.

## Spells, Rituals, and Other Magic

Collectors with suitable advantages can learn whatever magic those allow, subject to the guidelines under *Magic* (p. 7): no effects that tamper with aging, resurrection, time, or other dimensions, and no permanent despoilment of Havens or creation of resources.

Under the standard magic system, this prohibits Age, Banish, Final Rest, Halt Aging, Hideaway, Resurrection, Steal Youth, Summon Demon, Summon Elemental, and Youth, plus Gate spells for crossing, summoning from, or entering other times or dimensions (pocket dimensions included). Necromancy otherwise works, but cannot affect the spirits or corpses of monsters or people queued for respawning or resurrection – only those of the truly dead. Spells that permanently materialize or transform valuable matter last just one day if not irreversibly consumed sooner (burning, drinking, and eating count), which affects Create Acid, Create Earth, Create Food, Create Fuel, Create Ice, Create Water, Earth to Stone, Essential Acid, Essential Earth, Essential Food, Essential Fuel, Essential Water, and Water to Wine. Elemental, Plant, or Weather spells intended to foul or ruin a Haven simply fail; they can't tap the local resources. Finally, although divinatory magic works, it cannot reach back before the start of the *current* Creation.

Similar restrictions apply to other kinds of magic. In flexible systems such as that of *Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic*, this won't limit what *abilities* casters can possess but what *workings* they can attempt. All of this applies equally to theurgy . . . the Gods won't let the gifts they grant break their rules.

In all cases, remember that a Haven has limited magical resources that require the permission of the resident elders to tap. The GM sets the level present. When they're gone, they're gone. To do more magic, go to Hell.

## Gear

In a setting without money, buying equipment using starting cash makes no sense. Instead, each Collector enters play with gear worth up to  $5 \times (\text{starting point total})$ : \$750 at 150 points, \$1,250 at 250 points, \$2,000 at 400 points, and so on. The only way to begin with more is via Signature Gear, which gives kit worth a further \$500/point; such items remain with their owner when he's killed and resurrected.

All the usual gear of the Collector's TL is available. Havens *don't* have easy access to goods or a booming trade with craftsmen, but they *do* keep centuries, perhaps millennia of equipment and artifacts stockpiled for Collectors . . . and the Gods work in mysterious ways. If the campaign's magic system permits the creation of magical items, even these might be available.

Remember that these \$ values are strictly placeholders for equipment. Amounts not allocated during character creation are *lost*. There's no system of currency or credit chits.

## Death and Rebirth

A Collector who dies in Hell vanishes bodily at the moment of death. An instant later, he appears naked, conscious, and at full HP on the altar of the nearest Haven, knowledge of the exact route to his death site seared into his mind. A few facets of this merit further discussion.

## Life-Force Cost

A Collector with an Extra Life simply erases it – reducing point total by 25 – and gets back to work. All starting Collectors have an Extra Life, so the first death *in play* always goes this way.

One who *doesn't* have an Extra Life may come off the worse for wear. Someone with 25 unspent character points loses them to cover the cost. A Collector with fewer unused points loses all saved points *plus* 1% of current point total per missing point, rounded up. This debt comes off positive traits – attributes, advantages, skills, etc. – or adds physical or supernatural disadvantages, *as selected by the GM*, who should consult with the player if the victim died observing the Collector's Code. For example, a 250-point hero who dies with just 2 points in the bank is short 23 points and loses 23% of his point value, returning at 192 points.

Either way, resurrection doesn't erase longstanding physical disadvantages. Someone who starts with One Eye comes back with One Eye – the wounds of the battle that killed him heal, but old scars don't. However, if the hero has unspent points sitting around after paying the resurrection cost (if any), it *is* permissible to spend these to buy off previously sustained infirmities and return in better shape, at the player's option.

Points spent or lost by Collectors feed the local monsters. There isn't necessarily any specific, observable effect in the short term. However, the GM might modify random encounter rolls by  $\pm 1$  (whichever direction is worse) per PC death on that adventure, or otherwise have the ensuing mission get tougher.

## Material Cost

Although dead Collectors are reconstituted naked save for Signature Gear, the local Haven will strive to equip them. A Collector can request anything, but is subject to the GM's decision about the Haven's TL and assets: tiny communities lack fine swords, TL1 settlements don't have crossbows or steel, and so on. If the GM hasn't determined TL, roll 1d-1, reading a result of 3+ as TL3. A "special" item of an available TL (e.g., high-quality, magical, or designed for users bigger than ST 10, SM 0 humans) can be found stockpiled on a roll of 6 or less on 3d in a small hamlet of 10 souls, +1 per factor of 10 in population. The Haven will part with goods worth up to  $5 \times (\text{Collector's current point total})$ .

The slain hero's old equipment (besides Signature Gear!) doesn't vanish. It collapses in a heap for allies or monsters to pick through. If friends reach it first, the rightful owner has a chance of seeing it again. Otherwise, it aids Chaos. Smarter fiends in the area will surely turn up using it, often in perverse ways (e.g., a SM +3 troll might hammer swords through a huge branch to create a spiked club). If the PCs don't go back and fight for the gear, it's lost forever.

## The Long Road Back

Resurrected Collectors know the path to where they perished, while allies with them at the moment of death know what Haven they went to. Thus, the party can meet halfway (teleportation and gate magic are popular here). If the players prefer and the GM agrees, such PCs might instead train or travel with local (NPC) Collectors until reunited with their original group.

# HELL

Hell is basically an unsettled perversion of Earth with harsh terrain cranked up to 11, unnatural monsters instead of large animals, and countless networks of catacombs that can only be described as *dungeons*.

## Physical Environment

Apart from the monsters, Hell plays by the same rules as ordinary wilderness. It offers wood to burn, water to drink, small game to hunt, fish to catch, and berries to forage. The weather runs from cold to hot, and from dry to wet. The wind blows. The sun rises and sets.

But everything is *intense*. There are few boring stretches of plains; if the ground is open, it's wind-swept desert or frigid glacier. More often, though, the land offers dense forest, impenetrable jungle, or endless, gloomy swamp. Hills and mountains jut up with a frequency that sensible geology can't explain. Water is inevitably foaming, rushing, or crashing. And weather, while suited to the terrain, has a flair for the dramatic: hail and thunder, roaring wind, or still, withering heat.

In game terms, the heroes will often have to perform feats like *Climbing* (p. B349), *Hiking* (p. B351), and *Swimming* (p. B354), and face hazards such as *Cold* (p. B430), *Falling* (p. B431), and *Heat* (p. B434). The relevant rolls needn't be harder, just more frequent and with worse consequences on failures. On the other hand, Hell is rich with resources – that's part of the Game – so rolls for *Foraging* (p. B427) and the like enjoy bonuses much of the time.

## Supernatural Environment

Consecration, mana, sanctity, and other magical metrics are almost always “normal” or “average” in Hell. The sole oddity is that abilities, rituals, and spells which alter such levels end if the magic-worker leaves the affected area or their usual duration expires, whichever comes first. Aside from the blanket prohibitions under *Spells, Rituals, and Other Magic* (pp. 9-10), there are no other restrictions. In particular, the supply of magical resources is effectively infinite, so the limitations described for Havens in *Magic* (p. 7) don't apply.

## Dungeons

Catacomb networks are found wherever there's rock or ice. Some are natural but most are patently *weird*, created by devious Gods to tempt and challenge Collectors. All bets are off down here! Bizarre gases, lava eruptions, fluctuating levels of supernatural power (e.g., mana), shifting walls, and so on are commonplace. Artificial locks, traps, and tricks dating to the era of Ancient Magicks and Elder Things abound – and in the deep reaches, so do the Magicks and Things. The only constant is that theurgic abilities always work; areas without sanctity (or its equivalent) are unheard of.

## Monsters

Wild places and dungeons – *especially* dungeons – are filled with monsters. A few resemble large animals, eating game and berries, and lair-ing in caves or thickets. Most defy ecological sense, though, and thrive on some combination of the will of the Gods, ambient energies, and life force ripped from slain Collectors. The GM can use almost any creature that seems fun, with a few exceptions.

*What's There:* Giant, dire, and even *prehistoric* animals, plus hybrids and chimeras – conceivably eating each other, but more often mutated to thrive on supernatural energies. Behemoths such as trolls, dragons, and tunneling worms . . . but also *tiny* bugaboos that creep into bodily orifices. Slimes, jellies, puddings, and oozes. Demons with arbitrary numbers of body parts, and utterly indescribable *Things*. Statues and constructs animated by Ancient Magicks and forgotten in the darkness. Any of which might be enhanced with acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison, or granted occult powers. And anything that could be called “alive” has an undead version that's fouler, tougher, and capable of inflicting disease or chilling fear.

*What Isn't:* Chaos isn't civilized, so the organized “monster races” that plague other fantasy worlds (dark elves, goblins, orcs, reptile-men, etc.) don't exist; there might be a *lone* humanoid giant or reptilian out there, or even a nest of them, but these things lack villages, tribal leaders, and job titles. Transformed humans aren't on the menu, either – Hell has endless monsters that change shape, suck blood, and use magic, but no formerly human werewolves, vampires, or liches. Spirits from other dimensions are likewise right out; there's no shortage of demons and elementals, but they're local to *this* Creation and not horrors to be summoned or banished. Most spectral monsters start out that way and aren't ghosts of the dead.

## MONSTROUS IDEAS

Here are some monster-related twists the GM can use to give the campaign a uniquely Havens and Hells feel.

### Old Rivals

Like Collectors, monsters respawn when killed. Ones that weren't truly alive come back intact, while those that *were* alive return as undead (see below). As creatures of Chaos, they're hateful and *vengeful*. The GM may want to have the occasional encounter involve beings the PCs have already slain. Such foes will be prepared for some of the heroes' abilities, tactics, and tricks. As noted under *Social Traits* (pp. 7-8), particularly long and bitter rivalries can justify the Enemies disadvantage.

### Undead Monsters

Living monsters return as undead after being slain. The GM can simply add some HP, Injury Tolerance (Unliving), etc. and call it a day, but that isn't the only option. A fun possibility is to put the spirit of one fiend into the reanimated body of another; e.g., the super-tough body of a zombie shark-bear might have the intelligent, magic-using mind of an imp! Another option is to let the spirit roam free as an insubstantial specter – because though *humans* don't die and leave ghosts, monsters just might.

### New and Improved

If monsters manage to *defeat* the Collectors, remember that they'll acquire life force and gear. The GM is free to “power up” the victorious horrors, abstractly or by adding abilities equal in cost to the points the heroes lost to rebirth (*Life-Force Cost*, p. 10). Likewise, sapient (IQ 6+) bad guys will definitely avail themselves of any magic swords, armor, etc. left behind. And even if the PCs never lose, other Collectors might – there's no way to know for sure whether *this* lobster-frog-thing is stupid like the last dozen or has slaughtered enough mortals to have acquired sapience and a magic ring.

## LOOT

Fundamentally, Collectors travel to Hell and beyond to *acquire*. In the suggestions below, where monster parts are involved, assume the corpse lingers for 1d hours and then vanishes for recycling. Goods collected before that time stay behind.



## Material Resources

Every adventure should offer chances to identify and exploit useful resources: good stone or lumber for building, nonmagical monster parts (especially bone, hide, horn, and sinew), ore, and even such exotica as deposits of salts or petroleum. Collectors need Naturalist to identify plant- or monster-based commodities, and Prospecting for minerals. After that, the goal is to transport it to a Haven without the aid of beasts and carts. Magic spells are the preferred method, but determined Collectors may resort to muscle power. Lifting ST is a common advantage for a reason!

## Magical Resources

As *Magic* (p. 10) explains, there's a limit to the amount of (non-theurgic) magic that can be worked in a Haven before it runs out of resources. Such supernatural commodities take the form of glowing rocks, exceedingly rare herbs, snow from remote mountaintops, monster glands, and so on. After defeating magical creatures or negotiating a particularly inhospitable wilderness or dungeon, the GM might invite the Collectors to roll against a skill such as Alchemy, Herb Lore, Ritual Magic, or Thaumatology, with success spotting such goodies. The exact *quantity* present – rated in terms of energy points, magic points, etc. of casting it will enable – is necessarily dependent on the magic system and the plot. Not all magical resources are *safe*, and Hazardous Materials (Magical) may be needed to transport the stuff without being incinerated, petrified, poisoned, or otherwise cursed.

## Recaptured Spoils

Monsters that wipe out mortals journeying through Hell keep whatever gear is left behind. Sapient (IQ 6+) creatures use it, trade it to other entities for favors, or dangle it as bait to attract Collectors to kill. Lower-IQ fiends often line their lair with it or hoard it simply because it's comfy, shiny, or makes a nice noise. Thus, heroes may well come into possession of ready-to-use equipment in Hell. Their Code of Honor lets them keep anything that's genuinely of value to their job; the rest is almost always hauled back to a Haven to be used or stockpiled.

## Ancient Magicks

Rarest of all are artifacts from the previous Creation, which may exhibit supernatural properties of almost any kind – including ones that magic available to Civilization, even theurgy, cannot reproduce. Such items inevitably show up either on the deepest levels of dungeons or in the hands of Elder Things. Identifying them calls for an Archaeology roll, and Hazardous Materials (Magical) rolls might be needed for safe handling. Unlike all of the other loot discussed so far, Ancient Magicks *aren't* welcome in settlements. Elders grasp that these relics are powerful, and valuable to Collectors . . . but they expect heroes to keep such things to themselves and to wear, wield, or invoke them only when *far* from any Haven.

## ADVENTURES

The range of possible adventures is limited only by the setting-specific rules (no cash, settled monster races, dimensional

travel, etc.) and the GM's decisions regarding power level, magic system(s), Haven size, and monster types. Here are some ideas to prime the pump.

## Bringing Home the Bacon

The bread-and-butter adventure is leaving the Haven, exploring dungeons, fighting monsters, and returning with resources that can't be produced indigenously. The GM might give the PCs free rein to roam about and bring back whatever they find, or have the elders desperately petition the heroes to hunt down something specific: hooves for glue, iron ore, magical glow-stones, whatever. This makes a good starting scenario for newly initiated Collectors.

## Couriers

Havens *do* communicate and share resources. The exchange of information and surplus goods is crucial to Civilization's survival. Naturally, it's the well-armed, combat-trained Collectors who get the job of maintaining the flow. Sometimes this is incidental: a Collector dies, appears in a strange Haven, shares news and discoveries with the locals, and then returns to his allies, whom he guides past the closer Haven to drop off any excess goods. However, it could also be a mission assigned by elders.

## Social Problems

Haven life faces the specter of people *giving up*. Wouldn't it be easier to live in mud huts, till the rich soil, and stay the heck away from Hell? Why bother with houses, altars, worship, and such? Why waste scarce resources mustering Collectors? The elders know the answer: If Civilization stops struggling and becomes, well, *uncivilized*, the Havens will diminish and be overrun. For a change from the usual, have the elders enlist the Collectors' aid to deal with a spate of suicides, a movement to send old people outside to die, or a rash of hotheads leaving the Haven to duel (the latter two of which actively feed Chaos . . .).

## Permanent Death

People who take their own lives, have horrible accidents, or grow extremely old can die, but murder is unknown and mortals can't die in Hell. For a high-powered adventure, have something – perhaps the all-too-predictable Ancient Magicks or Elder Things, but conceivably an ordinary monster that has absorbed enough life force – change that. The heroes' job? Eliminate the new threat before death becomes a *much* bigger part of life!

Alternatively, perhaps some storied artifact or spell can visit permanent death upon *monsters*. Now all the heroes have to do is find it while *every creature of Chaos* rushes to block the path.

Or turn it into a race, with the Collectors and the scariest monsters battling to find the ultimate weapon.

## Defending Havens

With or without ultimate weapons, the victory conditions (p. 6) for Chaos involve finding a way to diminish and overrun the Havens. This needn't happen in one fell swoop.

Perhaps suitably powered-up monsters that have defeated enough Collectors can grow just powerful enough to lay siege to *one* Haven. Naturally, planning the defense falls to the PCs, who have the unenviable task of rallying farmers and old folks as an army for at least long enough to take the invaders down a few pegs and eliminate the threat.

## Expanding Havens

The victory conditions (p. 6) for Civilization involve finding a way to grow the Havens and eventually harness Hell as an empire. This, too, is most likely to happen a Haven at a time. If the Collectors bring back proof that it's possible, the elders will almost certainly have a long shopping list for their next trip out. If they manage to get everything on it, they'll once again be training an army. And if all goes well, the PCs may discover that Civilization has the seeds of status- and wealth-conscious bickering after all . . .

## Learning the Truth

People are blissfully unaware of several disturbing facts about the Gods and Divine Law. Presented with proof that Creation is a *rerun* and merely a game – and that the Gods supporting Civilization and Chaos are one and the same – there's no telling what might happen. It was mortal wizards who came up with Ancient Magicks and almost destroyed the Gods the first time, and they might try again. An alliance with monsters would be no less scary. Regardless, Collectors will end up doing most of the dirty work.

## Elder Things

Entities left over from the first Game lurk outside Creation, manipulating Chaos and Civilization alike as they scheme to depose the Gods. These Elder Things *aren't* bound by Divine Law and *don't* obey the rules of the Game. Encountered individually, they're just scary monsters – but the ultimate in high-level adventures would pit epically capable Collectors (worth 500, 1,000, or more points) against the Things, possibly in an uneasy alliance with smarter monsters and maybe even the Gods themselves!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean “Dr. Kromm” Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the **GURPS** Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every **GURPS** product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of **GURPS Third Edition** projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition** with David Pulver. Since then, he has created **GURPS Powers** (with Phil Masters), **GURPS Martial Arts** (with Peter Dell'Orto), **GURPS Zombies**, and the **GURPS Action, GURPS Dungeon Fantasy**, and **GURPS Power-Ups** series . . . among other things. Sean has been a gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, mixology, and Argentine tango.

## NOT YOUR DADDY'S FANTASY

Havens and Hells *does* include many classic hack 'n' slash elements:

- Full-time adventurers (Collectors) who meet at an inn (house of heroes), get missions from old men (elders), visit dungeons, slay monsters, and drag home loot.
- The potential for high-level adventures that scale up to the adventurers.
- Clerics empowered by Gods (theurgy), contrasted with wizards who wield magic.
- A town vs. dungeon dichotomy (Haven vs. Hell).
- An objective “good” vs. “evil” split (Civilization vs. Chaos).
- Potent artifacts from an age of fabulous magic (Ancient Magicks).
- Things Man Was Not Meant To Know (Elder Things).

However, several angles make the overall approach decidedly *alternate*:

1. *Death is temporary.* Death isn't merely reversed by a rare-and-expensive Resurrection spell – it's just a speed bump. Heroes dislike dying because of the hassle of reequipping, locating their comrades, and earning back lost points, not because it ends careers. It isn't linked to skull-tipped-wand necromancy, either; there are no zombies, vampires, etc.

2. *No other dimensions.* Nothing, however weird, is summoned or banished. Everything comes from *here*.

3. *No money or status.* Havens are socialist utopias. There's no cash, much less trade in luxuries, and no tolerance for hoarding. Heroes *do* seek loot, but that means better gear. Shopping, guild dues, training fees, cost of living . . . none of it exists. (Meaning no annoying bookkeeping, for gamers who hate it!)

4. *No monster nations.* Monsters fall into distinct classes but don't organize.

5. *No beasts of burden.* Nobody uses donkeys, horses, oxen, etc. to plow, ride, or haul. This in turn means no highways (monsters would destroy them anyway!) and no mounted couriers, scouts, or warriors.

6. *No crime.* Murder is impossible, there's no money to steal, and the concept of personal property is weak. Though there are definitely sneaky, trap-disarming burglars on Collector teams, they're respectable mission specialists, not rogues. There are no guilds of thieves or assassins.

7. *No war.* There's no need for a militia, since monsters can't enter Havens – or for an army, as Havens don't compete. Conflict consists of Collectors fighting monsters in Hell.

Accordingly, there's no faux-medieval veneer, as there are no castles, guilds, knights, princesses, etc. Many overused fantasy tropes – chests of gold, highwaymen, orc armies, magic shops, professional assassins, and so on – are absent. The campaign is about adventurers who can be as violent and eccentric as they want while still remaining moral. Heroes are judged by the people they house and clothe, not by lords, and on the basis of ends, not means.

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# EASTERN ADVENTURES

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

Far to the east lies a land of mystery, or so the sages say. Adventures in this exotic land are different from the typical “Kill monsters! Loot! Town! Repeat!” of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*. In the Mysterious East, adventurers don’t just go into dungeons seeking loot – they go looking for *problems* to solve . . . and find loot along the way.

The following guidelines make a couple of assumptions. The first is that the “Mysterious East” of *Dungeon Fantasy* is a mish-mash of multiple real-world Asian cultures. Although it’s

not meant to emulate any specific one, the GM is free to focus on a particular area. Second, this version of the “Mysterious East” has a vaguely sketched-out land for adventurers to operate in.

These new options rely heavily on *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventures*, *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons*, *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level*, *GURPS Magic*, *GURPS Martial Arts*, and *Pyramid #3/61: Way of the Warrior*.

## THE LANDS OF THE MYSTERIOUS EAST

*Dungeon Fantasy* very specifically does not describe a “setting” beyond the occasional notes (e.g., the Frozen North of the barbarians). A GM running adventures in the “Mysterious East” needs more than that. For the purposes of this article, assume a rough map with the farmlands, dells, civilized areas, etc. of the Central Provinces in, obviously, a central location. The Green Lands are the miles and miles of jungle to the south, while the north holds the harsh, hilly tundra of the Icy Steppes. To the west is the Great Desert (it’s *big*). To the east

are the Island Nations – which include the home of *Dungeon Fantasy* samurai (p. 19).

### GAIJIN AND FOREIGNERS

The GM may wish to use normal *Dungeon Fantasy* templates in Mysterious East games (or the reverse!). In both cases, such “fish out of water” have a 0-point feature: Social Stigma (Minority Group) [-10] + Unusual Background (Not From Around Here) [10]. This gives characters -2 to reaction rolls for their strange behaviors, but *also* gives others -1 on attack rolls, defense rolls, skill rolls, and Quick Contests when first encountering them. For example, a Western bard might use one of his bard-song abilities on a target who’d never seen such magic before. In such cases, the first roll only would be -1 to resist.

*Legend tells of a legendary warrior whose kung fu skills were the stuff of legend.*

– Po, in *Kung Fu Panda*

## TEMPLATES

For the most part, the templates from *Adventurers* work just fine, but a few tweaks help them fit in more with Mysterious East campaigns.

- *Dungeon Fantasy* templates tend to lack skills that would be “useless” for anything but delving. But for Mysterious East adventures, the GM may wish to allow adventurers

the option to purchase nondelving skills. In addition to including challenges that rely on using them (especially in Town), the GM can also permit a skill roll against an appropriate skill to serve as a Cultural Familiarity for one person or group, or as a complementary skill on a reaction roll. For example, a samurai might have Games (Go) and use it to give him +1 to Diplomacy against a local bureaucrat.

Culturally appropriate skills that anyone can spend background skill points on, or those gained from Quirks, are: Artist (Calligraphy), Dancing, Games (Shogi or Go), Gardening, Hobby Skill (Kite-Flying, Tea Ceremony, or Origami), Literature, and Poetry.

- Normally, only the martial artist template gets access to Judo and Karate, but for Mysterious East adventures, the GM may wish to allow *any* template access to such skills. In such cases, either skill may be bought only with points from background skills or Quirks. See *It's a Matter of Style* (below) for some additional thoughts. Optionally, templates that allow Boxing can replace that skill with Karate, while Wrestling can be replaced with Judo.

## IT'S A MATTER OF STYLE

**GURPS Martial Arts** offers *dozens* of martial-arts styles that expand the options for warriors. However, since **Dungeon Fantasy** doesn't use techniques, martial-arts styles may feel underpowered. At the GM's option, the following **Dungeon Fantasy**-specific rules for Style Familiarity can expand the possibilities for fighters.

- All styles have associated power-ups instead of techniques. Only those with Chi Training (p. 22) or Chi Talent can purchase cinematic skills. See p. 22 for advice on assigning power-ups to styles.

- Fighters can acquire the style's Style Perks (1 per 10 points in a style's skills or power-ups), learn its cinematic skills (provided you have Chi Training or Chi Talent), improve its related power-ups (see above). They may also buy abilities listed among its "Optional Traits" if they *also* appear on the list of **Dungeon Fantasy** trait list (**Adventurers**, pp. 14-16). Stylists *never* use the rules for **Training Costs** (**Power-Ups**, p. 10) for such abilities, and they can spend points on the style's traits even in the middle of battle!

- Members are familiar with the style's *culture* and don't suffer the -3 for lack of Cultural Familiarity when using such skills as Connoisseur (Weapons), Games, Savoir-Faire (Dojo), or Teaching to interact with co-stylists.

- Stylists tend to look out for one another and will often let co-stylists lodge with them. This functions identically to the Claim to Hospitality power-up (**Power-Ups**, p. 15), except the roll is 6 or less.

- Stylists can attempt to use the power-ups associated with style at "default." This requires 3 FP and either a Concentrate maneuver (for mental abilities) or a Ready maneuver (for physical abilities). Next, compare the point cost of the defaulted ability to either a power-up the delver already has from the style *or* his total number of points in the style's required skills. For every 10% of difference, roll at -1 against HT (for physical abilities) or Will (for mental abilities); add any appropriate levels of power talent to this roll. Success means the delver gets *one* use of the defaulted ability. This may only be done a number of times per session equal to (HT or Will)/4, round up. Power-ups can never be worth more than the ability they are defaulted from.

## BARBARIAN

Warriors of extraordinary size are common in the fiction that Mysterious East games draw from. Such adventurers are thought to be the offspring of demons, giants, or *oni* (see p. 20). Goblinoids of all types make *excellent* barbarians (**The Next Level**, p. 10). Optionally, barbarians may be from "back West" (see *Gaijin and Other Foreigners*, p. 15) and use the regular template.

Those with **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Denizens: Barbarians** can use the short barbarian lens (**Barbarians**, p. 11) to represent warriors from the Icy Steppes.

**Advantages:** Those who *are* descended from demons (a few generations back!) can purchase Infernal Gifts (see **The Next Level**, p. 12) at character creation. The GM may allow those with the short barbarian lens to take either Heroic Archer (Accessibility, Short bow only, -20%) [16], Weapon Master (Bow) [20], or both.

**Disadvantages:** Ham-Fisted, Language: Spoken (Native)/Written (None), and Odious Personal Habit (Unrefined Manners) are *extremely* common for Mysterious East barbarians. Those with Infernal Gifts can trade Social Stigma (Minority Group) [-10] for Social Stigma (Infernal) [-15].

**Primary Skills:** Barbarians from the Icy Steppes may exchange as many points from their melee skills as they wish for an equal number of points in Bow or Riding (Horse).

**Secondary Skills:** Hiking and Running may be exchanged for Riding (A) (Horse) [2]-13 for Icy Steppes barbarians.

**Background Skills:** Remove Seamanship as an option.

## BARD

Bards, as presented by **Dungeon Fantasy**, are unknown in the Mysterious East. Rather than traveling singers, they are charismatic wanderers, actors, or storytellers. Those few who do use musical instruments prefer small stringed instruments, such as various kinds of lutes (*biwa*, *pipa*, etc.). One example from the Island Nations is the *rakugoka*, or "lone storyteller," who uses magic and Enthrallment skills to spin tales.

Instead of singing or playing an instrument, Mysterious East bards activate their abilities by telling stories (Public Speaking) or acting out skits (Performance). All other aspects are the same, though plays must be seen by the target in order to be effective. Bard-Song abilities resist spells with the better of Musical Instrument, Performance, Public Speaking, or Singing.

**Advantages:** Replace Musical Ability with Bard-Lore 2 [10] (**GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups**, p. 21). Rapier Wit and Speak With Animals are common picks for Bard-Song abilities. Though it encroaches on the druidic abilities, Speak With Plants may be allowed as a Bard-Song ability at the GM's option.

**Disadvantages:** Add Odious Personal Habit (Jabberjaw) [-5] to the list. For *rakugoka*, add Odious Personal Habit (Starts sentences with "I heard a story once. . .") [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Put points earmarked for Acting, Musical Instrument, and Singing into Performance or Public Speaking.

*Background Skills:* Add Musical Instrument (H) IQ-2 [1]-12, Navigation (Land) (A) IQ-1 [1]-13, and Survival (any) (A) Per-1 [1]-13 to the list of options.

## CLERIC

Whether it's a *bussō* from the Central Provinces or a *shugenja* from the Island Nations, clerics of the Mysterious East fulfill many of the roles of their Western brethren. Most also have more than a passing proficiency in combat. Bussō specialize in supernatural warfare (don't forget to take Spirit Empathy!). Shugenja should use the lens for war priests (**GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 7: Clerics**, p. 30) if available; otherwise, use the spell list for a buffing cleric.

*Advantages:* Add Combat Reflexes [15], Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Khakkhara\*) [1], and Weapon Master (Staff) [20] to the available list.

*Disadvantages:* Both Vow (Vegetarianism) and Wealth (Struggling or Poor) are highly appropriate and can be taken instead of Honesty, Sense of Duty (Coreligionists), or Vow (No edged weapons). Use Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism or Mysticism) for especially devout practitioners.

*Primary Skills:* Of the three melee weapon packages Staff is almost universal for Mysterious East clerics.

*Secondary Skills:* Remove First Aid and add it to the list of available background skills; spend that point on Meditation, raising it to Will-1.

*Background Skills:* Add Autohypnosis and Mental Strength to the list of available skills.

\* A \$250 quarterstaff with metal shodding, rings, and an outsize head, giving +1 damage but -1 to skill unless the wielder has the appropriate Exotic Weapon Proficiency perk. Included in Weapon Master (Staff). In the hands of someone with Holiness, it automatically counts as a holy attack!

## DRUID

The *kannushi* of the Island Nations and some of the more animistic priests of the Icy Steppes are Mysterious East analogues of Western-style druids. Their focus is still nature, but they also deal with *nushi* – powerful spirit beings who are in charge of particular areas of wilderness (treat as a *Spirit of Place* from **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners**, p. 24).

Those with access to **Summoners** may create shaman *kannushi* who are *only* concerned with spirits, rather than spirits and nature.

*Advantages:* Exchange Green Thumb 1 [5] for Spirit Empathy (Specialized, Nature Spirits, -50%) [5], for 0 points. Add Resistant to Nature Spirit Powers (+3) or (+8) [5 or 7] to the list of available advantages.

*Disadvantages:* Add Sense of Duty (Nature Spirits) [-10] to the first choice list.

*Primary Skills:* Reduce Herb Lore to IQ-1 and spend those points on Hidden Lore (Nature Spirits) (A) IQ [2]-14.

## MYSTERIOUS EAST SPELL LISTS

Mysterious East clerics and druids have slightly different spell lists available than those in **Adventurers**, pp. 19-20.

### Cleric

Any spell that affects non-nature spirits does so normally. Any spell that affects nature spirits are at -5 to cast.

**PI 1:** Sense Spirits is now *Required*. Add Turn Spirit. Remove Watchdog.

**PI 2:** Add Awaken Craft Spirit\* (*Required*) and Summon Shade. Remove Turn Spirit and Wall of Light.

**PI 3:** Affect Spirits is now *Required*. Add Know Illusion. Remove See Secrets.

**PI 4:** Banish is now *Required*. Add Bless, Create Spring, Curse, Dispel Illusion, and Dry Spring.

**PI 5:** Entrap Spirit is now *Required*. Add Inspired Creation. Remove Bless, Curse, and Earthquake.

**PI 6:** Add Create Crafter† (*Required*). Remove Planar Summon (Divine Servitor).

\* In addition to the normal effects, items under the effects of this spell give +1 to rolls to use it.

† Identical to Create Servant, except the being *can* have IQ-based skills up to 14.

### Druid

Spells that affects nature spirits do so normally. Spells that affect non-nature spirits are at -5 to cast.

**PI 1:** Add Sense Spirits (*Required*).

**PI 2:** Add Aura (*Required*) and Minor Healing.

**PI 3:** Add Summon Spirit (*Required*), Repel Spirits, and Turn Spirit.

**PI 4:** Add Affect Spirits (*Required*) and Dispel Possession.

**PI 5:** Add Command Spirit (*Required*) and Astral Vision. Remove Permanent Beast, Possession, Permanent Shapeshifting, and Plant Form Other.

**PI 6:** Add Entrap Spirit (*Required*), Permanent Beast, Possession, Permanent Shapeshifting, and Plant Form Other. Remove Earthquake.

## HOLY WARRIOR

*Sohei* or *yamabushi* are warrior-monks who live in mountain retreats all over the lands of the Mysterious East.

*Advantages:* Trade Shtick (Foes slain personally can't rise as undead) [1] for Focused Fury [1] (**GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups**, p. 18). Add Higher Purpose (Slay Demons or Slay Undead) to the list of additional Holy Abilities or advantages; increase points for Holy Abilities to 30. Add Armor Familiarity (**Power-Ups**, p. 29) and Chi Training (p. 22) to the available choices.

*Primary Skills:* Reduce Exorcism to (H) Will-1 [2]-13.

*Secondary Skills:* Replace Brawling and Wrestling with Karate and Judo, both (H) DX [4]-13.



## KNIGHT

Whether a *bushi* from the Island Nations or a fighter from the Icy Steppes, warriors are always needed in adventuring parties. Like their Western counterparts, Mysterious East combatants rely on heavy armor, weapons, and/or shields. A particular type of warrior – the *samurai* – hails from the Island Nations and is feared throughout the land for his prowess in battle and skill in swordsmanship. See p. 19 for the samurai lens.

### NEW ADVANTAGE: HEROIC THROWER

20 points

You can draw and throw a knife or similar weapon in the blink of an eye. You get the following benefits.

- You may learn the Throwing Art skill (which you'll generally use for all attacks with thrown weapons, though this isn't mandatory).
- You may ignore off-handedness penalties when throwing weapons. This has no effect when wielding those same weapons off-handed in melee combat.
- When you Attack or All-Out Attack with a thrown weapon, you may add its Accuracy bonus to skill without taking an Aim maneuver. If you do Aim, you get another +1 after one second or +2 after two seconds.
- When you Attack or All-Out Attack in close combat, or Move and Attack anywhere, you don't add Acc, but you may ignore Bulk.
- Halve all Fast-Draw penalties to ready throwing weapons. If you have the relevant Fast-Draw skill at 16+, you don't have to roll at all!
- When you Attack, All-Out Attack, or Move and Attack, you can throw multiple weapons, all of them at -3 per attack past the first; e.g., two attacks at -3, three at -6, four at -9, and so on. These can target different opponents.
- If you throw using two hands, all attacks start at a basic -2, but the above penalty accrues separately for each hand; e.g., three attacks with one hand at -8, two with the other at -5. One attack with each hand is at -2 instead of -3. Again, these attacks can target different opponents.
- You can use Maneuvers that are normally limited to melee weapon attacks, should they make sense. For example, you could use Feint or Deceptive attack with thrown weaponry to "fake out" your target.
- If you combine Throwing Art and an appropriate specialty of Weapon Master, your multiple-attack penalties are halved: a cumulative -1 per extra attack and a flat -1 for using two hands (e.g., three attacks with one hand at -3 and two with the other at -2). The damage bonus from Weapon Master does not "stack" with that of Throwing Art, however.
- If for whatever reason you elect to use *Rapid Fire with Thrown Weapons* (*Martial Arts*, p. 120) instead of multiple attacks, you can ready whatever you're throwing instantly instead of taking a Ready, if you have a suitable Fast-Draw skill (this always requires a roll!), and you may ignore Bulk. You may ready at most Basic Lift/20 lbs. of weapon per hand.

## MARTIAL ARTIST

Whether it's wandering *xia* from the Central Provinces, orders of "monks," or any combination, the martial artist is *de*

*rigueur* for Mysterious East campaigns. Empty-hand masters are particularly common. Even if the GM doesn't include the optional rules for integrating martial-arts styles into *Dungeon Fantasy* (see *It's a Matter of Style*, p. 16) for everyone, he should permit martial-artist characters to use those rules.

**Advantages:** Expand the selection for Weapon Master to any "exotic weapon" or "martial-arts weapon" (see either *Martial Arts* or *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables*, pp. 30-31).

**Disadvantages:** Add Code of Honor (Xia) (*Martial Arts*, p. 53) to the first option list.

**Special Skills:** To make Mysterious East martial artists *really* stand out from their Western brethren, add Hypnotic Hands, Lizard Climb, Precognitive Parry, and Sensitivity from *Martial Arts*, pp. 61-21.

## SCOUT

Whether on horseback or on foot, archers are valuable components of any delving band. When it comes to archery, scouts excel. Alternatively, scouts may specialize in *crossbows* rather than bows, or, for the adventurous, something exotic like *boomarang*s.

**Advantages:** Outdoorsman 2 [20] may be swapped with Craftiness 4 [20] for less outdoorsy scouts. Heroic Archer may be exchanged with Heroic Crossbowman (*GURPS Martial Arts: Yrth Fighting Styles*, p. 23) or Heroic Thrower (above).

**Disadvantages:** Add Delusion ("I *never* miss") [-5] to the list of available traits.

**Primary Skills:** Archers from the Icy Steppes spend four fewer points on melee skills and add Riding (Horse) (A) DX+1 [4]-15 to their skills. Scouts specializing in crossbows trade Bow for Crossbow (E) DX+5 [16]-19, while those who prefer boomerangs swap Bow for Throwing Weapon (Stick) (E) DX+5 [16]-19 – or Heroic Thrower makes Throwing Art (H) DX+3 [16]-17 an option!

## SWASHBUCKLER

The *kensai* of the Island Nations are wandering swordsmen who test their skill at every turn. Alternatively, they may be *ronin* – masterless samurai (p. 19). Like their Western counterparts, Mysterious East swashbucklers rely on speed, skill, and luck to land a blow.

**Advantages:** For those with Signature Gear, Weapon Master (Specific weapon) [15\*] may replace Weapon Master (Weapon of

choice) [20]. The extra 5 points can be spent on anything the player likes.

**Disadvantages:** Add Code of Honor (Bushido) [-15] as an option for the first choice list.

*Primary Skills:* The points spent on the two Fast-Draw skills can be spent on a single skill if the player wishes.

\* This is for *one specific weapon*, just as if it were for Weapon Bond. Losing the weapon means that advantage is also lost! The GM may allow a quest to recover the weapon, but nothing less than it, or a *miraculously* identical copy, will work. The points cannot be reassigned to a different signature weapon.

## THIEF

The thieves of the Mysterious East operate much like their brethren, and they need no adjustments or notes. Those without *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 12: Ninja* may wish to use thieves as a way to fill in that niche.

*Illusionists are the most common types of wizards.*

## WIZARD

Wizards (often called *sorcerers*) are not necessarily masters of a specific element, but instead are particularly adept

magical generalists. Out of the three archetypes presented in *Adventurers*, *illusionists* are by far the most common.

*Advantages:* Add Life-Force Burn (**Power-Ups**, p. 24) and Resistant to Deception (+3) or (+8) [5 or 10] to available traits.

*Disadvantages:* Add Odious Personal Habit (Mysterious or Enigmatic) [-5] to available traits.

*Background Skills:* Add Artist (Illusion) (H) IQ-2 [1]-13 to the option list.

# NEW LENS

One new lens especially suits Mysterious East *Dungeon Fantasy* campaigns.

## SAMURAI (KNIGHT OR SWASHBUCKLER LENS)

0 points

You are a warrior and leader of men who knows no fear. With your *daisho* at your side, you do the bidding of your master with complete and utter loyalty. Alternatively, you're a "fallen" samurai (called *ronin*) who may wander the countryside as a knight-errant or mercenary, looking for a reason to continue your masterless existence. Most samurai are bedecked in their iconic armor (*o-yoroi*) – use steel laminate plate (p. B282) with or without the Ornate modifier (*Adventures*, p. 26).

This lens is most often applied to knights, but those who focus on swordplay may be swashbucklers.

*Secondary Characteristics:* Will +3 [15].

*Advantages:* Fearlessness 1; Chi Training (Kiai) [1]; and Social Regard 1 (Feared) [5]. • Knights add Charisma [5/level] to options. • Spend 35 points on further advantages instead of 60.

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Bushido) [-15] is required for samurai, while ronin often have Code of Honor ("Stays Bought") [-5].

*Primary Skills:* Knights omit Shield and add Leadership (A) IQ+3 [4]-13\*. • Swashbucklers choose one sword skill at DX+4 [16]-19 and Leadership

(A) IQ+1 [4]-11 (as their melee skills package), and may take Bow (A) DX [2]-15 as a ranged weapon option.

*Secondary Skills:* Kiai (H) HT [4]-13. • For knights, Leadership is no longer a secondary skill.

*Background Skills:* Knights take *three* instead of four.

• Swashbucklers take *five* instead of seven.

\* Includes +2 from Born War-Leader Talent.

## SHO'NUFF I GOT RESPECT!

*Dungeon Fantasy* ignores things like Status, standard Wealth, and well, society beyond "Town" as a place to recoup, rest, and sell loot. Mysterious East adventures can use the same model, but most traditional stories assume that some social interplay will occur. For such encounters, Social Regard (see below) makes them more interesting. A GM looking for an alternative can use "Traits for Town" from *Pyramid* #3/58: *Urban Fantasy II*.

### Social Regard

See pp. B86-87

This functions as per the *Basic Set* except that delvers can purchase this trait up to +8, not +4. Those with Social Stigma have a lower maximum than other delvers. This equals eight minus the reaction penalties from Social Stigma; e.g., an ogre barbarian with -5 in reaction penalties from Social Stigma (Minority Group) and Social Stigma (Monster) could have at most  $8 - 5 = 3$  levels of Social Regard.

# NON-HUMANS

The following *Dungeon Fantasy* races are not available for Mysterious East campaigns unless the GM permits them (see *Gaijin and Foreigners*, p. 15): coleopteran, halfling, gargoyle,

leprechaun, minotaur, and troll. For the most part, the majority of non-humans are human-looking or capable of hiding their otherness.

## PERMITTED RACES

Some races, though not forbidden, require a little extra detail to get them to jive with the Mysterious East aesthetic. Each entry has a race's *Dungeon Fantasy* name, the name they are known by, and any adjustments to the base template. Essentially, the following are considered "Mysterious East" subrace lenses.

- *Cat-Folk (Rakshasa)*: Hailing from the Green Lands of the south, rakshasa lack Phobia (Entering Water) [-2] and instead have Trickster (15) [-7]. Spend the excess points on Magery 0 [5]. "Wizard" becomes a choice profession for them.

- *Corpse-Eater (Preta)*: Remove Social Stigma (Monster) [-15] and replace it with Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen) [-5], for 10 points. Racial cost becomes 30 points. Preta serve a vital role in the lands of the Mysterious East, and while disdained, they are not lynched on sight. A festival is even held every year to celebrate the preta and their duties.

- *Dark One*: Dark Ones are a relatively new phenomenon in the Mysterious East. When the Seven Immortals closed the Black Gate, several *somethings* came out (see *Squidworks*, p. 24). Use this template as-is, but add Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen) [-5].

- *Dragon-Blooded*: Descendants of the godlike dragon kings, the dragon-blooded's Burning Attack acquires the Underwater enhancement, increasing cost by 1 point. They also have the ability to summon radiant wisps of light; treat this as the Illumination perk. Finally, increase their Damage Resistance by 1 level, for 3 points. This increases the total template cost to 35 points.

- *Dwarf (Ainu)*: The original inhabitants of the Island Nations, the ainu still remain in small numbers on mountainous islands, where they live deep inside the earth. Exchange one level of Pickaxe Pendant for Single-Minded, for 0 points. Ainu are capable of focusing on a single task to the exclusion of all else! It is thought that the code of Bushido was invented by the ainu, but this could be a myth.

- *Elves (Hsien)*: Hsien were once the inhabitants of a lost city that preached oneness with nature and enlightenment through meditation. Whether it was a fluke or through the help of a god, the inhabitants reached enlightenment . . . only they didn't get there all the way. Instead, they are somewhere in between. From that lost city, the hsien set out to find the true path to enlightenment and have adapted to all sorts of environments and terrain. Add "martial artist" to the list of choice professions for hsien. Hsien can purchase either Autohypnosis or Meditation if they have a Will of 12 or higher. While they do not use bows *often*, Forest Guardian remains a viable advantage. Hsien may take the following, optional racial talent:

*One With Nature*: You mediate a lot. Sometimes about bunnies. Sometimes about trees – which has helped you to be *really* good at beating people up with sticks. This Talent adds to Autohypnosis, Camouflage, Meditation, Staff, Stealth, and Survival (Woodlands). Only hsien can have it. It provides no reaction bonus, but instead every two levels purchased (round down) gives +1 to effective ST for wielding staves. *5 points/level*.

- *Faun (Yaksha)*: Yaksha lack Musical Ability 2, but have Outdoorsman 1, making them excellent barbarians, scouts, and druids. Template cost does not change.

- *Gnome (Mogwai)*: Mogwai are diminutive beings who have a mischievous streak a mile wide. They enjoy breaking things almost as much as they enjoy building them. Remove the penalty to Basic Move, for 5 points. Add Higher Purpose ("It's *Sabotage!*") [5], which gives them a bonus whenever they are intentionally sabotaging, breaking, etc. something that doesn't belong to them. Also add Striking ST +2 (Limited, Forced Entry only, -80%) [2]. Add Reputation -1 (Creator of Chaos) [-5] and Trickster (15) [-7]. Template cost does not change.

- *Goblin-Kin*: Goblin-kin are thought to be creatures of faeish origin who spent too long in the material world, or perhaps are the descendants of oni and human pairings.

- *Half-Spirits (Shen-Lan)*: The pairing of a human and spirit is usually the beginning of a story about a great hero (or a terrible villain). The half-spirit templates can be used as-is with the exception of the elder-spawn, which suffers from the same issues as dark ones (above), reducing template cost to 70 points.

- *Lizard Men*: Considered the degenerate offspring of dragon-blooded who fled to the Green Lands, lizard men rarely leave their swampy homes. When they do, it's usually because they've been banished or their village was destroyed and they have nowhere else to go.

- *Nymph (Yakshini)*: The Western nymph and Mysterious East yakshini are so similar it's almost as if they were the same race by different names . . .

- *Ogre (Oni)*: Oni and half-oni can purchase the Mr. Smash power-up (see *Power-Ups*, p. 19) either at character creation or afterward. Barbarian oni or half-oni may have up to six levels of Mr. Smash instead of the normal four.

- *Pixie (Kijimuna)*: Most kijimuna have red hair (copper, auburn, strawberry-blond, etc.) with almost-too-large-for-their-body heads. Their wide eyes and expressive features count as Easy to Read [-10] (p. B134). This reduces the cost of the template to 15 points.

- *Wildman (Yeti)*: The yeti of the Icy Steppes are white-furred humanoids who, despite their appearance, are quite friendly. Remove Arm ST 1 and add four additional levels of Temperature Tolerance (Cold) and Resistant to Cold Effects (+3) [3], for 7 points. Also add another two levels of ST and Damage Resistance 1 (Tough Skin, -40%), for 23 points. Total template cost becomes 40 points.

## NEW RACES

The following new races are available for players in Mysterious East campaigns.

### Hengeyokai

50 points

*Choice Professions*: Druid, Scout, Wizard.

*Marginal Professions*: None.

Hengeyokai are humanoid beings who can magically shapeshift into one particular animal form (e.g., badger, fox, cat, or raven). They have a pendant for both using and "sniffing out" magic, but are vulnerable to certain metals – especially when shapeshifted.

Hengeyokai stand as tall as humans of the same ST and weigh the same.



**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** Per +2 [10].

**Advantages:** Alternate Form (one 74-point animal template\*; Magic, -10%) [81]; Magery 0 (Mana Scent†, +20%) [6].

**Disadvantages:** Bestial [-10]; Unnatural Features 2 (Animal form blended into human features, and human features in animal form) [-2]; Vulnerability (Meteoric Iron x2) [-10]; Vulnerability (Silver x2) [-10]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15].

\* Choose an *animal* familiar (which can include the giant spider!) built on 62 points from pp. 21-25 of **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 5: Allies**. Remove the Familiar meta-trait (a net +22 points) and increase both hengeyokai Vulnerabilities from x2 to x3 (a net -10 points). To turn the result into a racial template, see *Becoming the Beast* (**Allies**, p. 8). Alternatively, the GM can design a custom animal template, but it *must* have the increased Vulnerabilities; if its final cost differs from 74 points, adjust the cost of Alternate Form accordingly.

† Allows the hengeyokai a roll against Sense + Magery when he *smells* something magical.

*At night, we make fire, and have our tea, and  
we listen for the ninja who never makes a sound.  
– Daigoro, in **Shogun Assassin***

## Tengu

50 points

**Choice Professions:** Cleric, Druid, Knight, and Swash-buckler.

**Marginal Professions:** Barbarian.

Tengu are humanoid beings with avian features (almost always birds of prey or corvids), wings, and exceptionally long noses. They are intelligent, nimble, and strong-willed beings known for their swordsmanship and connection to both nature and the gods. Tengu are thought to have once been the messengers of the gods who performed their service so admirably that they were given a “vacation.” Stories abound where the gods call the tengu back to service.

Tengu are slightly shorter than humans of the same ST (reduce ST by 1 to get final height) and weigh 40 lbs. less.

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST -1 [-10]; DX +1 [20]; IQ +1 [20].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** HP +1 [2]; Will +1 [5]; Per +1 [5].

**Advantages:** Acute Smell and Taste 2 [4]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Flight (Slow, Air Move equals Basic Speed, -25%; Winged, -25%) [20]; Night Vision 2 [2]; Tengu Swordsmanship 1\* [5].

**Perk:** Holy/Nature's Gifts†. [1]

**Disadvantages:** Appearance (Ugly) [-8]; Divine Curse (Attunement)‡ [-15]; Vulnerability (Crushing Attacks x1.5)¶ [-15].

**Quirk:** Cyrano's Curse§. [-1]

\* *Tengu Swordsmanship:* You're at one with your blade. This Talent aids Broadsword, Rapier, Saber, Smallsword, Shortsword, and Two-Handed Sword. Only tengu can have it, and may buy up to three more levels at character creation. The GM may make an exception for those who were “Raised by Tengu” (a 5-point Unusual Background). *Reaction bonus:* Swordsman, samurai, and others who live and die by the sword. 5 points/level.

† At character creation, pick either Holy Gifts or Nature's Gifts. Those who choose Holy Gifts can purchase Holy Might as a racial power-up, while those who choose Nature's Gifts can purchase Druidic Arts abilities; see **Adventurers** (p. 22) for more information on these abilities. Tengu may purchase up to three levels of Druidic or Holiness Talent.

‡ Tengu with Holy Gifts lose 1d HP per hour they spend in cursed areas or areas of high or better sanctity to evil gods. Those with Nature's Gifts lose 1 HP per day in despoiled wild places such mines or clear-cut forests; 1d-2 in cities and cut-stone tunnels; 1d-1 amid ordinary pollution; and 1d in a poisoned wasteland.

¶ Priced as *half* the cost of a x2 multiplier.

§ Attacks that hit the face require the tengu roll 1d, on a 1-4, the attack hits the face normally, on a 5 or 6 it hits the nose instead. Injury over HP/4 breaks the nose, causing No Sense of Smell/Taste (p. B146) until the injury heals. Cutting attacks that exceed HP/2 will cut *off* the nose! Excess injury is lost.

# NEW POWER-UPS

**Dungeon Fantasy** can never have enough power-ups – here are a few new ones.

## GENERAL COMBAT POWER-UPS

These new combat related power-ups are available to everyone.

### Aggressive Defense

2 or 7 points

**Prerequisite:** Unarmed combat skill at 14+.

Whenever you defend against another attack with an unarmed parry, roll at your normal Parry *minus* the Hit

Location penalty for the extremity you want to damage. You must specialize by unarmed combat skill. Roll at -2 if you are using Boxing against a leg or foot or -3 for Boxing or Brawling against a swung weapon. Success means you inflict *half* your thrust damage (plus any other bonuses!) to the extremity.

At level two, you can ignore up to -4 worth of penalties to this roll (e.g., from your foe's Deceptive Attack), but never gain a net bonus.

**Perks:** Level 2 adds Technique Mastery (Aggressive Parry) [1]. Normally, Aggressive Parry couldn't benefit from Technique Mastery, but since it *only* negates penalties, it balances out.

**Techniques:** Aggressive Parry (H) Skill+0 [2]. Level 2 increases level to Skill+4, for another 4 points.

## MARTIAL-ARTS STYLES AND POWER-UPS

When assigning power-ups for a style, the GM may be tempted to go wild, but he should be careful not to create overly powerful styles. As a guideline, for every *three* techniques the original style has (rounding up), add a style power-up. Treat techniques with multiple specializations as *one* technique for this purpose. For example, Shaolin Kung Fu has 28 techniques; thus, it should have no more than 10 power-ups ( $28 / 3 = 9.33$ , or 10).

Here are a few adapted styles from *Martial Arts*:

- *Praying Mantis Kung Fu* (*Martial Arts*, p. 191): Aggressive Defense (p. 21), Knifehand (p. 23), Master of Lethal Strikes (*Pyramid* #3/61: *Way of the Warrior*, p. 12), Slayer Training (*Power-Ups*, p. 13),

- *Shaolin Kung Fu* (*Martial Arts*, p. 194): Double-Ended Mastery (*Pyramid* #3/61, p. 5), Enhanced Dodge 1-2, Grand Flying Kick (*Pyramid* #3/61, p. 11), Knifehand (p. 23), Master at Disarms (*Power-Ups*, p. 30), Seven Secret Kicks (*Power-Ups*, p. 30), Master of Lethal Strikes (*Pyramid* #3/61, p. 12), Quicksilver Strike (below), Run and Hit (*Power-Ups*, p. 12), and Unarmed Master (*Pyramid* #3/61, p. 13).

- *Taijutsu* (*Martial Arts*, pp. 202-203): Backstabber (*Power-Ups*, p. 35), Basic Move +1 to +3, Craftiness 1-4 (*Power-Ups*, p. 35), Flash-Step (below), Knifehand (p. 23), Perfect Recovery (*Power-Ups*, p. 12), Slayer Training (*Power-Ups*, p. 13), and Super Climbing 1-10.

### Combat Perks

A few new Combat Perks.

### Chi Training

*Prerequisite:* Will 10+.

You may learn *one* chi skill (*Adventurers*, p. 22) or ability as if it were normally available to you. It still retains the chi power modifier, though you cannot take Chi Talent. Each level of Chi Training requires that you spend one hour meditating, exercising, etc., just as if you were a martial artist. Failure to do so means you lose access to your abilities. No one may have more than four Chi Training perks.

### Weapon Fencer

*Prerequisites:* DX 12+ and Melee Weapon skill at 14+.

You can wield a nonfencing weapon in such a way that it effectively becomes a fencing weapon! This gives you the good (e.g., a better retreat bonus) *and* the bad (e.g., encumbrance penalties). It is a free action at the beginning of your turn to switch between fencing and nonfencing stances. You must specialize by weapon (e.g., bastard sword or spear). The GM may disallow specializations for unbalanced weapons like mauls, flails, or scythes.

### Quicksilver Strike

34 points

*Prerequisites:* Combat skill at 20+ and Trained by a Master or Weapon Master.

When you perform a Move and Attack maneuver (p. B366), you use your full skill and ignore the skill cap of 9. You also ignore the -2 penalty for doing more than one thing at once, can make any active defenses, can retreat, *and* can use either Acrobatics or Jumping as part of your move. This takes its toll; each use of this power-up requires 1 FP.

The power-up applies to *all* of your appropriate combat skills. This is similar to but different from *Run and Hit* (*Power-Ups*, p. 12).

**Perks:** Unique Technique (Quicksilver Strike!) [1].

**Techniques:** Quicksilver Strike! (H) Skill+0 [33].

## MARTIAL-ARTIST POWER-UPS

Since many options are available that enable other templates to expand into the martial artist's niche, the martial artist needs a few new, special ways of improving. In to these new power-ups, the GM should be generous with allowing *any* martial power-up from any class as long as it suits his campaign.

*Fumio Funakoshi:*  
*What fist is this?*

*Chen Zhen: Don't ask; it's a good fist if it wins.*

– *Fist of Legend*

### Flash-Step

10/20/30/40/50/60 points for levels 1-6

*Prerequisites:* Chi Talent 1+.

You are capable of amazing bursts of speed by channeling your chi. Each use of this power-up costs you 2 FP. Levels 1-5 increase your step length (p. B363) by one yard per level.

At level 6, you can move *instantaneously* to anywhere you can see, within 500 yards, *if* you could get there normally (given enough time) by walking or climbing with the equipment currently on you. You are seen as a blur while doing this. Moving this way requires an IQ roll (plus Chi Talent), at no penalty for 10 yards, -1 for up to 20 yards, -2 for up to 100 yards, and -3 for up to 500 yards (the maximum).

Success means you go where you wanted to. Failure means you stay where you were *and* are at -5 to use this ability again for the next 10 minutes. Critical failure means this ability takes you to the *wrong* destination (which can be anywhere within range the GM likes) *and* your ability is inaccessible for 1d hours.

Additionally, at level 6, you may, once per turn, use your ability instinctively you to move to any location within 10 yards of you when being attacked. This is considered a Dodge.

**Advantages:** Levels 1 through 5 are Basic Move +10 (Accessibility, Only for determining step length, -60%; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Chi, -10%) [10/level]. Level 6 is Warp (Accessibility, Only places you could walk/climb to, -20%; Chi, -10%; Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Extra Carrying Capacity, Light, +10%; Gyroscopic, +10%; Nuisance Effect, Cannot spend extra FP to negate penalties, -5%; Range Limit, 500 yards, -35%; Reliable 10 (Accessibility, Only for negating Preparation Time penalties, -40%), +30%; Special Movement, must

be able to walk, -10%; Visible, -10%) [50] + the Basic Move bonus as an alternate ability of Warp [10].

## Knifehand

4 points/level

**Prerequisites:** Iron Hands *and* Karate at 14+.

Your unarmed Karate punches do +1 damage. In addition, your hands have +2 DR (cumulative with Iron Hands) and you may ignore *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379) completely!

At level 2 (the maximum) your Karate punch can do *cutting* damage if you wish.

**Perks:** Rules Exemption (Hurting Yourself) [1].

**Advantages:** Damage Resistance 2 (Chi, -10%; Limited, Hands, -40%; Tough Skin, -40%) [2]. Level 2 adds Sharp Claws (Accessibility, Hands Only, -10%; Chi, -10%) [4].

**Techniques:** Exotic Hand Strike (A) Skill+0 [1].

# EQUIPMENT

All equipment options from *Adventurers* are available for use. The GM may permit other equipment possibilities from other supplements, as well as these new weapon options.

**Balanced (Stick):** Sticks can have the balanced modifier (*Adventurers*, p. 27), but it is more costly: +14 CF instead of +4.

**Holy:** The weapon is inlaid with religious imagery and text, using spiritually significant materials, then blessed. Counts as a holy attack, causing additional damage to beings with a specific weakness or vulnerability to holy attacks. The weapon's final value (after all modifiers, including this one) *must* be at least \$250. All weapons: +4 CF.

**Spirit Wood:** Spirit wood weapons *won't* break. Non-spirit-wood weapons have +2 to their odds of breakage when parrying heavy spirit-wood ones. Any wooden or mostly wooden weapon: +29 CF.

**Hagane:** Blades made using ancient techniques of the Island Nations can cut through almost *anything* – with a natural armor divisor of (2)! This is not cumulative with the Penetrating Weapon enchantment, however; use whichever divisor is best. As it is very difficult to improve on perfection, the *fine* modifier costs +8 CF when combined with hagane, while *very fine* becomes +29 CF. Fencing weapons and swords only: +19 CF.

# GAME PLAY

Adventures in the Mysterious East have a slightly different tone than normal *Dungeon Fantasy* and thus some of the rules from *Dungeons* need modification. Unmentioned rules work fine without any alterations.

## DUNGEON-CRAWLING

All of the rules from *Getting Ready to Go* (*Dungeons*, pp. 3-5) work just fine. Often, finding a quest is as simple as “heading to the next village” – demons and monsters love tormenting villagers after all. *Getting There Quickly* (*Dungeons*, p. 5) should be the de facto method of travel since Mysterious East quests often involve townsfolk having a problem they need dealt with vs. randomly locating some dungeon to explore.

Should the delvers find themselves underground, exploring haunted castles, etc., the rules for *Exploring the Dungeon* (*Dungeons*, pp. 6-7) work just as well in this new land. *Dungeon Parkour* (*Dungeons*, pp. 7-8) suits Mysterious East games quite well and delvers may wish to put a point of two in Acrobatics, Jumping, and/or Escape just so they can make use

of those rules. *Curses 101* (*Dungeons*, p. 10) play an important part of Mysterious East games – specifically *Cleansing* – given that *most* demons prefer incorporeal forms and the process of exorcism often involves making the demon *physically* corporeal so that it can be killed and sent back to the netherworld.

The GM may allow the better of an IQ, Singing, or Psychology roll to insult IQ 6+ beings. Use the rules for *Group Intimidation* (p. B202) for insulting multiple groups of similar beings.

## MASTERING DUNGEONS

The monsters listed in *Perilous Encounters* (*Dungeons*, pp. 20-28) are all strange enough to be used in Mysterious East campaigns with a few cosmetic modifications. For example, acid spiders may hail from the Icy Steppes and actually be “ice spiders” with furry bodies and a fatigue sapping venom that freezes its target to death. Doomchildren might be a form of *shen* (demon) or *yokai* (faerie). Elder things are unchanged and represent something truly alien in the lands of the Mysterious East (see *Squidworks*, p. 24).



## Squidworks

Several hundred years ago, a strange portal appeared in the highlands of the Icy Steppes. Through it terrible beings began to enter the world. These beings harassed, harried, and harmed the locals until the Seven Immortals ventured into the highlands and shut the portal (later on called the Black Gate). But the damage was done. These terrible beings were here to stay. Called *kurotaki*, the elder things hid themselves among the people and lands and have stayed there since. Elder things in the Mysterious East are just as inscrutable as their Western cousins, and no one knows exactly *what* they want, but given the fact that they've been breeding with the local population to produce elder-spawn and dark ones, it appears they're playing the long game.

## NEW RULE: DUEL OF SKILL, WILL, OR WITS

Not every battle in the Mysterious East is a physical contest of arms! Some battles are fought within the mind or even with words. To represent such battles use the following rules.

To initiate a duel of any kind requires a roll against HT (for physical ones), Will (for mental duels), or IQ (for intellectual duels) *and* taking a Ready (for physical ones) or Concentrate maneuver (for mental or intellectual ones). Those with an appropriate skill may make a Will-based or HT-based roll if better. Thus, a duel of skill involving fancy katas may use a HT-based Broadsword roll if better than just HT. Similarly, those with an appropriate IQ skill (e.g., Public Speaking for oration or Poetry for riddles) can use that instead.

If the initiator's foe accepts, then he too must make a roll and take a maneuver. Declining the duel still takes a roll of HT or Will, but no maneuver. Failure on this roll means the person or being is drawn into the duel *anyways*.

Once the duel begins, roll a *Regular* Contest of Will (for mental), IQ (for intellectual), or HT (for physical) each turn.

Either participant may substitute Intimidation or Mental Strength for Will, if better. Roll once per turn until someone wins. The winner then gains a bonus to related skill rolls equal to *half* the margin he won by for 1d seconds against challenged foes – *halved* again for Active Defenses. The GM may decide that failing this roll requires a Reaction roll for NPCs who may become hostile due to embarrassment or helpful after seeing a true master at work.

**Modifiers:** Fearlessness; +5 each for Indomitable and Unfazeable; +5 for Rapier Wit (intellectual duels only); the most skilled duelist gets +1 per three levels by which his best skill exceeds his opponent's (for contests of skill); the difference in levels of Social Regard (p. 19). Reputation can go either way – for instance, -2 for being a ruthless killer would give +2, but +2 for being merciful might give -2.

**Example:** Orto and Ichi have a duel of skill – Orto-san's kung fu vs. Ichi's swordsmanship. After some quick rolls, Orto-san succeeds by four against Ichi, who becomes embarrassed and attacks Orto-san. Since Orto-san won the duel, he gets +2 to *all* rolls against Ichi for 1d seconds.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice knows kung fu. Well, he knows how to order kung pao for takeout. From Portsmouth, Virginia, he dreams of writing full-time, or at least eking out a living doing it. Of course, if he's not writing about **GURPS**, he's blogging about it. Visit his site "Ravens N' Pennies" ([www.ravensnpennies.com](http://www.ravensnpennies.com)) for more **GURPS** goodies. He wishes to thank L.A., his own personal muse, as well as the rest of his gaming group; Antoni Ten Monros; Douglas Cole; Beth "Archangel" McCoy, the "Sith Editrix"; and Hal "Wavefunction" Batty, for being most excellent sounding boards. Heroic Thrower was originally created by Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch.

**GURPS**

Fourth Edition



# DUNGEON FANTASY 16 WILDERNESS ADVENTURES

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# EIDETIC MEMORY

## THE TITAN'S HOUSE

BY DAVID L. PULVER

*He was an old man in a night shirt with a long beard, but he stood 30 feet tall! His voice was like thunder: "What's this? A pack of skittering dolls disturbs my sleep?"*

*Gilly the thief fired her crossbow, but missed the titan's eye, and the bolt glanced off its skull. Sir Taranor charged, holy sword held high! Ragnar was right behind, axe whirling, frothing like a berserker.*

*The monster stomped Taranor into a bloody pancake before he could strike a blow. Ragnar hewed the titan's leg as if it were a tree, but the monster merely grunted, grabbing her friend with one enormous hand. He struggled desperately to break free. As Gilly watched in appalled horror, the titan squeezed, breaking the barbarian like an egg. "Fragile little dolls," the titan remarked. "Huh, there's another one!" He reached for Gilly, but the agile thief was already moving. She darted between the titan's tree-sized legs, and before he could turn about, was through the open door and sprinting down the great hall . . .*

*— Caedmon the Bard, fragment of "Gilly's Tale"*

On the summit of a lonely mountain stands a great edifice: the Titan's House, which legend says it is inhabited by Gromm the Old, the Wyrmcruiser, a giant among giants.

Some 60 years ago, before the titan came, the mountain was the lair of a fierce dragon, Pyrrakis, who raided the surrounding lands, accumulating a great pile of loot. Adventurers tried to kill the dragon; their charred skeletons littered the mountain.

Then came Gromm. He slew the dragon and took its lair and its treasure for himself. He soon built a house atop the mountain. Some say he gathered other giants or monsters into his service; others that he dwells alone. In any event, the few humans optimistic enough to try resettling the land below the mountain following the dragon's demise quickly realized the titan was no better a neighbor. Ravaged homesteads and dismembered bodies bore mute witness to his terrible presence. Soon the land was deserted again.

Over the years, a few brave parties launched raids to slay Gromm and take his rumored hoard, but none succeeded. Fewer survived to tell tales. Still, in the last two years, sightings of giants have become rarer, and Gromm has not sallied

forth. But no can say whether the titan still lives, for everyone fears to get near the Titan's House!

### GM Notes

*The Titan's House* is an adventure that can be inserted into any **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** campaign. If the party consists of powerful adventurers who can stand toe to toe with ST 30-50 foes, feel free to give them the above legend as a rumor, or even just spot the house while on a wilderness crawl through mountains hearing knowing anything about it.

Less powerful groups are more likely to survive if they know what they're in for and use stealth or prepare magic. Details from past raids, such as "Gilly's Tale," may be available to wary adventurers who attempt Research rolls. Rumors or information also could be stumbled on scroll or diary discovered within another treasure. "Gilly's Tale," for example, might be a fragment found in half-burned book in a ruin's library or in the pack of a deceased adventurer. Adventurers could come across a map to the mountain with "house of the titan" or "here be giants" on the summit. (But old maps might say "lair of the dragon Pyrrakis.")

### THE APPROACH

The titan's house stands on the summit of a low, forested mountain (1,200' high). It's name is up to the GM; the nearest settlement is at least a day's ride away due to the dragon and titans having killed or frightened off everyone closer. Perhaps there are burned-out villages or looted farmhouses from a century of monster depredations.

Individuals moving through the mountains may spot a path winding up the slopes. It's rough but wide as a road (made for giants) and allows mules, carts, or sure-footed horses to travel to the mountain summit.

The mountain slopes bear light brush, rocks, and a few hardy trees. There are small wildlife, and larger bears, wild goats, manticores, and wyverns; it's up to the GM whether to have the adventures run into any of these on the way up. The path approaches the house from the north face. Access from other faces requires climbing at least 50-100 yards of cliff.

From a great distance, against the setting sun, adventurers can first spot what seems like the silhouette of a simple stone house, two stories high, with a garden wall – perhaps the residence of a well-to-do country squire or yeoman. But its true scale becomes clear the closer they get to it: the wall is 30' high, and the house is castle-sized, over 120' wide and high.

The summit it stands on is periodically “cleared” of brush and trees by the house’s inhabitants – but only from their perspective as giants. It remains strewn with 3' to 6' boulders, burned tree stumps, and scraggly bushes that provide cover for anyone of SM 0 or less sneaking up exercising minimal stealth (not riding up on horses, etc.)

For details on who lives in the house, see *Encounters*, pp. 30-32. For maps of the house and grounds, see pp. 33-34.

## Encountering the Titans Outside

The party is unlikely to encounter any titans outside the house, just their giant servants. Under normal circumstances, Gromm sends weekly hunting parties of thralls over the mountain after game or forage. Every few years, he launches an attack to annihilate an unlucky merchant caravan daring the nearby mountain passes or to erase a border village. At present, his wife’s death has left the household in mourning; all are likely to remain indoors for another few weeks, which also allows adventurers to move around the mountain without encountering giants. However, if the party makes a fuss (buzzing the compound as flyers, erecting siege engines, tossing fireballs at the house, etc.), Gromm’s son Vorg and his warband will come out to fight.

## THE COMPOUND

The compound encloses a central stone house, a garden with clover field, and outbuildings. Usually one to three giant-thralls (p. 32) work here during the day.

The east, west, and south are sheer cliff – a drop of 60-100 yards down to the path winding round the mountain (and a further 400 yards to the foothills or canyon below).

### 1. Wall and Gate

The compound is surrounded by a 30'-tall stone wall, 5' thick. It has a wooden gate 25' high and 1' thick (DR 12, HP 200), barred with an 800-lb. iron bar (DR 240, HP 80).

During the daytime, one of the warband (p. 32) is on guard duty at the gate. He carries a horn and will blow it to alert the house if dangerous-appearing intruders are sighted.

### 2. Chicken Coup

At night, 3d giant chickens (p. 30) are penned here; others are often in the courtyard. A dozen huge eggs weigh 4 lbs. each and could sell for \$100 a piece as curiosities.

### 3. Beehive

A 20'-high cone-shaped beehive on a wooden stand (2,000 lbs.) houses a colony of giant bees (2.5" long each). The bees buzz around the hive by day. Approaching within five yards during the day, or disturbing the hive at night, provokes an attack by a 3-hex swarm; treat as a regular bee swarm (p. B461) but with HP 60/hex and inflicting 1d+1 impaling

damage/turn. Mages may be able to control the hive with insect-control spells, turning the swarm into a weapon against the titans! The hive holds 600 lbs. of honey.

## 4. Giant Rose Bushes

These 12' tall rose bushes are just below Room 15's window. They could break the fall of anyone jumping out (but add 1d-2 cutting damage from thorns!). In spring and summer, the blossoms attract a 1-hex swarm from the hive, who attack if disturbed.

In spring or summer, 3d roses might sell for \$100/each in a town if kept fresh.

## 5. Shed and Vegetable Garden

The vegetable garden is filled with giant pumpkins, cabbages, carrots, and squash 3-5× usual size (and 10-100 times heavier). The shed holds farming and gardening tools (SM +2 scaled), sacks of chickenfeed, coils of 100' of heavy rope, and bushels of seeds.

## 6. Garbage Dump

The base of the cliff 70 yards directly beneath the house's southern wall is strewn with bones, feces, and garbage dumped by the inhabitants over the years. These are mostly the bones of large animals, but a few human and giants as well.

Buried in the garbage is a gold Necklace of Fireballs (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers*, p. 30) with three stones left (a giant ate a mage, necklace and all; no one noticed the item when emptying his chamber pot). Just off the base of the cliff is a nest of four foul bats (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons*, p. 23).

*Leo frowned at the giant's spire. "Can't we blow it up or something?"*

*– Rick Riordan,  
The Lost Hero*

## THE HOUSE

A rectangular courtyard-style stone house. (The interior courtyard is not visible unless viewed from above). It is 130' tall, including its foundation. Judging by its windows, it appears to have two full-stories, each about 50'.

It faces north. One door is visible; around the east side is a second door. By day, windows are unshuttered. At night, first-floor windows are shuttered, but the second's are open for ventilation unless raining or snowing (GM's option).

See *Dungeons*, p. 18, for more details on doors, metalworks, and locks, and *Dungeons*, p. 19, for rules about falling.

*Walls:* Outside walls are 8' thick stone; internal are 12" thick wood.

*Ceilings:* 15 yards high.



**Doors:** 12 yards high, six yards wide; as extra-heavy construction but double HP. Front doors are ironbound; internal are wood. Knobs, locks, and bars are three to five yards above the ground and of extra-heavy construction (a thief might need to climb up to the knob before unlocking it).

**Stairs:** Internal stairs are made of stone. Each step is one yard higher than the last; 15 steps reach the next floor.

**Windows:** Five yards above floor level, unglazed with wooden shutters (treat as a heavy wooden door, the latch as a heavy bar). They're open by day, latched at night.

*After breakfast I took a nap,  
like I always do. Eating makes me tired.  
And when I did, Jack stole a bag of gold!  
Humans: nutritious and sneaky.*

*– Eric Braun, **Trust Me,  
Jack's Beanstalk Stinks!***

## FIRST FLOOR

Access is the front door, the windows, and servant's door (on the southeast side).

### 7. Front Door

Usually unlocked after sunrise and locked after sunset. Each titan (except the baby) has a key in a pocket. When an alarm is sounded, someone will bar the door.

### 8. Servant's Door

As above, but opens onto the garden. It's mostly used by thralls and is well-oiled so it can open and close quietly. A key hangs on a post (8' off the ground) beside the door. This is for use by servants when they venture outside to do chores. It's often unlocked an hour or two before dawn as one or the other of the thralls ventures outside into the yard to empty a privy, check on the animals, or some other task.

### 9. Courtyard

In the center of the house is a grass courtyard. It is open to the sky, and offers access and light for the interior rooms. It is used by giant chickens during the day, and for activities such as wrestling or weapon's training.

A well in the center provides the house's water. A giant-size (SM +2) bucket and attached 45' coil of rope are beside the well. Its shaft is 15 yards deep and five yards wide. The bottom four yards are water. When they were little, Freyla and Vorg used it as a wishing well. There are 72 titan-sized silver coins (total \$9,000) glittering in the silt at the bottom.

Inward-facing second floor windows all provide a field of fire into the courtyard.

By day, 2d giant chickens peck around. Also, always check for a wandering encounter (p. 30).

### 10. Main Hall

The hall is dominated by a huge table (four yards high, 10 yards wide, 15 yards long).

Gromm, Vorg, Freyla, and four warband giants sit for supper in the afternoon or early evening, attended by three thralls. At this time, the table is piled high with trenchers of food (mostly eggs and meat – chicken pieces or wild pigs – with a few huge vegetables) and tankards of wine. They remain to talk and socialize for an hour or so afterward before the fireplace.

During the day, Gromm, a pair of warband giants, and an attendant thrall are here: Gromm boasting, drinking, playing a board game, or managing the business of the estate.

At night, the hall is empty except for random thralls passing through or dusting. There's an dragonbone chess set (32 pieces; average 2 lbs. and \$500 each).

### The Dragonskull Fireplace

This is a fireplace made from the skull of a dragon with cunning iron fittings; the dragon's eyes were replaced by two 25-carat rubies. A flame burns behind its jaws.

The fireplace is also magic. By shouting the name "Pyrrakkis," Gromm can make the fireplace open its jaws and spit a 6d burning damage flame jet (15-yard range, attacks with skill 15). (If Gromm dies, whoever speaks the command word and expends 6 FP while touching it becomes its master; Vorg knows how to do this.)

Three yards inside the dragon's jaws, at the back of the mouth, are three iron levers. The right lever is a secret trap door (-3 to Search; roll vs. ST-5 to pull). The central lever manually activates the flame jet, toasting anyone reaching in; it's usually used by giants other than Gromm (with a long poker) to restart the fire. The left lever causes the dragon's jaws to snap shut (5d cutting). A giant can reach a hand in; a human would have to extend his entire arm, torso, and head (likely taking damage to the torso if it closes).

Warband members and titans know the right combination; thralls don't. The secret door opens on a flight of 10 steps to the dungeon below (see pp. 29-30).

### 11. Kitchen

A huge fireplace and brick oven (20' long and 10' wide) are set against the south wall. A big trestle table stands in a corner of the room. Shelves are placed against the walls, holding silver and porcelain plates and cutlery. The pantry contains great jars of pickled cabbage and root vegetables, a huge basket of apples, a bowl of two dozen giant chicken eggs, a pot with 40 lbs. of honey, and a giant, plucked, headless chicken.

The pantry's spice cabinet is the real treasure: 50 lbs. of ginger (\$30,400), 25 lbs. of mustard (\$15,200), 3 lbs. of saffron (\$14,400), 5 lbs. of cinnamon (\$12,000), 5 lbs. of cloves (\$12,000), 20 lbs. of black pepper (\$48,000), and 200 lbs. of salt (\$3,000). (See **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables**, p. 11, for spice effects.)

### 12. Guardroom

Used by the warband and scaled to SM +2 giants, this room has six beds piled with exotic furs (100 square feet of bear and wyvern, \$500, 75 lbs.), chests holding 270 silver coins (titan-sized; \$125 each), and a bench with whetstones, oils, and other tools for caring for the warband's armor and weapons. Five SM +2 spears and three axes hang on rungs 10' off the ground.

During the day, one warband warrior is here, cleaning his weapons (two others are with Gromm, one at the gate, two on patrol). At night, four warband giants (2/3 of the band) are asleep, one stands on guard outside the door (ready to awaken the others in the event of trouble) and one is on patrol (switching with the one on guard duty every few hours).

### 13. Thrall's Quarters

A bleak room with eight simple wooden cots (16' long) with straw mattresses, along with several piles of laundry and a laundry tub.

During the day, one thrall does laundry. At night, six thralls snore here.

### 14. Storage Room

The room is crammed with piles of broken furniture, linens, ceramic pots, carpentry tools, etc. (all scaled SM +2 or +4), two tons of salted meat, giant sacks with a ton of salt (\$30,000), and giant barrels holding 2,400 gallons of ale (\$12,000). This is a good place to hide.

*Jack: I've got an idea.*

*Elmont: What?*

*Jack: I'm gonna wake a sleeping giant.*

*Elmont: Well, that doesn't seem like a good idea.*

*– Jack the Giant Slayer*

## SECOND FLOOR

The south windows overhang the cliff and are often used as urinals. The inner windows look down on the courtyard. In the event of attack, the thralls gather on the stairs leading to the second floor.

### 15. Vorg's Room

A heavy bed dominates the room. The floor is strewn with garments and wyvern and bear pelts (400 square feet of exotic pelts, \$2,000, 300 lbs.). A bench holds a pile of smelly clothes. A fur cloak and an axe hangs from pegs. On a table is a flagon of ale and a hunting horn; nearby is a wooden stool. A chest (locked) contains 70 silver coins. All items and coins are scaled for SM +4. Stuffed monster heads adorn one wall: manticore, giant elk, siege beast, giant ape, and wyvern (20-70 lbs., \$500 each).

Vorg (p. 31) is here at night only about 50% of the time.

Day or night, chained to the bed frame is a pretty female giant, 14' tall, half-dressed in a tattered shift, body bruised and cut. She's Zaki, an uppity giant-thrall (p. 32) forced to endure Vorg's attentions. Zaki is at 2/3 HP due to Vorg's brutality, but her spirit has not broken. She reacts at +5 to any adventurers offering her a chance at freedom or vengeance, or to free her brother Orak (see Room 21, p. 29). The 9' chain is DR 14, HP 22.

### 16. Gromm's Chamber

The eldest titan's bedroom; all furnishings and goods are scaled for SM +4. Gromm (pp. 30-31) sleeps here at night, often with his cat Loki (see *Critters*, p. 30) curled on his bed. By day, he locks the room.

There's a giant wooden bed with an iron frame; a chair, a bedside table, a mammoth-hide rug (800 square feet of exotic furs, \$4,000, 600 lbs.), a large closet, and a chamberpot.

Hanging on the wall above the bed is a 900-square-foot tapestry Freyla spent an entire year weaving for her father as a birthday gift. In brilliant reds and gold threads, it depicts the titan Gromm with a great fire-breathing dragon atop a pile of gold (350 lbs., \$7,000).

On the bedside table are two silver goblets, a dagger, a giant-sized dragonbone comb, and a gold candle holder with a pair of wax candles. On rungs on the wall are a crossed spear and a great axe. A "small" closet (10 × 15 yards!) holds two fur cloaks, a robe, a pair of boots, a pair of slippers, four shirts, a pair of trousers, and a hat with a roc's feather crest. (Also a titan-sized moth with a 6" wingspan. Harmless but scary . . .)

On the floor of the closet is a large chest (100 cubic feet), holding three suits of neatly pressed titan-sized women's dresses and slippers (clothes that belonged to the master's wife, Skraeda) and an ivory scroll case (\$5,000, 10 lbs.). Inside is a map that shows the route to the realm of the giants (p. 29).

### 17. Nursery

This room contains a giant cradle housing Skrom, a 9.5'-long titan baby, his toys, and his exhausted wet nurse Hilda, a 13'-tall giant-thrall who struggles to feed and care for a babe almost as big as she is.

Skrom is awake about half the time (roll randomly); his occasional crying can be heard down the hall. He's big and demanding enough to be dangerous: whether he coos delightedly at someone's antics and claps his chubby hands together, is enthralled by their bard singing a lullaby and goes back to sleep, wails loudly for his missing mother, or grabs a party member to "play" with depends on reaction rolls and the PCs' own actions.

If Skrom is harmed and Gromm learns of it, he will swear to wreak terrible vengeance. (However, taking Skrom hostage or ransom is an effective ploy.)

Freyla spends a few hours helping care for the babe each day (usually at night).

### 18. Freyla's Chamber

This room features a feather bed, a dressing table and wooden chair, a cedar wardrobe, and a work table with a spinning wheel and sewing kit. Furnishings and items are scaled for SM +4. The wardrobe contains a collection of summer tunics, winter dresses with fur trim, two pairs of sandals, a hat, trousers, two shirts, and a scabbard and giant-sized shortsword.

The cabinet is locked (Freyla has the key). The lower shelf (10' off the ground) holds jars of herbal ointments and home remedies (+1 to First Aid and Physician skill) – enough to treat a regiment of 1,000 soldiers (or four titans and their thralls . . .). The upper shelves carry surgical tools and first-aid supplies: scalpels, bone saw, and clean bandages.

Freylla (p. 31) spends most of her time here except when bathing, dining, or with the babe.

Arranged on the window sill are three dolls (painted wood, but with glittering eyes). Each is 5' tall and dressed in exotic, finely made outfits as a sorceress, a princess, and a shieldmaiden, with 10-carat ruby, emerald, or sapphire eyes. Each gem/eye is worth \$4,900. (Their clothes will fit a human.)

## 19. Bathing Room

The room features a wash basin the size of a swimming pool, a chamber pot, a bucket of liquid soap, and rack with homespun towels (all SM +4). A row of wax candles sits on a high shelf next to a two-gallon bottle holding 125 oz. of perfumed oils (\$1,000, 7.8 lbs.).

It is occupied by Gromm in the morning hour, and Freylla before bed, with a thrall attending. Thralls, Vorg, and the warband bathe at the courtyard well. Siege beasts don't bother.

## DUNGEON

Ceilings are six yards high, and floors are damp, rough stone. The dragoncave is 12 yards high. The stair at Room 10 opens into Room 21.

## 20. Stairs

These 10 steps lead to the hidden stairway behind the dragonskull fireplace (see 10. *Main Hall*, p. 27).

## 21. Torture Chamber

A 25'-tall wood post stands in the center of the room. A naked male giant (16' tall) slumps against it, hanging by his wrists, back torn and bloody from a dozen lashes.

Dangling from hooks on the far wall (20' off the ground) are a whip, a branding iron, a poker, and two large knives; scaled to SM +4. There's a pile of torn rags (big enough to hide a human). The victim is giant-thrall Orak, punished for talking back to Vorg and objecting to his sister Zaki's abuse. He's at 1/2 his full HP, and reacts at +4 to anyone offering him freedom, revenge, and a chance to rescue Zaki.

## 22. The Cells

Two of these dank cells hold siege-beast battle thralls; the other is used for prisoners or unruly thralls. All have extra-heavy bars, extra-heavy iron doors, and dirty, lice-infested straw. A single cell can hold several human-size prisoners, who may be kept alive for interrogation . . . or as a supply of live pet food.

## 23. Family Crypt

An 32' x 10' carved wooden coffin holds the corpse of the titaness Skraeda, Gromm's wife, wrapped in a white shroud and buried with some favorite jewelry – a heavy gold ring (2.5 lbs.) on her finger with a 20-carat emerald (\$18,700), a dragonbone-and-silver comb (\$4,000, 1 lb.), and a greatsword-sized invisible dagger (-2 to defend against in melee, -4 if thrown, or *no* defense if the target didn't see you throw it).

## REALM OF THE GIANTS

Gromm hails from a faraway giant kingdom whose titan aristocracy ruled over lesser giants. He backed the wrong claimant in a succession dispute and was forced into exile, eventually wandering into human lands. After terrorizing the borderlands, he faced a foe big enough to challenge him: a dragon.

Gromm was not afraid of dragons. He was big as this dragon. He grabbed it by the tail and whacked it against a cliff. He tore off its wings. He bashed its skull in with his tree-sized club. It died. Gromm took the dragon's hoard – he wanted to wed, and he needed a bride-price.

He returned briefly to the borders of the giant kingdom to woo Skraeda, a giantess nearly as big as he was. He took her back to the dragon's mountain, and built a hold for them. They took other lesser giants to be their thralls and warband, and ruled from a dragonskull throne. Skraeda bore him children, and for a time, he focused on raising them – until she died bearing their third child.

Soon his mourning will be over . . . Gromm may yet return to his raiding ways, perhaps to gather treasure to fund a return to power in his old kingdom, or a quest for a spouse for himself or his children. Does the giant realm still exist in a far corner of the world, or has it collapsed into strife (leaving ruins to explore)?

*Catacombs:* These niches hold the bones of seven siege beasts and 11 giants who died loyally in the titans' service. Each wears a leather collar, and placed on their rib cage is a titan-sized silver coin (\$125): a passage-fee for the ferryman of the dead. (Disloyal thralls are tossed off the cliff or given to the dogs.)

## 24. Dragon Cave

A locked door (extra-heavy iron, extra-heavy lock) seals it; one of the three siege beast is always placed on guard here, ordered to let only titans pass. The key is on Gromm's key ring. In the cave lies the headless, broken skeleton of a great winged creature – a 60' dragon. It sprawls amid a few small piles of glittering gold and silver treasure.

Besides the skull, many ribs and two legs are gone, mute testimony to decades of salvage by the titans, who made dragonbone tools, furnishings, and weapons. There's still half a ton of dragonbone for adventurers to hack off (\$25/lb. untreated) and haul it away.

The coins are all human-scale rather than giant coins, and are the remnants of the dragon's hoard. Most interesting items (gems, large jewelry, magic weapons) were taken by Gromm's back to the titan city and sold; this is the remnant he couldn't carry. The current horde consists of 2,160 gold pieces (each \$80; total 8.64 lbs., \$172,800), 32,748 silver pieces (each \$4; total 131 lbs., \$130,992), 72,000 coppers (each \$1; total 1,152 lbs., \$72,000), three fine-quality broadswords, a very fine meteoric iron shortsword, six steel pot helmets, 17 ordinary shortswords, one suit of elven mail (chainmail), three plate cuirasses (one dwarven with DR +2), and 20 lbs. of silver and electrum plates, torcs, and bracelets (worth \$40,000).



There is also an inactive human-sized wind-up bronze spider (300 lbs., worth \$1d × 30 as scrap; see *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1*); close examination (-5 to spot) reveals a keyhole. Winding it up with the proper key (lost amid the gold; roll Search-8 to find every hour) takes 20 minutes. This allows the user to activate the spider, which obeys whomever is holding the key for one hour before it winds down again.

The south wall is a rubble pile – a blocked cave mouth leading out the mountainside.

## ENCOUNTERS

*The wooden chest was the size of a wagon, and Gilly had used a crowbar to pick the lock, then struggled mightily to lift its heavy lid. It was filled with gold pieces, each the size of saucers! She climbed inside it, and greedily began stuffing as many of heavy coins as she could lift into her pack when an ear-splitting meow froze her blood.*

*A cat? The thief stood on tiptoe and peered over the chest's rim. It was a black house cat – the size of a tiger – eying her like she was a mouse. Gilly slammed the chest's lid shut. As she hid inside, she heard it clawing at the wood . . .*

– Caedmon the Bard, fragment of “Gilly’s Tale”

If the party makes a fast raid into the house, the GM may wish to just use the fixed encounters. If they remain for an extended period sneaking about, check for random encounters. Roll 1d every 10 minutes by day, or hourly at night. In daytime, also roll immediately upon entering a room. On a roll of 6 (or a 5-6 in high-traffic area), someone is there. High traffic areas are the central courtyard, stairway, great hall, kitchens, in or outside the servant’s door, and vegetable garden. Use the tables below to determine what was encountered; if they’re already accounted for, treat as no encounter.

### Compound Table

Roll 1d; modifiers: +2 at night; -1 within five yards of hive.

Roll	Compound Encounter
0	3-hex swarm of giant bees
1	1-hex swarm of giant bees
2	Titan (Vorg, Freyla, or Gromm) and warband giant
3	Wyvern (raiding the livestock)
4	Thrall giant (doing chores)
5	1-2 warband giants
6	Loki the cat
7+	2d-1 giant rats

### House Table

Roll 1d; modifiers: +1 at night; +1 on second floor.

Roll	House Encounter
1	1d giant chickens
2	2d-1 giant rats
3	Thrall giant
4	Warband giant
5	Loki the cat
6+	Titan (Vorg, Freyla, or Gromm)

## Dungeon Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Dungeon Encounter
1	One giant chicken
2	Thrall giant
3	Warband giant and siege beast
4	4d giant rats
5	1-2 siege beasts
6	Titan (Vorg or Gromm) plus 1-2 warband giants

*Whether they are  
giants or elves or dwarves,  
or whatever they are,  
they’re still human . . .*

– George R.R. Martin

## Critters

Titan-sized domestic animals and plants are stock imported from the giant kingdom (plus a few pests).

*Giant Rats:* See *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons*, p. 23.

*Siege Beasts:* The drooling idiot cousins of giants, three of these hulking brutes serve as assaulters, guards, and laborers; see *Dungeons*, p. 23.

*Loki:* Use trigger stats (*Dungeons*, p. 26) but with only one head and Domestic Animal instead of Wild Animal . . . unless the GM wants to add some extra excitement. Then make Loki a giant three-headed tabby cat.

## Giant Chickens

These chickens are 7.5’ tall and quite aggressive. More than a few intruders have been pecked to death!

<b>ST:</b> 15	<b>HP:</b> 60	<b>Speed:</b> 5.00
<b>DX:</b> 10	<b>Will:</b> 13	<b>Move:</b> 15
<b>IQ:</b> 2	<b>Per:</b> 10	
<b>HT:</b> 10	<b>FP:</b> 10	<b>SM:</b> +1
<b>Dodge:</b> 8	<b>Parry:</b> N/A	<b>DR:</b> 1

**Beak (10):** 1d pi+. Reach C.

**Traits:** Domestic Animal; No Fine Manipulators; Peripheral Vision; Sharp Beak.

**Skills:** None.

**Notes:** 300-700 lbs.; sell for \$625 each.

## Gromm Wyrmslayer

The aged titan patriarch. A 30’ man with a long gray beard that reaches half way down his chest. He is proud, but getting on in years; his armor no longer fits, and he carries a walking stick instead of a sword. But he is not to be crossed! All fear him. He cares for his family, but considers giants mere thralls and humans as insects.

His beloved wife Skraeda, matriarch of the house, died in childbirth a month ago, an unexpected late-in-life pregnancy that cost her life. Without her about to manage things, Gromm has become grim and brooding, his son Vorg has taken to abusing the thralls (more than usual), and Freyla spends much of her time threatening to leave to see the world instead of caring for the baby. Once the mourning period is over, Gromm plans to unleash Vorg and his warband to ravage more human villages and perhaps find a bride.

**ST:** 55                    **HP:** 60                    **Speed:** 5.50  
**DX:** 12                   **Will:** 13                   **Move:** 6  
**IQ:** 12                   **Per:** 11  
**HT:** 10                   **FP:** 10                   **SM:** +4  
**Dodge:** 9                   **Parry:** 12                   **DR:** 2 (4 on skull)

**Punch (16):** 6d+5 crushing. Reach C-3.  
**Trample (16):** 6d crushing. Reach C-4.  
**Walking Stick (15):** 8d+7 crushing. Reach 3-6.

**Traits:** Acute Taste and Smell 2; Ally Group (Warband); Combat Reflexes; Fearlessness 2; Magic Resistance 3; Overweight; Sense of Duty (Family).

**Skills:** Animal Handling-11; Armoury-12; Brawling-16; Broadsword-16; Carpentry-12; Climbing-12; Crossbow-12; Detect Lies-12; Engineer (Civil)-12; Farming-11; First Aid-12; Leadership-13; Intimidation-14; Spear-12; Survival-11; Tactics-11; Tracking-14; Wrestling-13.

**Class:** Mundane.

**Equipment:** Belt pouch holds door key (2.5 lbs.) and key to dragon cave, tinderbox, and 20 titan-sized gold coins, and a gold toothpick (0.05 lb., \$1,000); giant spectacles that can See Invisible.

## Vorg

A muscular 31'-tall warrior, the loyal, brutal son leads the warband. He wears his father's dragonhide leather armor, a dragon-horned pot helm, and furs. He enjoys hunting animals or monsters and abusing thralls and prisoners.

If the house is under attack, Vorg will take command, rallying 2/3 of the warband to defend the house, but leaving a pair of guards to protect his father, Freyla, and the babe, urging them to stay upstairs, with the thralls as a living shield at the landings.

**ST:** 60                    **HP:** 60                    **Speed:** 6.00  
**DX:** 12                   **Will:** 13                   **Move:** 11  
**IQ:** 10                   **Per:** 13  
**HT:** 12                   **FP:** 11                   **SM:** +4  
**Dodge:** 9                   **Parry:** 11                   **DR:** 2 (DR 8 torso, skull, and groin)

**Punch (14):** 7d+5 crushing. Reach C-3.  
**Spear (14):** 7d+9 impaling. Reach 3-6. (+5 Damage, +3 Reach if used two-handed.)  
**Trample (14):** 7d-1 crushing. Reach C.

**Traits:** Acute Taste and Smell 3, Ally Group (Warband); Bully; Danger Sense; Fearlessness 2; Sense of Duty (kin); Sadism (12).

**Skills:** Animal Handling-12; Axe/Mace-13; Brawling-14; Leadership-10; Intimidation-13; Spear-15; Thrown Weapon (Spear)-14; Tracking-14; Wrestling-13.

**Class:** Mundane.

**Equipment:** Dragonhide leather armor (70 lbs., DR 6); SM +4 spear and SM+4 shortsword. Belt pouch holds a door key (2.5 lbs.) and 20 silver and 12 gold titan-sized coins.

## Freyla

Gromm's daughter is a 25'-tall girl of the equivalent to 14 human years (actually 56). She wears a lace-trimmed, black mourning dress; a veil; a belt with a purse and a silver buckle;

a fur-trimmed hooded cloak (when outside); and sandals. Her curly brown hair reaches to her waist.

Freyla enjoys making things: clothes, dolls, etc. She also has some medical training (having studied under her mother in this role). She is interested in the outside world and is the most likely to talk to a human adventurer.

**ST:** 40                    **HP:** 40                    **Speed:** 6.00  
**DX:** 13                   **Will:** 13                   **Move:** 6  
**IQ:** 13                   **Per:** 13  
**HT:** 11                   **FP:** 11                   **SM:** +4  
**Dodge:** 9                   **Parry:** 9                   **DR:** 2 (4 on skull)

**Dagger (Hair Pins) (12):** 4d+3 impaling. Reach 1-4.  
**Trample (13):** 4d+1 impaling. Reach C.

**Traits:** Acute Taste and Smell 3; Curious (12); Night Vision 2.

**Skills:** Artist (Woodworking)-13; Artist (Painting)-12; Diagnosis-12; First Aid-13; Herb Lore-12; Housekeeping-13; Knife-13; Leadership-12; Leatherworking-13; Intimidation-13; Naturalist-12; Observation-13; Pharmacy (Herbal)-11; Sewing-14; Surgery-11.

**Class:** Mundane.

**Equipment:** Purse holds a door key and 50 silver and 12 gold titan-sized coins, and a first aid kit. Freyla wears two ruby earrings (\$20,000). Her silver-trimmed belt buckle is 12 lbs., \$600.

## SCALING ISSUES

*The Titan's House* provides significant challenges for adventurers due to the titan-sized scale of the house and its furnishings and its SM +2 to +4 enemies. Titan-sized silver (\$125) and gold (\$2,500) coins each weigh 0.125 lbs.

*Combat Writ Large* in *Pyramid* #3/77: *Combat* provides a highly useful summary of all **GURPS** rules for fighting high-SM foes, plus optional rules to add extra detail.

Items sitting atop titan-scaled tables, shelves, beds, etc. will be at least 12' off the ground, and they might be difficult to spot from within that distance from ground level.

### Scaling Items

SM +4 items in the Titan's House are scaled for the titans' average ST 50-52, having about 27× normal weight (use 20× for clothing or armor) and 2.9 × HP.

SM +2 items are scaled for their giant-thralls, and are about 6× normal weight (use 5× for armor or clothing) and 1.85 × HP.

## Baby Skrom

A 9.5'-long titan infant in a diaper.

**ST:** 19                    **HP:** 19                    **Speed:** 4.25  
**DX:** 7                    **Will:** 10                   **Move:** 4  
**IQ:** 7                    **Per:** 7  
**HT:** 10                   **FP:** 10                   **SM:** +1

**Dodge:** 8

**Parry:** 12

**DR:** 2 (4 on skull)

**Bite (7):** 2d-2 crushing. Reach C.

**Punch (7):** 2d-2 crushing. Reach C, 1.

**Traits:** Acute Taste and Smell 3; Confused (12); Light Sleeper; Penetrating Call.

**Class:** Mundane.

**Notes:** Can't walk yet, but can crawl.

## Warband Giant

When Gromm built his house, he enslaved a local clan of 12'-tall mountain giants. The strongest become his warriors; the rest, his thralls. They've served him for a generation. The six giants in the warband wear leather armor, furs, pot helmets, and heavy boots.

**ST:** 27

**HP:** 27

**Speed:** 6.00

**DX:** 12

**Will:** 10

**Move:** 6

**IQ:** 10

**Per:** 11

**Weight:** 2,000 lbs.

**HT:** 12

**FP:** 12

**SM:** +2

**Dodge:** 8

**Parry:** 10

**DR:** 1 (7 on skull,  
3 on torso, groin, feet)

**Axe (14):** 5d+6 cutting. Reach 2, 3.

**Punch (14):** 3d+1 crushing. Reach C, 1.

**Spear (14):** 3d+4 impaling. Reach 2, 3. (+3 Damage, +2 Reach if used two-handed.)

**Trample (13):** 3d-1 crushing. Reach C.

**Traits:** Acute Taste and Smell 3; Bad Temper (12); Extended Lifespan 2.

**Skills:** Brawling-14; Axe-14; Farming-10; Observation-12; Spear-14; Thrown Weapon (Spear)-12; Survival-11; Tracking-13.

**Class:** Mundane.

**Equipment:** Armed with a SM +2 axe and spear; belt pouch holds 1d silver coins (titan-sized).

## Giant-Thralls

Seven mountain giants (four males and four females aged 14-70 years) serve as thralls. They'll fight to defend themselves or if under the eyes of the titans. Two of the eight are currently being punished; the others work by day in the compound or house.

**ST:** 25

**HP:** 25

**Speed:** 5.00

**DX:** 10

**Will:** 10

**Move:** 5

**IQ:** 10

**Per:** 10

**Weight:** 1,800 lbs.

**HT:** 10

**FP:** 10

**SM:** +2

**Dodge:** 8

**Parry:** N/A

**DR:** 1 (3 on skull)

**Punch (11):** 2d+1 crushing. Reach C, 1.

**Broom (8):** 5d crushing. Reach 2, 3.

**Trample (10):** 2d+2 crushing. Reach C.

**Traits:** Penetrating Voice.

**Skills:** Brawling-11; Farming-12; Gardening-12; Housekeeping-12.

**Class:** Mundane.

**Equipment:** Armed with cleaning implements; wears an iron slave collar.

**Note:** Broom wielded with DX-based Housekeeping at -4.

## ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

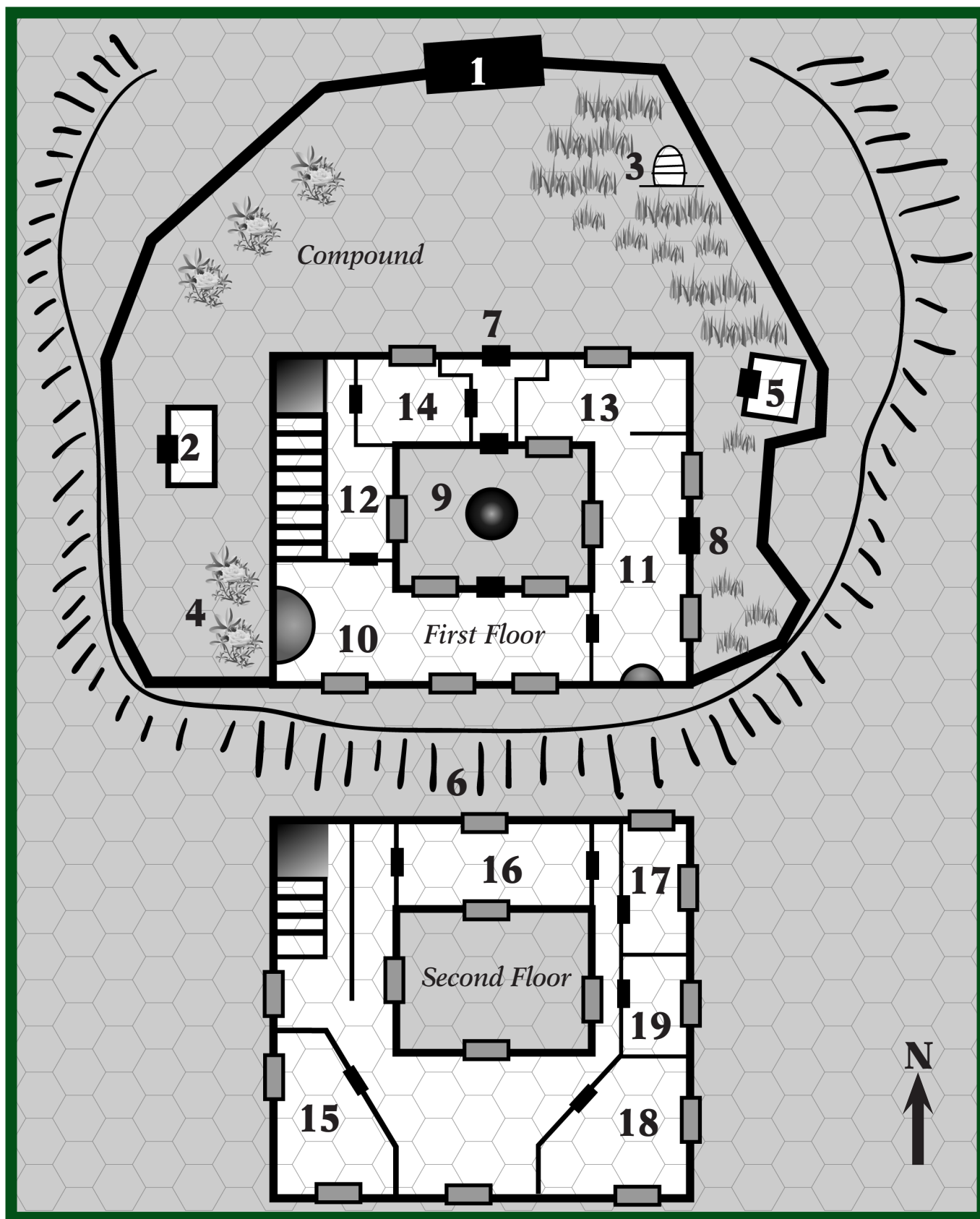
David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. An avid science-fiction fan, he began roleplaying in junior high with the newly released *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*. Upon graduating from university, he decided to become a game designer. Since then, David has written over 70 roleplaying game books, and he has worked as a staff writer, editor, and line developer for Steve Jackson Games and Guardians of Order. He is best known for creating *Transhuman Space*, co-authoring the *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* anime RPG, and writing countless *GURPS* books, including the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*, *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, and the *GURPS Spaceships* series.

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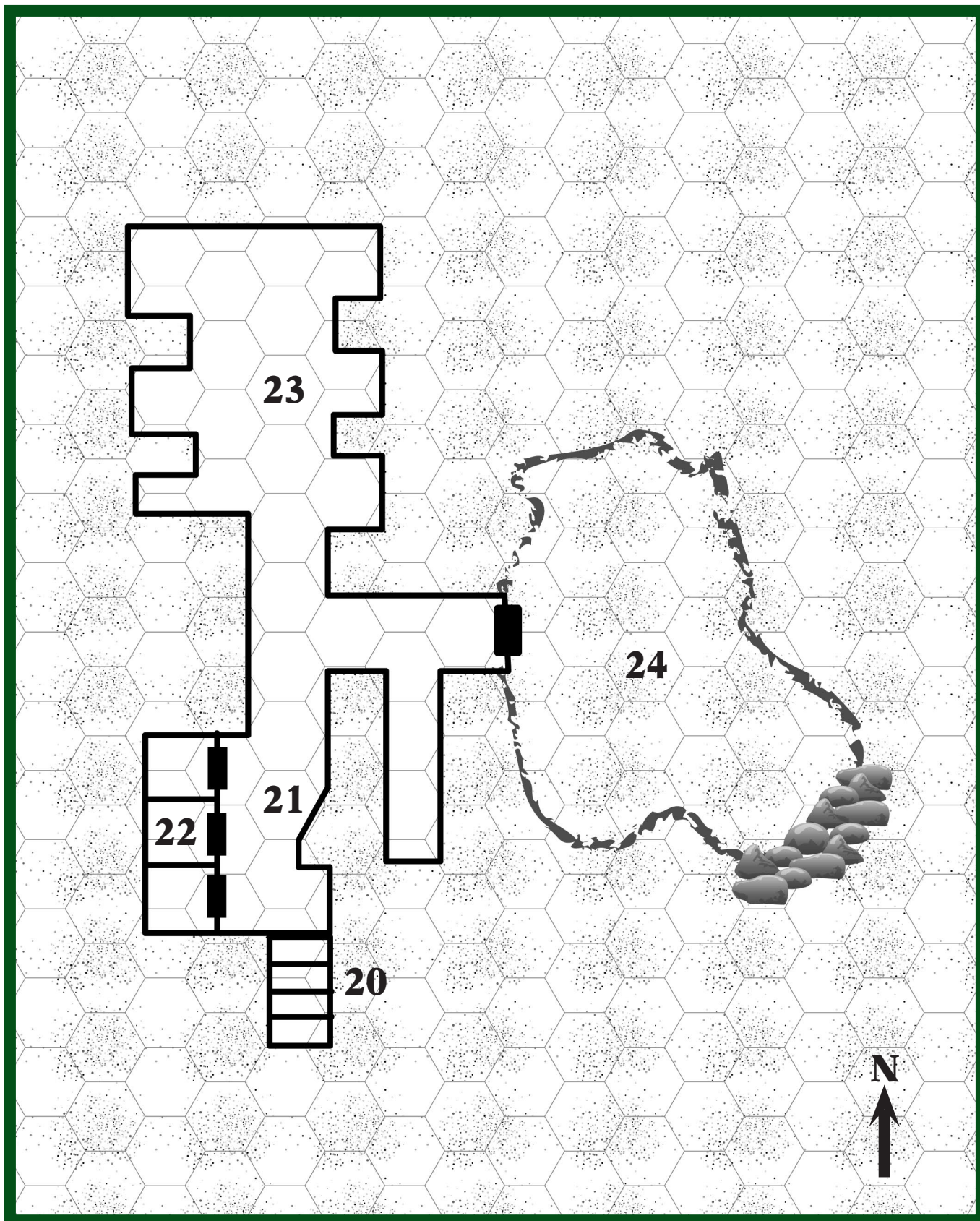
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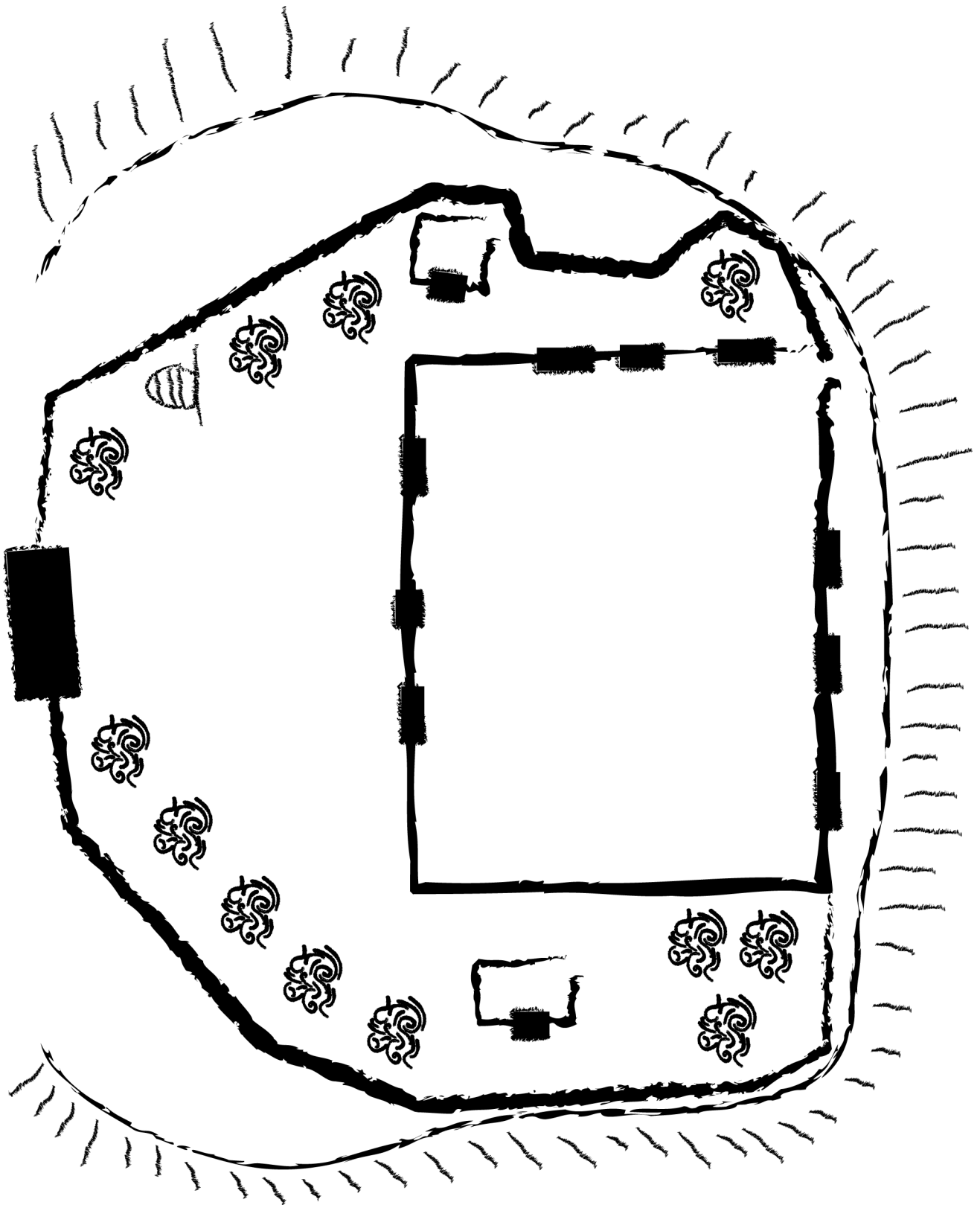
## MAPS OF THE HOUSE

Scale: 1 hex = 5 yards



## MAP OF THE DUNGEON

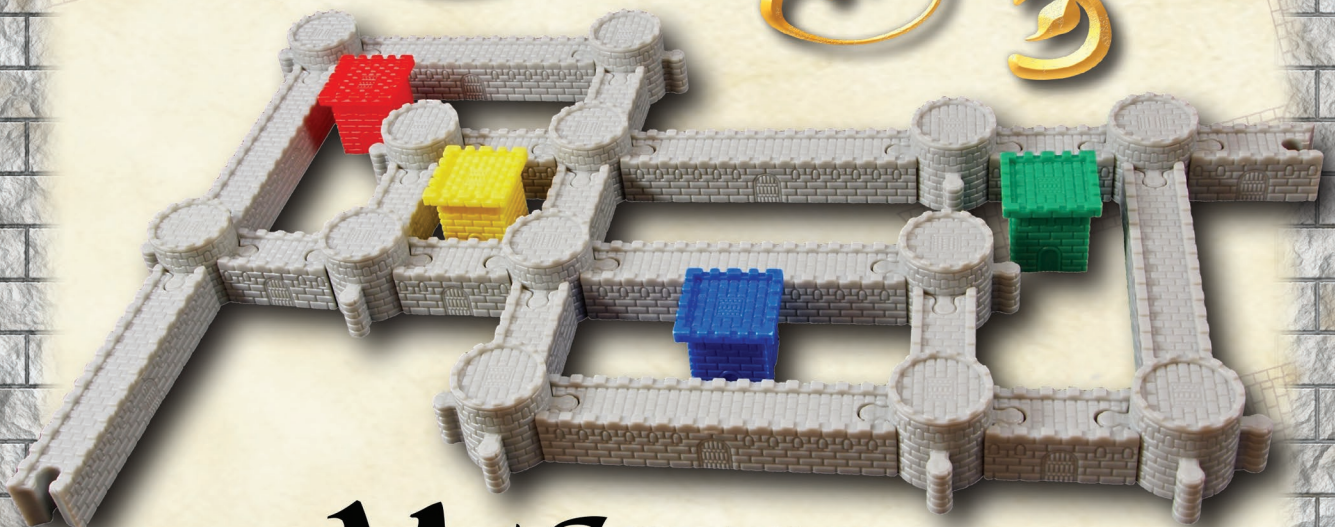
Scale: 1 hex = 5 yards



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# RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

## THE SECRET OF THE EXPLORERS

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

One of the core assumptions of a dungeon-crawling game is that the world generally *wants* you to go poking around tombs (or, at least, doesn't object overly much when you do so). That's a pretty big assumption. Most parts of the modern world don't take too kindly to folks poking around their historic caves, abandoned temples, or ancient tombs. More-modern structures would get even a bigger admonition from authorities; "I was looking for treasure" is not a good excuse when you're caught making tunnels in the town's aquifer.

When you're dealing with crypts containing Things Man Was Not Meant to Know (or, at least, Critters Who Get Angry and Rampage Across the Countryside When Adventurers Poke Around), it's easy to envision a campaign where the heroes are actively hunted for being . . . well, *heroes*.

So let's do that.

### THE PREMISE

On this world, there is an uneasy *détente* between monsters and the forces of humanity: You leave us alone (for the most part), and we'll leave you alone (again, for the most part). This is especially true for dungeons, crypts, and the like; the forces of darkness claim those areas as theirs, and – in return – they do what they can to keep incursions to the surface world to a minimum.

The heroes are involved with an organization that threatens that relative balance.

### THE SECRET

The adventurers are part of a loosely affiliated group called the Explorers. Members of the Explorers do exactly what heroes do in other dungeon-crawl settings: kick down doors, kill monsters, and take loot.

However, they need to do so as clandestinely as possible, lest they arouse the suspicion and anger of the Ruler (or Rulers) of the various kingdoms and realms. The powers that be of the mortal world deploy investigative teams to roam the lands, keeping busybodies from disturbing all those wonderful dungeons.

For the most part, the authorities are *right*. If the heroes aren't cautious, their efforts at stirring up trouble *will* cause the forces of darkness to seek revenge on the sunlit world. So Explorers need to be very careful to make sure they work as discreetly as possible.

Explorers members know each other via code phrases and other innocuous signs. They primarily aid each other with leads on new places to adventure, rumors and tips that might be unavailable elsewhere, and equipment helpful for adventures that would be difficult to acquire legally.

As some ideas for how such a campaign would be different from a standard *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* series . . .

### TO THE LIBRARY!

In an Explorers campaign, finding adventures is an adventure itself. No longer will old people be waiting in taverns passing out maps. Each encounter is a game of cloak and dagger to track down leads, investigate whispered rumors, and stay one step ahead of authorities. This can result in many-hours in libraries or other information sources (which can be abstracted away with dice rolling if bookhound-type games aren't the players' style). These intel explorations can turn into an adventure of its own, when the heroes have to explain *why* they're asking about things that ought to be left alone. Which leads to . . .

### I CAN EXPLAIN THIS MAP, OFFICER . . .

Social elements become much more important. Explorers need to talk their way out of trouble, and cover stories can be vital, when strange out-of-towners seek provisions and weapon repairs. The wrong answer can get someone arrested!

Cover stories involving nobles are likely popular. An actual title of nobility would be invaluable, since it would give the titled someone plausible deniability to roam the lands (along with a retinue). However, clever players are likely to come up with their own ideas, and fast-talking heroes may just not bother to devise any alibi until it becomes necessary.

## No SURVIVORS!

To give the heroes a chance at maintaining their secrecy, it should be assumed that residents of various dungeons don't talk to each other much. The détente may have been agreed to broadly decades or even generations ago, but the specifics aren't kept up much on the monster side.

However, they're not stupid; if escaping goblins from the Temple of Dread make their way to the Tombs of Despair with tales of sword-swinging heroes wiping out most of them, the denizens of the Tombs are likely to take their revenge on an unsuspecting surface world.

Thus, most adventures will see Explorers attempting to completely resolve the locale they've chosen . . . or at least leaving it in a position where the remaining darkness-dwellers don't know what hit them. This means the heroes might push themselves a bit farther than they might be comfortable with to ensure they finish what they started. It might also mean that if the Explorers realize they've bitten off more than they can chew, they may need to do something tricky or creative to either seal off the unresolved areas until the group can return, or ensure they can escape with humanity's cover story intact. It's quite possible the heroes might resort to trickery or *Ocean's Eleven*-style plots to ensure their best

chances at success. A standard dungeon-crawl might more closely resemble a cyberpunk thriller, with investigation, sneaking, contingency plans, etc.

## LOTS WITHIN PLOTS . . .

It's entirely possible that the forces of darkness are attempting the same evil plots they would in a more standard *Dungeon Fantasy* game . . . they're just being more subtle about it. Thus instead of a goblin horde kidnapping the noble's prince for some nefarious ritual, he just . . . *disappears* one day. The Explorers use their investigative mojo to uncover the truth – he's been taken to Ye Nearby Evil Temple – but they can't convince the authorities of this, so they need to take matters into their own hands. In this way, a basic "rescue the prince" plot becomes at least two stories: a standard dungeon crawl preceded by a tense espionage mystery.

Provided that an adventure doesn't have earth-shattering consequences – "With this artifact, Lord Demonik will conquer the world!" – many typical dungeon-fantasy tropes and adventure starters work just fine with in an Explorers campaign.

## . . . WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

In a long-enough campaign, even the earth-shattering plots become possible. All you need is for the forces of darkness to begin slowly but surely getting their act together. Perhaps they agreed to the original détente because they knew that the Grand Astral Convergence would augment their power in 1,000 years . . . and that was 997 years ago. Maybe they're waiting for one exceptional, terrifying leader to unite them all. Or, it's quite possible that the actions of the Explorers will eventually cause the final conflict between monsters and civilization.

In the shadow-realm before all hell breaks loose, it's quite possible for the heroes to start making allies in the upper echelons of mortal power. Not *all* royals are clueless, and enough strange happenings and near-misses may convince them to ally themselves with the Explorers. That's likely to just *increase* tensions for the heroes. Adventures are thus possible where the Explorers need to navigate the halls of power trying to figure out who they can trust . . . and even if they win the support of nobility, they'd still likely be kept secret from the rank-and-file peasantry (since "you're about to be pawns in a bloody clash between good and evil" isn't likely to play well to the local shopkeepers).

## ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hogshead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for over 10 years; during that time, he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son.

## THE PENALTIES OF FAILURE

Heroes (and players) may wonder what would be so bad if they just went about dungeon-crawling without any particular concern over secrecy. At a minimum, the consequences should be serious enough to remind the world why the détente exists in the first place. Some ideas:

- The remaining monsters destroy a nearby town, killing or seriously harming all its residents and burning most (or all) of it to the ground.
- A powerful monster who had been content to remain within his lair suddenly demands tribute from the town, explaining in detail why he is doing so (and no doubt enraging folks against the heroes).
- Escaping creatures alert a nearby dungeon or crypt what the heroes are up to, and *that* locale's denizens attack *their* nearby civilized outposts.

Consequences can escalate further, depending on how much of a mess of things the heroes make it. Of course, it's presumed that the *players* would only be participating in such a campaign if they thought they'd have fun with the core premise.

## EXPLORER

Those who sign up as an Explorer can take the following 0-point lens.

**Advantages:** Patron (Explorers; 9 or less; Accessibility, Cannot provide overt help, -20%; Equipment, Up to starting wealth, +50%) [20].

**Disadvantages:** Enemies (King's Men and Investigators; 6 or less) [-10]; Sense of Duty (Explorers) [-10].



# SHORT BURSTS

## FIVE BEST PLACES TO NEARLY GET KILLED BEFORE YOU DIE!

BY MATT RIGGSBY

*The next edition of **Car Wars** is coming! To help prepare, **Pyramid** proudly presents this vignette, spotlighting one aspect of its bold new world. Visit [carwars.sjgames.com](http://carwars.sjgames.com) to keep abreast of the latest developments!*

\* \* \*

Every kid dreams about a victory lap under the T-Dome, but for every big-money venue, there's a dozen only the locals know about. Mixed in with the old mall parking lots, there are a real few gems. Here are five great overlooked autoduel arenas around North America.

### *Big Swede Arena (Emeryville, CA)*

Americans associate San Francisco with Bayview Park, but Californians know the best new talent is found behind the Oakland dikes. This converted parking garage combines low clearances, tight turns, and challenging ramps. The Swedish yeastballs in the spectators' pub come in a sauce only a local could love, but the beer is outstanding.

### *Glamorgan Yards (Stark County, OH)*

What do you get when you add enthusiastic amateurs to a fake Scottish castle and former outlaw stronghold? One of the

wildest autodueling arenas in the Upper Midwest. Glamorgan was the estate of an eccentric tycoon, then a base for local road gangs, and now a venue for new duelists from Ohio and Western Pennsylvania. Grassy earthen berms replace fabbed concrete for a rustic look, and the castle is the centerpiece of a spectator venue with never-ending charm.

### *Homestead Proving Grounds (Amherst, MA)*

Massachusetts has the fewest pro autodueling venues per capita of any state, but its amateur fighting grounds are top-notch. The entryway's bronze statue of Death's chariot is just the first clue to an impressive, well-designed arena with tricky diagonal sets of obstacles requiring quick reflexes and sharp maneuvers.

### *PolyPark (Troy, NY)*

The PolyPark Drum is the core of a shopping and recreation district centered on Congress St. There are arenas with more exciting terrain, but the spectator experience is among the best. The comfortable, sharply raked seats provide unblocked views; Prisma-Panamerican, headquartered in neighboring Albany, uses the arena safety glass as a showplace for its armored transparencies; and some of the nearby gourmet cafes regularly offer wheat bread!

### *Washington Slope Arena (Pittsburgh, PA)*

Reclaimed from an old working-class neighborhood, "the Slope" is a testament to a vibrant community of amateur duelists with ties to the city's mutant community. The chains and exposed girders of the arena's architecture call back to the city's industrial past, and the duelist cooperative operating it make a point to schedule newcomer events opposite pro events across the river at Heinz Dueltrack.

### *About the Author*

Matt Riggsby has written over 120 articles and supplements for Steve Jackson Games.



## ABOUT *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by email: [info@sjgames.com](mailto:info@sjgames.com). Resources include:

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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

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