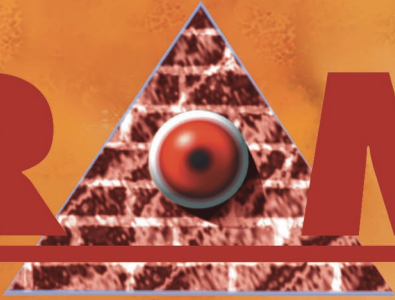


# PYRAMID<sup>®</sup>



Issue 3/107 September '17

## MONSTER HUNTERS III

### THE DWYRM

by David L. Pulver

### BORN TO BE WILD

by Christopher R. Rice

### AN IRREGULAR SORT OF TERROR

by J. Edward Tremlett

### YOUNG HUNTERS

by Liam Duncan



# STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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# CONTENTS

FROM THE EDITOR . . . . .	3
BORN TO BE WILD. . . . .	4
<i>by Christopher R. Rice</i>	
AN IRREGULAR SORT OF TERROR . . . . .	15
<i>by J. Edward Tremlett</i>	
EIDETIC MEMORY: THE DWYRM . . . . .	22
<i>by David L. Pulver</i>	
YOUNG HUNTERS . . . . .	29
<i>by Liam Duncan</i>	
RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE:	
THE IMPORTANCE OF STATIC . . . . .	35
<i>by Steven Marsh, Pyramid Editor</i>	
ABOUT GURPS . . . . .	37

## 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

*Abrar Ajmal*

*And some settings defy this split completely,  
happily blending the supernatural with  
the scientific for a world in which reality hackers  
use computer-assisted spellcasting to defeat aliens,  
vampires, demons, and plagues from outer space!*

– **GURPS Monster Hunters 5:**  
**Applied Xenology**

# IN THIS ISSUE

All that stands between sinister sanity-shattering forces skulking in the shadows and the unaware masses of humanity are a small group of champions. Maybe – just maybe – it'll be enough. This month's *Pyramid* expands the world of **GURPS Monster Hunters**, with new options and opponents for those who risk their lives to save the world.

To make competent, confident heroes quickly, you need to tap the possibility of wildcard skills; Christopher R. Rice – co-author of *Dungeon Fantasy Traps* – shares his tips for designing champions that are *Born to Be Wild*. Utilize ideas for making wildcard skills feel extra special, don over 20 new wildcard skills – including Mastermind!, Teamwork!, and Criminal! – and unlock the options of wildcard versions of techniques, powers, perks, and magical skills.

Was that the wind . . . or a ghost? Discover the supernatural secrets behind *An Irregular Sort of Terror*. Long-time *Pyramid* contributor J. Edward Tremlett offers insight into three new types of spirit-like creatures. You'll also learn about well over a dozen new kinds of ghostly **GURPS** abilities perfect for any kind of spirit.

When music from our plane of existence attracts an inter-dimensional entity, a cryptid and an urban legend are born; will you survive your encounter against *The Dwyrm*? In this month's *Eidetic Memory*, your cryptozoological guide (and **GURPS Psi-Tech** author) David L. Pulver suggests typical sightings along with those who might be searching for them. Discover what the horrific effects of these creatures are on humans, including **GURPS** stats for both the entity and its transformed host.

Pursuing a primary education is challenging enough . . . but it gets even more perilous when monsters prowl the schoolyard. When the adults don't know or don't care about the truth, *Young Hunters* need to save the world. Add new lenses and traits to define your youngsters using **GURPS Monster Hunters 1: Champions**, discover adventure ideas, and learn how to include the possibilities of **GURPS Social Engineering: Back to School** in your *Monster Hunters* campaign.

In this month's Random Thought Table, you'll discover how to keep mysteries more mysterious by adding some well-placed static. Whether you're looking for new threats or new ways to augment champions who face those dangers, this month's *Pyramid* is sure to make the fight against darkness more exciting than ever before!

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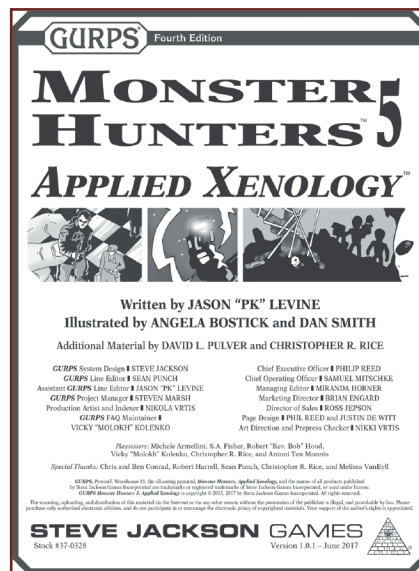
# FROM THE EDITOR

## TAKE ARMS AGAINST A SEA OF TROUBLES, AND BY OPPOSING WASTE THEM

At their core, nearly all roleplaying games focus around action. I don't mean the "using a makeshift hang glider to chase after a burning jeep absconding with the Declaration of Independence" kind of action (although that's really cool), but in the sense of "doing stuff." Tales that don't focus on heroic agency are just . . . well, *stories*, at best, with the GM narrating what happens around the PCs. It's taking that description of the world and acting with it – or *against* it – that makes RPGs really special.

This brings us to **GURPS Monster Hunters**. As I type these words, we near the Halloween season, a time of year where the shadows seem extra murky and danger lurks in the periphery of our vision and the edges of our weather. (That's if you're in the Northern Hemisphere. If you're in Australia, I'd wager the weather's nice. That seems like a safe bet.) What sets **Monster Hunters** aside from your standard horror stories is that the heroes are expecting – and expected – to step up against the forces of darkness and kick their butts.

This dichotomy – between a genre (horror) that usually epitomizes hopelessness, and the guns-a-blazing action that makes the heroes heroic – gives **Monster Hunters** arguably the widest range out of the box of any of the ready-built genres tackled in recent years by **GURPS**. You can steer fairly close to horror – traditional or even cosmic (pp. 22-28) – or just dress up the campaign in the trappings



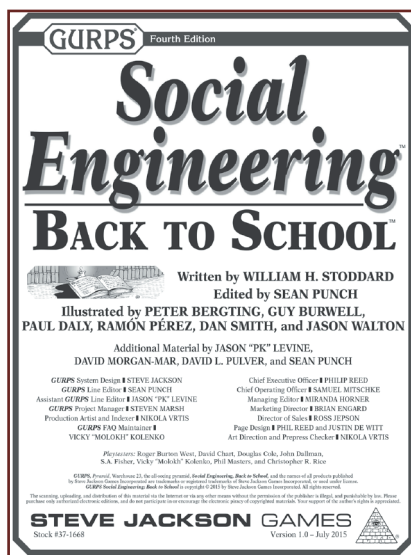
of horror defanged as "modern-day dungeon fantasy, but with vampires instead of goblins."

So as you're planning your next adventure or campaign, think about action and reaction from the PCs' point of view. Do you want them to go through the ringer reactively like many horror-movie heroes, perhaps with significant odds of death? Or do you want the heroes to emphasize action, putting their capacities and capabilities

to the forefront of the campaign? Depending on the players' interest, you can even mix it up from adventure to adventure; it can emphasize the horrific potential of the scary bits to have the previously super-effective heroes be seemingly powerless in the face of a new threat or adversary.

## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

You, gentle reader, also have great agency! What do your oracles say about this issue? Is it a monstrous hit, or do you wish something would skulk back to the shadows? (And do you have any thoughts on the first full **GURPS Monster Hunters** support in a while?) Let us know, privately via [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com), or by joining the public band of heroes online at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).



Additional Material: Sean Punch

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# BORN TO BE WILD

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

*GURPS Monster Hunters* has amazing wildcard skills to let monster hunters do their job. But like new powers, you can never have enough new wildcard skills. This article details numerous common wildcard skills, and broadening

their application with some rules from *GURPS Power-Ups 7: Wildcards*. It also takes a look at using a “wild” approach for powers, perks, and techniques.

## TAMING THE WILD SKILL

Wildcard skills replace the standard skills in the *Basic Set*, which become *tasks* that can be accomplished using wildcards. Wildcards also give hyper-competency bonuses (*GURPS Monster Hunters 1: Champions*, pp. 28-29, and *Power-Ups 7*, pp. 12-13) based on the amount of points spent on them. They may grant bonuses elsewhere, such as to damage or reaction rolls.

Wildcard skills thus cost more than ordinary skills, but have greater scope. In *Monster Hunters* campaigns, it's especially appropriate to use some of the optional rules from

*Wildcard skills have greater cost, but for a greater scope.*

*Power-Ups 7*, especially *Wild Criticals* (*Power-Ups 7*, p. 26) and *Wildcard Benefits* (*Power-Ups 7*, pp. 10-14).

Use the chart below to determine costs and bonuses of wildcard skills.

### USING WILDCARDS TOGETHER

If several wildcards can stand in for a skill for the task at hand, use the wildcard with the *highest* full bonus and add the half bonus of any wildcard(s) which include the skill being used.

### Wildcard Skill Table

*Wildcard Level:* The base relative skill level.

*Wildcard Cost:* The number of character points required to buy the wildcard skill at a particular level.

*Skill Roll:* The target to roll against for a task. “Attribute” means the usual controlling attribute for the skill governing that task. For instance, somebody with a wildcard at +1 might roll versus DX+1 for Stealth or IQ+1 for Shadowing. Block and Parry are  $3 + [(DX + \text{wildcard level})/2]$ .

*Wildcard Points:* As per the *Hyper-Competency* rules (*Champions*, pp. 28-29, and *Power-Ups 7*, pp. 12-13), you get a number of bonus points to expend however you see fit with the campaign's parameters.

*Full Bonus:* Used to assess certain benefits of high wildcard levels.

*Half Bonus:* Some powerful benefits, like reaction bonuses, use *half* the full bonus, rounded up.

Wildcard Level	Wildcard Cost	Skill Roll	Wildcard Points	Full Bonus	Half Bonus
-3	3	Attribute-3	0	0	0
-2	6	Attribute-2	0	0	0
-1	12	Attribute-1	1	0	0
0	24	Attribute+0	2	0	0
+1	36	Attribute+1	3	+1	+1
+2	48	Attribute+2	4	+2	+1
+3	60	Attribute+3	5	+3	+2
+4	72	Attribute+4	6	+4	+2
+5	84	Attribute+5	7	+5	+3
+6	96	Attribute+6	8	+6	+3
each additional level	+12	+1	+1	+1	+1/2 (round up)

## WILDCARD COMPLEMENTARY BONUSES

When using a wildcard as a complementary skill, if the bonus from the "Half Bonus" column of the *Wildcard Benefits Table* (p. 4) exceeds +1, use that as the benefit the wildcard grants on a successful complementary skill roll (*Power-Ups* 7, pp. 25-26) instead of the normal +1. Critical success gives an additional +1. For instance, for someone with attribute+6 and a half bonus of +3, the range of effect becomes -2, -1, +3, and +4.

## WILDCARD COMBAT SKILLS

Some wildcard skills are directly combat-related. In place of traits like Gunslinger (see *Who's The Master?*, below), these skills give a bonus to damage and include many of the benefits associated with advantages like Gunslinger or Weapon Master; in general, take either the wildcard or the advantage. In all cases, such skills grant a bonus to damage equal to 1 + half bonus; convert every +2 damage to +1/die, if better.

Additionally, combat-related wildcard skills may automatically get the benefits of any advantages the GM decrees are *superseded* by wildcard skills. This is noted in the benefits section of each wildcard skill. For

example, Archery! includes the benefits of Heroic Archer *and* Weapon Master (though using the damage bonus above), but *only* when using that skill.

## WILDCARD CRITICALS

For a *Monster Hunters* campaign, wildcards start with a critical success range of 3-4 and add the half bonus from the *Wildcard Skill Table* (p. 4); e.g., attribute+5 adds 3 to top of the range, resulting in critical success on a 3-7. The maximum half bonus that can be added is +5. If using multiple skills together (p. 5), only your *best* skill determines your critical success range.

### Who's the Master?

Some of these wildcard benefits overlap existing traits; e.g., Blade! *effectively* grants Weapon Master for any sharp weapon while Criminal! gives limited Intuition. Players should always be allowed to delete or modify these traits from their templates to compensate. For example, the warrior (*Champions*, pp. 19-20) can either omit Weapon Master or replace it with Weapon Master (Non-Bladed Weapons) [35], spending any points saved on advantages and/or wildcard skills – perhaps adding a new one, like Archery! or Fist!

# EXPANDED WILDCARD LIST

Wildcards allow all uses of the indicated skills except where noted, plus any other application the GM deems thematic. An asterisk (\*) appears next to the name of combat wildcard skills (see above for special notes about such skills).

### Anthropology!

IQ

From the Incas to the lost Harappan civilization, you know it all, and you know how to survive long enough to get there. This skill completely replaces the following skills: Anthropology, Archaeology, Area Knowledge (any past specialty), Geography, Heraldry, History, Linguistics, Naturalist, Navigation, Paleontology, and Sociology. It can stand in for Occultism, Philosophy, and Theology when answering questions about what a particular civilization believed. When communicating with primitive cultures, it also functions as Gesture and can be used for the following Influence skills (p. B359) – Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Intimidation (with a Will-based roll), Savoir-Faire, and Sex Appeal (with a HT-based roll). It can stand in for either Literature or Research for any roll related to ancient peoples, civilizations, etc. When making or reading maps it can substitute for Cartography. Finally make a Per-based roll to use any of the following skills in a wilderness or unexplored area: Camouflage, Meteorology, Observation, Survival, Tracking, and Traps.

*Wildcard Benefits:* Ignore penalties due to lack of Cultural Familiarity of primitive peoples or familiarities or tech level penalties for using equipment covered by this skill.

*Full Bonus:* Add the full bonus to resist natural hardships; when determining the critical failure range for disarming traps, solving puzzles, etc. (e.g., if effective skill is 4, then critical failure is 14 or more, but with Anthropology! at IQ+2, this would be 16 or more) – though 18 is always a critical failure – or to distance and area class (both p. B176) on any skill to which these apply.

*Half Bonus:* Add the half bonus to active defense rolls to avoid ancient booby-traps, or to active defense rolls against weapons with a TL less than (campaign TL × 0.75), round up.

### Archery!\*

DX

Robin Hood, Odysseus, and Orion – all amateurs compared to you. This skill covers Blowpipe, Bow, Crossbow, Sling, Spear Thrower, Thrown Weapon (Dart or Spear) and related Fast-Draw skills. You can also use it in place of Artillery for catapult or bow-like weapons. Make an IQ-based roll for Armoury or Connoisseur to recognize, evaluate, or repair suitable weapons. Use Archery! in place of such skills as Acrobatics and Climbing for crossing or swinging from bow-launched climbing lines, and when shooting while dangling from high places. Use the better of this skill or your motive skill to shoot from horseback, from a vehicle, etc.

Use the wildcard for any Per-based skill (Observation, Scrounging, etc.) when the goal is to locate spent arrows or well-shaped sling stones, or while aiming with an appropriate weapon. It also allows a Per-based roll after battle to recover *and* repair one used arrow, plus one per point of success.

You can even wield a bow as a melee weapon without ruining it. Roll against Archery! skill to treat your bow as a baton with Reach 1, for swing or thrust crushing damage. If you have an arrow ready, you may opt to stab for thrust-1 impaling. You may also *parry* at 3 + [(DX + relative skill level)/2]. Finally, if using *Quick-Shooting Bows* (**GURPS Martial Arts**, pp. 119-120), you roll at no penalty, and as long as your skill is 16 or higher, you don't need to make a roll to Fast-Draw your arrows or nock them.

**Wildcard Benefits:** Ignore penalties due to TL difference, improvised gear, and so on. This skill includes the benefits of Heroic Archer (**Martial Arts**, p. 45) – there is no reason to have both this skill and that advantage.

**Full Bonus:** Add the full bonus to ST to determine how powerful a bow you can wield; to Will rolls to retain Aim; to your weapon's DR when parrying; or as a penalty to others' rolls to hear you use your bow.

**Half Bonus:** Add your half bonus to Accuracy when you take an Aim maneuver.

### Wildcard Techniques

You may take a technique and turn it into a *wildcard technique*. This multiplies the original cost by  $\times 3$  and uses the Hard progression as the baseline, but allows it to apply to *all* related skills. For example, Dual Weapon Attack! could be used for dual pistols, pistol and knife, knife and sword, and so on. Wildcard techniques are especially effective when combined with Targeted Attack (**GURPS High-Tech**, p. 252), as champions often have to decapitate or stab their foes in the heart!

### Blade!\*

See **Champions**, p. 29, for details on this skill.

**Wildcard Benefits:** You have *half* the usual penalty to make a Rapid Strike (see *Melee Attack Options*, p. B369) or to parry more than once per turn (see *Parrying*, p. B376).

**Full Bonus:** Add the full bonus to your damage (every +2 to damage translates to +1/die, if better). Add your full bonus  $\times 2$  for the purposes of *Parrying Heavy Weapons* (p. B376).

**Half Bonus:** When using an applicable technique (e.g., Armed Grapple or Targeted Attack), add your half bonus to negate technique penalties to determine skill level, though this *never* gives a net bonus.

### Criminal!

This skill covers Climbing, Crossbow or Throwing for lobbing grapnels, Escape, Fast-Talk, Filch, Forced Entry, Intimidation, Pickpocket, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth. Make an IQ-based roll for Accounting to hide or find illegal funds, Architecture for locating building access or secret rooms, Connoisseur for pricing expensive or rare items, Counterfeiting, Electronics Operation (Security or Surveillance), Forgery, Holdout, Lockpicking, Merchant for selling stolen goods, Panhandling, Shadowing, Smuggling, Streetwise, Traps to *spot* or

*disarm* traps, or for Gesture to signal allies. You can also use this skill for Area Knowledge or Current Affairs in places you spent at least (6 - full bonus) months in.

Make a Will-based roll for Intimidation. Make a Perception-based roll for Observation for "casing the joint" ahead of time, Scrounging, Search, Tracking in cities you have Area Knowledge for, or Urban Survival.

**Wildcard Benefits:** This skill stands in for Intuition (p. B63) for the purpose of finding easy marks, looking for the best loot, realizing someone is going to narc on you, and so on.

**Full Bonus:** Add the full bonus to ST for all purposes related to break-ins – using a crowbar to pry open a door, rolls to use a battering ram to knock a door down, etc. Add the full bonus to rolls to spot fellow criminals, security of all types, and "trouble" (physical, social, or otherwise). Add the full bonus *instead of* half bonus to complementary skill rolls when you're assisting someone in a criminal act (e.g., as a distraction or helping to forge records).

**Half Bonus:** Add the half bonus to reaction rolls from other criminals or seedy types.

### Computers!

#### IQ

When it comes to computers, you're king. This skill replaces Computer Hacking, Computer Operation, Computer Programming, Cryptography, Electronics Repair (Computers), Expert Skill (Computer Security), and Mathematics (Computer Science and Cryptology).

Furthermore, it can stand in for Brain Hacking (in campaigns that have it), Current Affairs to know about the newest models or advancements in computers, Engineer (Electronics) when designing new computer hardware, any Electronics Operation skill that uses a computer or computer-like interface, Intelligence Analysis when mining data, Psychology or Interrogation when trying to understand the mind of an AI or interviewing one, or Scrounging when looking for spare parts. It can stand in for Accounting, Cartography, Counterfeiting, Forgery, Research, or Speed-Reading when creating, seeking, reading, or altering digital files via computer – but *not* when working with printed or written records! It can be used as *any* Influence skill when "social engineering" passwords or log-ins, showing off your knowledge to others, etc., or when dealing with computer professionals, IT guys, artificial intelligences, and so on.

**Wildcard Benefits:** Ignore the Indomitable trait for AIs or robots with IQ 6+, as if you had Empathy.

**Full Bonus:** Add your full bonus when repairing computers and add your bonus to restored HP (but do *not* increase the cost of the repairs). Add your full bonus to rolls to avoid or mitigate HT-related computer hazards (e.g., computer viruses that can affect living and non-living beings, nanotech, exhaustion due to coding all night, etc.).

**Half Bonus:** Add your half bonus to active defense rolls against robots or AI-controlled machines (e.g., drones with onboard weapons); as an Accuracy bonus when firing computer-controlled weaponry of any type; or to negate penalties due to *Time Spent* (p. B361), allowing you to use *any* of these skills faster with little to no penalty.



## Cop!

### IQ

You're a police officer cranked up to 11. This skill completely replaces Criminology, Forensics, Law, Lockpicking, Intelligence Analysis, Interrogation, Savoir-Faire (Police), Shadowing, Streetwise, and Tactics. You can make a DX-based roll to wield any traditional "police" weapon (nightstick, pepper spray, TASER, etc.), to operate any authorized police vehicle, when making a Stealth roll, or when using an unarmed attack to restrain or subdue a subject (this includes using handcuffs, zip-ties, etc.). This applies to firearms – in particular, Gun (Pistol), Gun (Shotgun), and Gun (Rifle). The wildcard can be used in place of Throwing for tear-gas canisters, and to replace Explosives (Demolitions) when setting door charges. It can stand in for Electronics Operation (Surveillance or Security) or Photography when surveilling a target.

You can use the wildcard for Area Knowledge for your particular beat or precinct; Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Intimidation, or Psychology when talking to witnesses or suspects; and Administration, Computer Operation, Research, or Writing when filling out reports, taking statements, or looking for information on a database. It can stand in for Public Speaking when making being interviewed by news media. Make a Per-based roll for Body Language, Detect Lies, Observation, Search, and Urban Survival when used in the line of duty.

**Wildcard Benefits:** You can spend Wildcard Points for Favors in play. As well, this is an especially broad skill that can cover many different actions; if it's a key part of "being a cop," the GM should allow it.

**Full Bonus:** Add the full bonus to all rolls for your Intuition (p. B63) or Empathy (p. B51); to resist Influence skills when it comes to doing your job right (add half your bonus to resist Influence in other circumstances); or to recognize criminals and other law-breakers.

**Half Bonus:** Add the half bonus when making Assistance Rolls (**Champions**, p. 27) for your department; to damage (or as a penalty to resist) when making non-lethal attacks; or to any roll requiring a Quick Contest to fool or trick criminals.

## Detective!

### IQ

See **Champions**, p. 29, for details on this skill.

**Wildcard Benefits:** Gain the benefits of Empathy (p. B51); though none of the bonuses or penalties) to know when someone is lying, but use this skill instead of IQ.

**Full Bonus:** Add the full bonus to casual Perception rolls to notice clues when no skill would apply, or to rolls for Intuition (p. B63) or Empathy.

**Half Bonus:** Ignore up to the half bonus in penalties due to Time Spent (p. B361), allowing you to use any of these skills faster with little to no penalty.

## Electronics!

### IQ

If it has a circuit board or uses electricity, you know how to make it, break it, operate it, or create it. This wildcard completely replaces Electrician, Electronics Operation, and Electronics Repair. It also stands in for any specialty

of Engineer as long as you're dealing with electricity in some way.

It can work as Lockpicking when dealing with electronic locks, and Camouflage, Holdout, or Smuggling to hide any electronic device (alarms, transponders, bugs, etc.). It can be used as Explosives or Traps to rig any device that uses an electronic detonation system. Electronics! can also be used in place of Mathematics, Meteorology, Physics, or Physiology when answering questions about how electricity relates to a given system (bodies, weather patterns, etc.). It can stand in for any skill roll required when piloting UAVs, drones, etc.

Make a Per-based roll for Search or Traps when the objective is to find a hidden electrical device, or for Scrounging when trying to locate parts. You can make a DX-based Electronics! roll when using Beam Weapon, Brawling, Gunner, Innate Attack, Shortsword, etc. for electrical weaponry or attacks like stun guns, cattle prods, ultra-tech electrolasers, and so on.

**Wildcard Benefits:** You can make a skill roll at -1 to know the exact state of any gear you're using. Success means you know its battery power, if it's damaged, what year it was made, etc.

**Full Bonus:** Add the full bonus to restored HP (but do not increase the cost of the repairs) when repairing electronics; to HT-based rolls to resist electrical attacks, afflictions, etc.; or to HT to any device you are redlining or using extra effort with.

**Half Bonus:** Add the half bonus as an Accuracy bonus when firing electricity-based weaponry of any type, or when customizing electronics-based gear for an ally for (full bonus - 1, minimum of 1) uses. If sabotaging electrical equipment, the half bonus becomes the enemy's penalty to use it!

## Encyclopedist!

### IQ

If it's trivia and you don't know it, *no one* does. You are a savant with facts – not just *knowing*, but retaining and finding them. This skill completely replaces Area Knowledge, Connoisseur, Current Affairs, *all* Expert Skills, *all* IQ-based Hobby Skills, *all* IQ-based Professional Skills, and Research. The GM can also allow you to roll against your Encyclopedist! skill in place of a IQ roll to know, remember, or find any isolated fact or bit of trivia.

This wildcard can stand in for Administration for knowing a given bureaucracy's rules; Architecture or Cartography for interpreting blueprints or maps (but not creating them); Astronomy (Observational) for reading the sky; Computer Operation to search a database; Games, but only for knowledge of the rules, not skilled play; Linguistics to determine what a given language is; and Philosophy or Theology for understanding different religions and overviews of their holy texts.

In the right circumstances, Encyclopedist! can replace any IQ-based skill (even if the skill normally has another controlling attribute). For example, you could make an IQ-based Piloting roll to know what the FAA regulations are or what a given manual for an airplane might tell you, but not for *piloting* the airplane. It cannot be used for skills you could not have to begin with. For example, you could use it for Expert Skill (Demonology), but not use it for Hidden Lore (Demons).

**Wildcard Benefits:** Ignore penalties for Geographical and Temporal Scope (p. B176).

*Full Bonus:* Add your full bonus to any roll that notes a bonus for Eidetic Memory (p. B51), including recall rolls for Speed-Reading; or to Contests against Influence skills, Gambling, Merchant, Politics, Strategy, etc. rolls trying to deceive you about *facts*.

*Half Bonus:* Apply the half bonus on *any* roll where using Encyclopedist! might be helpful as a complementary skill.

## Fist!

### DX

From street-fighting to T'ai Chi, you know what you're doing. Use this skill to make all unarmed attacks; this includes using weapons that can be wielded using an unarmed skill, such as brass knuckles or improvised fist loads. It replaces Boxing, Brawling, Judo, Karate, Parry Missile Weapons, Sumo Wrestling, and Wrestling. The damage bonus from this wildcard applies even when you bite, use fist-loads, or other natural attacks. You get the improved Retreat bonus when parrying *and* you are considered to be using a "fencing" weapon when you do so, but *aren't* penalized for encumbrance or when parrying kicks or weapons.

You can roll against this skill in place of *any* physical roll made when in combat while fighting unarmed, such as Acrobatics, Climbing, Jumping, and so on. Make an IQ-based roll for Savoir-Faire (Dojo) in social situations, Fast-Talk to use *Specious Intimidation* (p. B202), Tactics for close-in unarmed fighting, etc. Make a Per-based roll for Body Language or Observation to figure out if someone is about to sucker punch you, or Detect Lies when someone is making a threat he can't back up physically. Make a Will-based roll for Intimidation if you are threatening someone with your unarmed fighting skills ("I should warn you: I can kill anyone with my thumb"). You may also use it instead of Forced Entry when you are attacking doors, windows, and other inanimate objects.

*Wildcard Benefits:* Ignore *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379) completely. You never suffer the penalty for striking or parrying with your off hand (p. B17). You're *always* considered armed for the purposes of *Parrying Unarmed* (p. B376), but though you are still "armed" when *Parrying Unarmed Attacks* (p. B376), you must make an *opposed* roll of Fist! vs. the skill the opponent defended with. Success means you roll damage normally. This is better than Aggressive Parry (*Martial Arts*, p. 65); don't use both.

*Full Bonus:* Add your full bonus + 1 to your damage (every +2 to damage translates to +1/die, if better); when making a "basic unarmed attack" technique (e.g., Kicking, Choke Hold, or any similar attack from the *Basic Set*), add your full bonus to the penalty to determine skill level, though this *never* gives a bonus; and bonus  $\times 2$  for the purposes of *Parrying Heavy Weapons* (p. B376).

*Half Bonus:* Add the half bonus when you Retreat (in addition to the already improved retreating bonus you get).

## Gun!\*

### DX

You can wield a firearm as a melee weapon without ruining it. Roll against Gun! skill to strike with a longarm as a baton at Reach 1, for swing or thrust crushing damage. For handguns, treat as if you had brass knuckles (p. B271). You may also

parry with your firearm at  $3 + [(DX + \text{relative skill level})/2]$ . See *Champions*, p. 29, for further details of this skill.

*Wildcard Benefits:* Reduce the Recoil of any firearm you wield by 1/3 your full bonus, rounded down; this can reduce the Recoil to a minimum of 1.

*Full Bonus:* Add the full bonus to ST to determine what weapons you can wield via minimum ST. Add the full bonus to Will rolls to retain Aim.

*Half Bonus:* Add your half bonus to Accuracy when Aiming.

## Inventor!

### IQ

See *Champions*, pp. 29-30, for details on this skill.

*Wildcard Benefits:* Treat any tool kit or lab (*Champions*, p. 56) you have as if it were one category better for equipment modifiers: a belt kit becomes equivalent to a box kit, a field kit is as good as a shop kit, and a shop kit gives an additional bonus equal to 1/3 your full bonus, rounded down.

*Full Bonus:* Add the full bonus as either a bonus or a penalty when rolling on the table under *Weird Technology* (p. B479). Decide *after* you roll!

*Half Bonus:* Add the half bonus to your or allies' rolls to operate anything *you* create.

*This might help. I've mass-produced a small device that, when placed on individual Dominators, will cause indescribable agony. Not the nicest invention, but this is war.*

– Dr. Martin Stein,  
*Legends of Tomorrow* #2.7

## Lore!

### IQ

See *Champions*, p. 30, for details on this skill.

*Wildcard Benefits:* You never suffer cultural or physiology penalties when dealing with monsters. Additionally, you can make a roll against Lore! - 1 to notice anything odd – curses, blights, faeries in the basement, etc. – that happens to animals, crops, or people in an area where you've lived for at least (5 - full bonus) months.

*Full Bonus:* Add the full bonus to your Will when making Fright Checks caused by *supernatural* beings and effects. Add the full bonus to rolls to resist supernatural abilities of any specific creature you've previously examined or encountered.

*Half Bonus:* Add the half bonus to your reaction or Influence skill rolls against nonhumans. Add your half bonus to active defense rolls if you succeed on a Lore! roll (use the modifiers from *Occultism*, *GURPS Monster Hunters 2: The Mission*, p. 8).



## WILDCARD PATH AND MAGIC TRADITION SKILLS

Particularly potent magic users may possess wildcard skills devoted to a Path skill or a Tradition (introduced in **GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic**). Here is one example of a Tradition. All Path skills are based on the wildcard described below.

### Druidism!

IQ

Your magic is like a green and growing forest. This skill subsumes Animal Handling, Disguise (Animals), Naturalist, Navigation, Pharmacy (Herbal), Veterinary, and Weather Sense. You can make a Druidism! Instead of Religious Ritual or Theology when answering druidic questions. Make a Will-based roll for Meditation. Make a Per-based roll for Survival or Tracking. Druidism! also functions as any Hidden Lore specialty appropriate for druids in the campaign. It can stand in for Herb Lore when creating ritual path magic herbals (see *The Old Ways* in *Pyramid* #3/56: *Prehistory*).

This wildcard can function as *any* Path skill that relates to animals, plants, nature, weather, etc. It can stand in for divination using ogham-script wands, reading the future by watching birds, and so on.

**Wildcard Benefits:** If higher, Druidism! skill replaces the roll required for traits like Oracle, Intuition, Common Sense, and similar traits. It can also replace Influence skills when used on animals, sentient plants, nature spirits, and the like – someone with this skill does not need Animal Empathy, Plant Empathy, or Spirit Empathy to affect such beings! Add all the bonuses from Path! (see below) as well.

**Full Bonus:** Add the full bonus to resistance for any threat found in nature (toxic mushrooms, Komodo dragon bacteria, etc.) or other druidic magic. All the full bonuses from Path! (see below) apply as well.

**Half Bonus:** Add the half bonus to rolls to attack or defend against animals or non-sapient plants (IQ 5 or less). All the half bonuses from Path! (see below) apply as well.

### Path!

IQ

You know secrets of a particular Path that only lesser mages can dream of. This skill subsumes one *particular* Path skill, as well as Thaumatology – making the latter redundant if you only wish to cast spells. It also stands in for Alchemy, Herb Lore, or other such skills when making charms or conditional spells based on the chosen Path! specialization. This wildcard removes the additional requirement for needing a Path of Magic effect for creating a conditional spell as long as the spell could be cast with your skill alone.

A Per-based roll can help you determine if a subject is under enchantment or help you unravel a spell. Make a Will- or HT-based roll when resisting spells that your skill covers.

**Wildcard Benefits:** You can spend a character point (or spend a Wildcard Point) to gain a one-use Energy Reserve (Magic) equal to (your full bonus)  $\times$  5. So Path of Mind! at attribute+4 gives you Energy Reserve 20 (Magic) to spend on a spell, which translates to +6 to a single roll using voluntary sacrifice.

**Full Bonus:** When determining how many conditional spells you can have active at one time – as long as they are spells you could cast with your Path! skill – add your full bonus to your skill. Add the full bonus to Path level when using the Golden Rule (**Ritual Path Magic**, p. 24).

**Half Bonus:** Add the half bonus to damage or healing dice for your Path! skills.

### Mathematician!

IQ

You're a supercomputer. This wildcard covers Accounting, Cryptography, Mathematics, Economics, Engineer, Finance, Market Analysis, Navigation, and Physics; mathematical applications of Astronomy; Sociology to perform sociometry (**GURPS Social Engineering**, p. 81); Gambling to estimate probabilities; and Mind Block to hide your thoughts behind calculations.

It can also serve as a complementary skill to any roll that would benefit from mathematical modeling; this normally takes one minute, but uses modifiers for *Time Spent* (p. B346). Examples include trajectory analysis for an aimed shot, hitting the ground at the right angle when falling, or statistical analysis to predict an enemy's movements.

**Wildcard Benefits:** This skill includes the benefits of Absolute Timing (p. B34), Absolute Direction (p. B34), and Lightning Calculator (p. B66) – but does *not* include the skill

bonuses associated with these traits. If you know this skill at IQ+3 or higher, Lightning Calculator is upgraded to Intuitive Mathematician (p. B66). If you know this at IQ+7 or higher, Absolute Direction is upgraded to 3D Spatial Sense (p. B34). If you know this skill at IQ+10 or higher, Absolute Timing is upgraded to Chronolocation (p. B34). When using this skill as a complementary skill (p. 5) or when combining wildcard skills (p. 4), use the *full* bonus if knowing the odds, exact dimensions of an item or area, etc. would help the master skill. Finally, Mathematician! allows a roll against full skill as per Oracle (p. B72) to derive information of *mundane* significance from vast quantities of numerical data.

**Full Bonus:** Add the full bonus to contests against *any* skills trying to deceive you about *numbers*, such as odds, dimensions, or counts (cards, troops, etc.). Add to Observation vs. visual deceptions (e.g., shuffling around troops confusingly, or fancy card-sharp tricks); to Detect Lies vs. verbal “bafflegab” about numbers, such as embezzlement or fraud; to rolls to recall numbers or formulas.

*Half Bonus:* Add the half bonus to *all* reaction rolls from engineers, scientists, math geeks, etc. The half bonus can negate penalties for *Time Spent* (p. B346) when performing calculations, but never gives a bonus.

## Mastermind!

IQ

You have a plan. You *always* have a plan. This skill stands in for Administration, Diplomacy, Finance, Intelligence Analysis, Leadership, Politics, Propaganda, Public Speaking, Savoir-Faire, Strategy, Tactics, and most aspects of Teaching. It counts as Body Language and Gesture to “read” and signal those you lead; Detect Lies if your underlings try to deceive you; First Aid to bandage them; and Psychology to understand them. Finally, you can use this as a complementary or directive skill when coordinating allies.

*Wildcard Benefits:* Ignore Cultural Familiarity penalties for anyone under your leadership or who is considered your ally. Furthermore, if there is a limit on the number of Gizmos for the campaign, you add 1/3 your full bonus (round to the nearest whole number) to this limit.

*Full Bonus:* Add the full bonus for others to hear and understand you. When leading a group, add your full bonus to *your followers’* Fright Checks, rolls to resist supernatural mind control or persuasion, self-control rolls to disadvantages that inhibit working well as a group or taking orders, morale checks, etc. Add your full bonus to spot impostors for anyone you’ve led before. Add your full bonus to reaction or influence rolls against anyone you’ve led or who watches you work (your skill is impressive!).

*Half Bonus:* Add the half bonus - 1 when you use this skill as a complementary or directive skill. Add the half bonus for assistance rolls (see *Patrons and Influence*, **GURPS Monster Hunters 2: The Mission**, pp. 26-27), if applicable to the campaign.

## Medic!

IQ

See *Champions*, p. 30, for details on this skill.

*Wildcard Benefits:* Treat any first aid kit or medical lab (*Champions*, p. 56) you have as if it were one category better for equipment modifiers: a belt kit becomes equivalent to a box kit, a field kit functions as a shop kit, and a shop kit gives an additional bonus equal to 1/3 your full bonus, rounded down.

*Full Bonus:* Add the full bonus to HT rolls to resist diseases or toxins; HP restored via *First Aid* (p. B424); and to reaction rolls from anyone who’s benefited from your Medic! skill.

*Half Bonus:* Add the half bonus to resist supernatural infections such as lycanthropy or a zombie virus.

## Psychologist!

IQ

You are a true expert on of the mind – both your own and others. This skill replaces Brainwashing, Criminology, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Hypnotism, Interrogation, Politics, Propaganda, Psychology, and Sociology. Make a Per-based roll for Body Language, Detect Lies, or Observation. Make a Will-based roll for Autohypnosis, Dreaming, Meditation, or Mind Block.

## WILDCARD PERKS

A perk which normally requires specialization can be turned into a wildcard perk. This costs 5 points instead of 1, but allows it to function as *all* specialties of that perk. For example, Sure-Footed! [5] (*GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks*, p. 8) lets you ignore the -2 to attack and -1 to defend for bad footing in general, not just in one situation. Where this is underwhelming, the GM may expand its benefits, by extrapolating from its existing ones, looking at related perks, or just getting inventive. For example, Iron Body Parts! [5] (*Perks*, p. 6) should give the character DR 1 (Tough Skin) on any body part that doesn’t already have innate DR, along with +3 to *all* ST or HT rolls to resist locks, choking, etc. This always requires GM adjudication, as some wildcard perks can be overpowered; if so, charge more (like 10 points), add minor drawbacks, or simply forbid it.

An example that needs GM discretion is the Weapon and Equipment Bond perks.

### Gear Bond!

5 points

This wildcard perk comprises Equipment Bond, Vehicle Bond, Weapon Bond, and similar “gear enhancer” perks. This gives +1 to skill rolls while using any piece

of gear it applies to. The person must have had the item, weapon, vehicle, etc. for at least six months (starting equipment always counts).

This does come with a downside: those who’ve claimed a bonus for a particular item (weapon, tool kit, crowbar, hovercraft, etc.) *must* use *that* piece of equipment in any subsequent circumstances that require such an item! They invoked their “Schrödinger’s bond,” so now they’ve *always* been bonded to it . . . If there’s a reason to use some other bow/spaceship/kit, it requires a Will roll for the individual to force himself to set aside his beloved whatever, and he suffers -1 to all rolls to use the alternate gear. If he cannot *get* his bonded item for some reason, he doesn’t need to make a Will roll, but he’s still at -1.

Each Gear Bond! only ever applies to one item within each category – one firearm, plus one vehicle, plus one lab or tool kit, and so on. (The GM decides whether two pieces of gear fall into the same category.) Even dual-wielding requires two Gear Bond! perks. For example, a commando with Gear Bond! 2 [10] might have two Colt M1911s (guns) and a favorite backpack and tent from his Army days (camping gear); he’d get +1 on all rolls to use them, but would have to make a Will roll to use any other handguns, camp with any other tent, and so on, unless he has no choice . . . but either way, he’s at -1.

You may roll against your skill to access the benefits of Empathy; thus, you do not require that trait. You may attempt to use Hypnotism in combat (albeit at -10 to your roll) even if that's normally disallowed. You can also use this skill to modify someone else's self-control rolls! If you know the subject well or have previously analyzed him, make a skill roll and spend a minute talking to him. Success means he must add or subtract 1 + (your half bonus) from *one* specific disadvantage's next roll (your choice whether he's more or less likely to resist his disadvantage).

**Wildcard Benefits:** Ignore penalties you might have due to Low Empathy (p. B142) or Callous (p. B125) when *diagnosing* a subject. *Ignore* physiology modifiers (p. B181).

**Full Bonus:** Add your full bonus to all rolls to resist madness or mental manipulation; to the reactions of people you've treated; to *patients'* rolls to combat mental illness; or as a penalty to negate the bonus gained for unwilling or unaware subjects.

**Half Bonus:** Subtract the half bonus from the total character point cost for "*Buying Off*" Disadvantages (p. B121) for a patient who has been in your care (6 - full bonus) months, minimum of one month.

## Science!

IQ

See **Champions**, p. 30, for details on this skill.

**Wildcard Benefits:** Treat any tool kit or lab (**Champions**, p. 56) you have as if it were one category better for equipment modifiers: a belt kit becomes as good as a box kit, a field kit is equivalent to a shop kit, and a shop kit gives an additional bonus equal to 1/3 your full bonus, rounded down.

**Full Bonus:** Add the full bonus to your skill to negate penalties for *Time Spent* (p. B346).

**Half Bonus:** Add the half bonus to reaction rolls whenever you use your skill for, or in front of, others.

## Talker!

IQ

See **Champions**, pp. 30-31, for details on this skill.

**Wildcard Benefits:** Wildcard Points can be used to purchase Favors in play. You also get access to the *Expanded Influence Rolls* rules (**Social Engineering**, p. 31) and exemption from reaction penalties due to Rank or Status.

**Full Bonus:** Add the full bonus to any reaction rolls made immediately after successfully using Talker!. Add the full bonus to reactions from those who demand respect (priests, kings, etc.).

**Half Bonus:** Add the half bonus to negate the penalties from dealing with an unfamiliar culture (p. B23). If a culture is so alien that the GM would not normally allow a roll, you can roll at -6 (instead of -3), negated as usual by your half bonus . . . if you can communicate with them.

## WILDCARD POWERS

The GM may allow particularly powerful champions to purchase any of the **Monster Hunters** supernatural powers (**Champions**, pp. 40-46) as a "wildcard power." Take the most expensive ability a champion wants and multiply its cost by 4. This lets the hero use *any* similar ability within the same power, simultaneously with the core ability, as long as it doesn't exceed the core ability's cost. For Psionic powers, the type corresponds to the four separate powers. Bioenhancement wildcard powers may include up to eight abilities, and Mysticism may have up to 10; the abilities are specified when purchasing the wildcard power.

**Example:** Ellen the ESPer purchased Remote Senses 1 [35] as a wildcard power for a cost of 140 points. While Remote Senses is active, she could also use *any* ESP ability listed (except for Remote Senses 2) at level 1 or 2, since all other ESP abilities cost less than the base cost of Remote Sense 1.

Optionally, the GM may allow inhumans to purchase one of their advantages (which should be iconic in some way) as a wildcard power. The player and GM then need to decide what advantages fall under that power's domain (the other abilities do not necessarily need to be part of the inhuman's template). For example, a vampire who has Vampiric Bite! might be able to leverage it into Terror as he gets his "game face" on or gains +6 to Striking ST because he just fed – but that would cost 140 points.

The core ability of a wildcard power can be used with only *one* "wild" ability at a time. Talents and advantage-like talents that offer a bonus to skills (e.g., Charisma or Voice) do not apply to wildcard powers in any way.

## Ten-Hut!

IQ

See **Champions**, p. 31, for details on this skill.

**Wildcard Benefits:** Wildcard Points can be used for Favors during play at military installations, from members of the military, and so on.

**Full Bonus:** Add the full bonus to reaction rolls from any member of the military, military types, highly patriotic citizens, etc.

**Half Bonus:** Add the half bonus to operation rolls when using milspec equipment or gear.

## Teamwork!

IQ

This capability only matters when working with one or more teammates. It counts as Body Language and Gesture to "read" and signal allies; First Aid to bandage them; and Climbing, Hiking, Stealth, or any other mundane skill in a scenario where the whole team must roll and you lack another applicable Wildcard. In situations where you need to work with a group, you always count as if you "know the skill." For complementary skills, an IQ-based roll enables you to "do something useful" and then make a complementary skill roll to provide a modifier to someone else's master skill.



*I think that you appreciate that there are extraordinary men and women and extraordinary moments when history leaps forward on the backs of these individuals, that what can be imagined can be achieved, that you must dare to dream, but that there's no substitute for perseverance and hard work and teamwork because no one gets there alone; and that, while we commemorate the . . . the greatness of these events and the individuals who achieve them, we cannot forget the sacrifice of those who make these achievements and leaps possible.*

– Dana Scully, *The X-Files* #4.18

You can transfer the benefits of an Aim, Deceptive Attack, Evaluate, or Feint to any teammate you can both see or hear and who can both see or hear you.

If you are within reach, or possess a ranged weapon that can reach the target, you can sacrifice a parry or block to defend a teammate. You could, for example, take an All-Out Defense (Double), while an ally takes an All-Out Attack (Double) and defend your ally even though he cannot normally get an active defense roll against attacks.

**Wildcard Benefits:** Ignore the -2 to attack enemies in close combat with teammates (p. B392) and ignore the penalties of missing. This works for *any* team as long as you've practiced with them for (6 - full bonus) months; treat a 0 or less as one week instead. Those using *Coordinated Attacks* (**GURPS Powers**, pp. 165-166) suffer only -1 per fighter after the first.

**Full Bonus:** Add the full bonus to rolls to resist Brainwashing, Interrogation, and supernatural mind control in any situation where failure would lead to betrayal of your comrades. Multiply the bonus by 5% (round up) when combining Basic Lift. Add the full bonus to your ST when combining ST for a ST roll or to cause damage. When using complementary skill rolls to assist someone, add your full bonus (if better than any other bonus you can provide). Add the full bonus to your rolls to spot impostors or supernaturally controlled members of your team.

**Half Bonus:** Add the half bonus to your Basic Speed for determining your order in the initiative when performing team-based actions (which always use the Basic Speed of the slowest team member).

## Tradecraft!

### IQ

Your skill at espionage and spying (what intelligence agencies call "tradecraft") is profound. This skill replaces Acting, Body Language, Detect Lies, Disguise, Fast-Talk, Forgery, Interrogation, and Mimicry (Speech) when trying to deceive others or when avoiding being deceived. It also can be used as Area Knowledge, Current Affairs, Electronics Operation (Comm, Electronic Warfare, Media, Security, Sensors, or Surveillance), Intelligence Analysis, Photography, Propaganda, Research, and Streetwise when trying to gather information or make sense of previously gathered information.

You can rely on this wildcard in place of Smuggling or Holdout to hide things from others, or substitute for a

Per-based Observation or Search roll to find them. It can be used to break into computer systems or crack codes (Computer Hacking or Cryptography). Make a DX-based roll when trying to break into somewhere you shouldn't be (Forced Entry or Lockpicking); pick a lock or crack a safe (Lockpicking); take something from someone else (Filch, Pickpocket, or Sleight of Hand); or escape bonds or squeeze into somewhere smaller than you could otherwise fit (Escape or Acrobatics). When following someone (Shadowing) or avoiding being seen (Stealth), make an IQ-based skill roll.

**Wildcard Benefits:** Gain the benefits of Empathy (p. B51); though none of the bonuses or penalties) to know when someone is lying, but use this skill at -3 instead of IQ. Use Wildcard Points to gain Favors in play (representing old contacts).

**Full Bonus:** Add the full bonus to the final margin in Quick Contests used with any of the skills listed in the description.

**Half Bonus:** Add the half bonus to the effective Rank in your organization for the purpose of security clearance and requesting aid, gear, etc., but not for giving orders or collecting pay. Freelance spies add their half bonus to reaction rolls from those who want to employ them.

## Wetwork!

### DX

You're an expert assassin. This skill encompasses Blowpipe, Fast-Draw (any weapon), Garrote, Knife, Stealth, and Thrown Weapon (Dart, Knife, or Shuriken). This doesn't include weapon skills in general, but for aimed or surprise attacks *out of combat* (this includes surprising your target before combat begins) the user can roll against the higher of this skill or *any* applicable combat skill. You may make an IQ-based roll when using *Dirty Tricks* (p. B405). Make an IQ-based roll when using Acting, Camouflage, Disguise, Holdout, Poisons, Shadowing, Smuggling, or Traps. Make a Per-based roll for Tracking your target. You can also use it for any roll to plan an extraction or assassination of a target.

Each game session, for a number of victims equal to your half bonus, you can declare that you're targeting a specific person. To gain a benefit to your attack on that person, roll against skill at -2 per +1 that you'd like to gain (up to your half bonus); you also need to spend one day making preparations, tracking the person, etc. per +1 gained. Success means you get the desired bonus to *all* attack rolls against that target the next time you engage that individual in combat.

*Wildcard Benefits:* You never poison yourself accidentally and are exempt from all such rolls. You *never* freeze in combat (as per *Combat Reflexes*, p. B43).

*Full Bonus:* Add the full bonus to spot other killers or assassins. Add the full bonus as a penalty to other's rolls to find evidence, such as spent shell casings, etc., that you may have left behind.

*Half Bonus:* Add the half bonus to *any* attack you make where you surprise the target. Add the half bonus to damage rolls for *passive* attacks (poison, traps, etc.) used with this skill.

*Techniques, perks, and powers also can have wildcard versions.*

## Wheelman!

### DX

From submarines to automobiles to airplanes, you're a savant behind the steering mechanism. This skill replaces all specialties of Boating, Crewman, Driving, Piloting, Shiphandling, and Submarine. Use this skill for any Gunner skill needed to fire built-in weaponry from such vehicles. Make an IQ-based roll for all specialties of Artillery or Electronics Operations for vehicular systems, and for Freight Handling to pack a vehicle. It can be used instead of Navigation to plot a course or as Shadowing when following someone in a vehicle. It may also be used in place of a Parachuting roll to escape from a damaged or crashing vehicle.

Use this skill (if better) in place of *any* physical skill while you are operating a vehicle, including Guns skills if firing from outside a window, Forced Entry when using your vehicle to batter down an obstacle or wall, and so on. At DX+1, you gain +1 per die to all damage rolls when using your vehicle as a weapon by slamming, ramming, etc. At DX+2, you gain +2. An IQ-based roll covers Armoury, Connoisseur, Current Affairs, Mechanic, Merchant, or Streetwise when it comes to buying, pricing, recognizing, repairing, or selling vehicles of any kind.

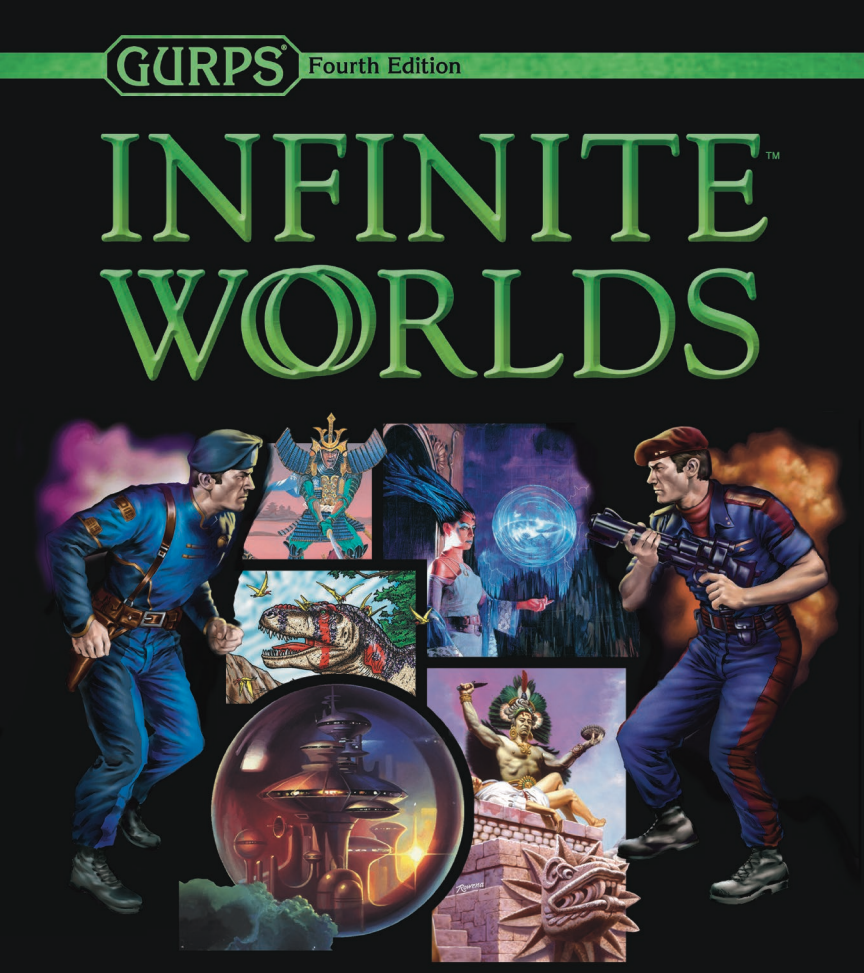
*Wildcard Benefits:* Ignore penalties due to tech level, familiarity, or equipment when dealing with vehicles or their subsystems.

*Full Bonus:* Add the full bonus to Per rolls to notice dangers in the path of your ride: running children, oncoming vehicles, land mines etc. When repairing vehicles, you may add your full bonus to restored HP, but do *not* increase the cost of the repairs.

*Half Bonus:* Add the half bonus to *all* vehicular Dodge rolls and any HT roll the vehicle needs to make for redlining.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice is a real wild one. From Portsmouth, Virginia, he dreams of being able to write full-time, or at least eke 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 (the Headhunters); Elizabeth "Archangel" McCoy, the "Sith Editrix"; Hal "Wavefunction" Batty; and Blake Chapman, for being most excellent sounding boards.



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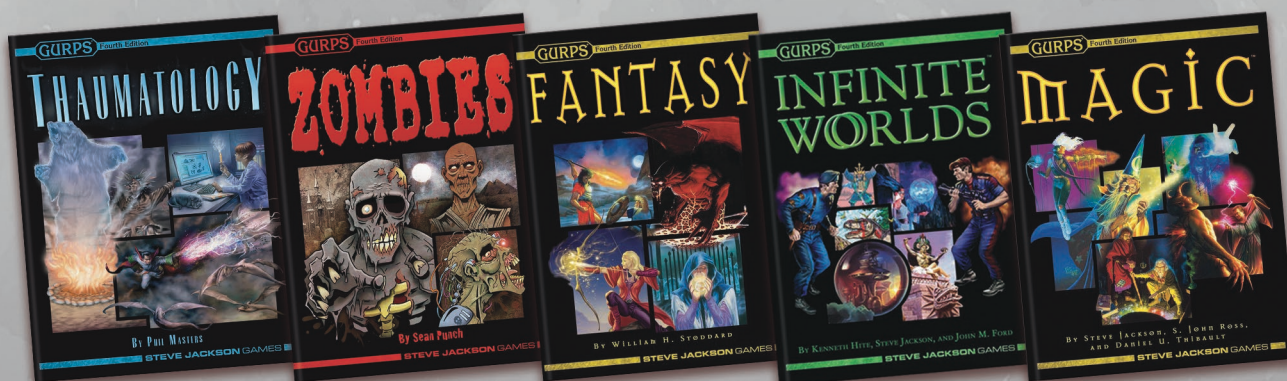
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# AN IRREGULAR SORT OF TERROR

BY J. EDWARD TREMLETT

*When people ask me if I've ever seen a ghost, I always ask "which time?" Then I smile and walk away, and hope they're still there when I look back.*

*Because I **have** seen ghosts, friend. I've seen a **lot** of ghosts. I've walked through haunted houses and graveyards. I've spoken to angry spooks and possessed kids. I've fled poltergeists and revenants, fought with presences both sad and foul, and experienced things no one's ever been able to name.*

*Sometimes I've put them to rest, too. It's a difficult thing, and you don't always get it right the first try. But I've succeeded more than I've failed, thank the Maker.*

*And every time I touch that other world, however briefly, I can't help but wonder if the next ghost I see will be my own, come to tell me my own time is coming.*

For monster hunters, ghosts can be an extreme challenge. Unlike other creatures, they can't be killed – they're already dead.

Hunting such beings demands research, patience, and interpersonal skills. It also requires the hunters to know what they're actually hunting, which isn't always possible when it comes to the spirit world. They say everyone's ghost is just a little different, and some are very strange indeed.

This article expands the range of ectoplasmic entities so as to make the hunt a little more involved and fun. It gives new ghosts and spirits to bedevil the PCs with: self-haunted objects, fetches, and poltergeists. It also provides new ghost abilities to drop on the PCs, ranging from annoying to genuinely terrifying and dangerous.

## NEW GHOSTS

The general definition of "ghost" is the restless spirit of a once-living person, but not every ghostly entity adheres to that classification. These new spirits are described below, listed from least to most harmful. See **GURPS Monster Hunters 3: The Enemy**, p. 5, and *New Ghostly Abilities*, pp. 18-20, for details on individual special traits.

*Maybe it's her way of holding  
on to this world. Not all spirits  
are ready to let go.*

– Yasmine Galenorn,  
*Ghost of a Chance*

## SELF-HAUNTED OBJECTS

*The tea tray was his grandmother's – brought over on the boat from Ireland when she was just a babe in arms. It was the only silver her parents had to their name, but they never thought of it in those terms. Center of their home, heart of their hospitality, it*

*was more precious to them than money – the sturdy, dependable thing that brought the family together, every single day.*

*His grandmother used it to the last, when it was just her and an old house full of memories. She willed it to her grandson, remembering when he liked to take tea with her, all those years ago. He'd been hoping for cash, instead, but didn't dare sell it for fear of his parents' wrath.*

*That was two years ago, and he's never touched it since. It's buried under stacks of things, unused and unappreciated. Whenever he looks at it, he feels disappointed.*

*Unsurprisingly, it feels the same way about him . . .*

Not every haunted object is the anchor of a ghost – sometimes they are brought to a form of ghostly life by means not fully understood. Some believe that objects absorb the emotions and/or life force of those who've used them, down the generations. Others think a burst of negative psychic energy is impressed upon them by being too close to an extremely emotional event or ongoing situation. Barely self-aware, they anchor themselves, and use their abilities to further some strange goal.

However they are made, such objects have a wide array of goals. Some want to be used in the manner to which they've become accustomed. Others have had enough and just want to be packed away, or destroyed. Still others might want to be free to do their own thing, whatever it might be.

## Standards

Japanese folklore speaks of *tsukumogami*: objects that become both sentient and animate when they reach 100 years of age. This leads some people to throw something away when it becomes 99 years old, though such items are becoming increasingly rare. These creatures are reputed to be more mischievous than dangerous – playing harmless pranks on their owners, and playfully scaring onlookers as the items parade through the streets at night. Some, however, have been known to kill.

### SELF-HAUNTED OBJECTS

**ST:** See Notes

**DX:** 5

**IQ:** 1-5

**HT:** 10-14

**Dodge:** See Notes

**Fright Check:** 0

**Traits:** Mute (Substantial Only); Spirit (Insubstantiality is always on).

**Ghostly Abilities:** Communication; Illusion; Levitate; Mind Control; Possession; Send Dreams; Teleport (you thought you could throw it out, huh?).

**Notes:** Calculate HP per pp. B557-558 (minimum HP 10). ST and FP equal HP + DR. Speed and Move for an SM -6 or smaller object are 10; each +2 SM reduce these by 1, to a minimum of 1. Dodge is Speed + 3. Add 5-20 to FP to reach the desired energy level. Affected by Path of Spirit, but not Path of Undead or True Faith.

**HP:** See Notes

**Will:** 5

**Per:** 5

**FP:** See Notes

**Parry:** N/A

**Speed:** See Notes

**Move:** See Notes

**Weight:** N/A

**SM:** 0

**DR:** Per Object

move into the first place available – a cramped apartment all the way across town. Sammy didn't make friends very easily, and the new middle school wasn't very welcoming, but they couldn't afford anywhere else.

At first, Sammy's parents thought the broken things were accidents or coincidence. But then the TV was smashed while they argued in the kitchen, and Sammy was the only one watching it. She insisted it wasn't her, but who else could it have been?

Furious, they sent her to bed. In the morning everything in her closet and dresser had been flung around her room. She claimed it happened while she was asleep, but they didn't believe her.

Things got worse from there. She somehow rigged things to fly through the air when she wasn't near them. Cell phones stopped working in the house, or received hissing, evil phone calls. Using the Internet became a dicey proposition.

After her father woke up bleeding from light scratches on his face, they took to locking Sammy in her room at night. Three days later, they awoke to the sound of breaking glass. Their car had been totaled by a small storm of fist-sized, white rocks . . .

A controversial topic among parapsychologists, no one has a definitive answer as to the so-called noisy ghost. While some insist that it is an energetic and destructive spirit attracted to one person (the "agent") for a thankfully brief period of time, the majority believe the focus of the haunting is actually *causing* the effects themselves!

In their view, a combination of repressed psychokinetic energy (RPE) and latent telekinesis is unleashed by the agent. This is often owing to the onset of puberty, extreme adolescent rage, or poor mental or physical health. Once the stress subsides, the poltergeist goes away – usually.

What's *not* in dispute is how violent such a "haunting" can be. Poltergeists can levitate numerous objects through the air simultaneously – holding them up or throwing them about. They can crack walls and break furniture, interfere with electronics, make loud noises and horrible smells, start fires, and even teleport objects over a great distance. They're also classically known for spontaneous "stone falls" over small or wide areas, though this aspect is often forgotten in popular culture.

## Standards

Poltergeist cases have been known for centuries, going back to the infamous Drummer of Tedworth, in 1661. Satan was initially blamed, but late 19th century Spiritualism determined it was ghosts. It wouldn't be until the early 20th century that more scientific methods of observation made a distinction between "normal" hauntings and poltergeists. Since then, three major competing views have arisen to explain these troublesome situations: the agent's RPE, an actual ghost that briefly haunts the agent, or a mindless whirlwind of psychic energy that latches onto the agent, assumes its personality aspects, and acts on its subconscious behalf.

## Solutions

Self-haunted objects can be tricky. Hunters may spend a lot of time looking for a ghost, only to realize the family bible is haunting *itself*. To make things worse, just as a person can't be exorcised from their own body, neither can the soul of an object be removed by such means.

Destroying the object may be the easiest way to solve the problem, but may create a new one. If destroying the object does *not* dispel the ghost, there's now an angry, free-floating spirit in the loose – perhaps desirous of payback. It might take the person who "owned" it as its anchor, or attach itself to a similar object nearby.

A better, if more time-consuming method of resolution is to figure out what the object wants. In the case of the tea tray example, the grandson regularly using it for its intended purpose would probably quiet the spirit. If an object gathered its soul from more painful things, then acknowledging that pain – perhaps apologizing to it – might end the haunting.

However, if the haunted gun is upset because it wants to kill more people, the hunters may have a real problem.

## POLTERGEIST

*The trouble started when Sammy changed schools – at least that's what her parents told the court-ordered family therapist, after the incident with the car.*

*When her mom got out of jail, it turned out their house was too close to a church. So they had to pack up their home and*

## Solutions

Depending on which sort of poltergeist is at work, the hunters could be in for a long ride.

If the agent is being plagued by an actual ghost, then it's just a matter of dealing with the haunting, however violent it may be. However, if the agent is subconsciously manifesting these effects due to stress, strain, or a bad situation, the hunters may have to ride it out. Some combination of therapy and medication could fix what's wrong, or just make it worse.

It's also possible the agent is *not* acting subconsciously and has actual psychic abilities. Ideally, the team can talk the kid down, perhaps preventing the birth of a rogue psi (*The Enemy*, pp 33-35). Some care and positive attention may create an eventual ally; a poor interpersonal job may do the exact opposite.

As previously mentioned, there's a further possibility: a strange swirl of psychic energy may have latched onto the agent – feeding off its despair and turmoil, and transforming that negative emotional energy into destructive actions. Such a spirit essentially does what the agent wishes would happen (hopefully subconsciously) for as long as the emotions last. The energy being then leaves when the pain isn't enough to keep it around. If psychic energy is the cause, trying to improve the home situation may be a massive help. If that doesn't work, it might be best to consider the "ghost" a spiritual infection, and use direct methods to excise it as quickly as possible.

## FETCH

*The scariest ghost I've never met? That's easy. It was the man who was haunting himself.*

*I used to work the midnight-to-morning shift at Charlie's, back when they were open 24 hours. This older guy was always there, sitting at the far end of the back room, drinking the endless cup of coffee. Sometimes we'd be the only people there, so we got to talking.*

*One night, he told me why he was always there: Every night, as soon as it got dark, his own ghost would be sitting at his kitchen table, looking right at him.*

*He said it was horrible – burned to a crisp, wet, and stinking of charred skin, blood, and gasoline. It wouldn't say or do anything, but having that thing looking at him was enough to keep him away from his house all night. Come sun-up, he'd stagger back, and it would be gone, leaving only that awful smell.*

*One morning, it was raining hard too hard to see, so he accepted a ride home from someone. Bad move – the car got wrapped around that awful memorial, a block away, and burned until mid-afternoon, rain or no.*

*When they finally pulled him out of the wreck, he was little more than a man-shaped lump of charcoal. And the corner stunk of gas for weeks . . .*

Possibly the most common pseudo-ghost to be found is the crisis apparition – a spirit in the image of a friend or

## POLTERGEIST

If the poltergeist is an actual ghost, the GM can use the stats from *The Enemy*, p. 6 – keeping in mind that it's most likely going to be quite self-aware and have a higher than usual FP pool to fuel its antics.

Its anchor will depend on its purpose. If the goal is to mentally or emotionally harm the focus of its haunting, or draw attention to itself, then the agent makes for a logical anchor. However, if the ghost wants to *kill* the agent, then something near and dear to the victim is probably what the spook's latched onto.

If the GM wants to go with the idea of having the poltergeist a different spiritual entity from a standard ghost, consider the following.

<b>ST:</b> 0	<b>HP:</b> 20	<b>Speed:</b> 7.00
<b>DX:</b> 13	<b>Will:</b> See Notes	<b>Move:</b> 7
<b>IQ:</b> See Notes	<b>Per:</b> See Notes	<b>Weight:</b> N/A
<b>HT:</b> 12	<b>FP:</b> 40	<b>SM:</b> 0
<b>Dodge:</b> 12	<b>Parry:</b> N/A	<b>DR:</b> 0

**Fright Check:** 0

**Traits:** Mute (Substantial Only); Spirit (Insubstantiality is always on).

**Ghostly Abilities:** Damage; Drain (Recoup lost FP); Ghost Fire; Illusion; Levitate; Noise; Poltergeist; Probability Alteration; Smell; Stains; Stonefall; Teleport; Vermin; Wounds; Zap.

**Notes:** IQ, Will, and Per is as the agent's. Affected by Path of Spirit, but *not* Path of Undead or True Faith.

## FETCH

The Fetch's stats are a mirror image of the person it's haunting, because it *is* that person. The major difference – other than being dead – is that it won't have ST, and will have an FP pool around 20, maybe more.

It has the Mute and Insubstantial traits, and if it appears badly mutilated or damaged it can cause a Fright Check, especially to those who know its victim. Its anchor is always the person it's haunting, and it is extremely self-aware.

Common abilities are Illusion, Materialization, Mind Control, Presence, and Probability Alteration.

loved one, witnessed while they are still alive. Such apparitions usually appear when the person they impersonate is in great peril or distress, or about to die. In most cases there's nothing to be done – the ghost serves its purpose and then vanishes.

Fetches, meanwhile, comes to warn the living of their *own* impending demise. It might appear only once, or several times – sometimes every night before the event. Each successive haunting becomes increasingly longer, more involved, and more sinister. Sometimes it seems the ghost is driving the witness toward the end it's warning of. In such cases, the fetch often bears wounds or mutilations that match the state of the witness postmortem.



## Standards

While the term *fetch* comes from Irish folklore, there are many stories involving a ghostly double, going back to the *ka* of Egyptian mythology. In some cases, the *eidolon* travels ahead of the person. In others, the *doppelganger* is a dark reflection of that individual, leading a sinister, alternate life. The notion that a person's ghost might haunt him before death seems a cruel twist on this story, but one that's rather common in northern European countries.

## Solutions

How do you drive off a ghost that hasn't been "born" yet? The answer has to be "very carefully."

# GHOSTLY ABILITIES

The following abilities could definitely "liven up" any ghostly encounter and give even experienced monster hunters a real challenge. Unless indicated otherwise, a critical failure means the ghost cannot use the ability for 24 hours.

## Corpsewalk

It's a common thing for a ghost to possess the living. It's not as common for them to possess a dead body and walk around in it, but there have been some terrifying cases where this has occurred. Some "zombies" may actually be ghosts who've slipped inside a discarded, mortal shell – becoming like the dreaded revenants of legend.

To possess a dead body, the ghost must have some connection to it. It works best on its own corpse, but the body of a family member or friend might do. The ghost spends an FP and engages in a contest of its Will against the HT of the corpse when it was a living person (usually 10). Success means the body is animated for a full 24 hours. Critical failure causes the body to collapse into dust and be unusable.

The GM can use the stats for a slow zombie (*The Enemy*, pp. 13-14) for the corpse's physical traits, with the ghost's mental traits and skills. While in the shell, the ghost cannot use any other ghostly abilities. Physical damage the corpse suffers isn't transferred to the ghost, but magical attacks affect both flesh and spirit at the same time.

## Damage

Avatars of entropy, ghosts can accelerate the state of decay within their sphere of haunting, causing specific inanimate objects to crack, break, and fall apart immediately. This may be why haunted houses, spooky graveyards, and the like crumble and fall down faster.

Slow damage and rot takes 1 FP per day and requires no roll. Things around the near vicinity of a ghost's haunt start to slowly fall apart, losing 1 DR per month until they reach 1, and then begin to lose HP at the same, slow rate until they get to 1 HP. Such things probably won't last too long past that – one good shove will bring it all down.

Fast damage takes 1 FP per attempt, and requires pitting the ghost's Will against the object's DR. The object cannot be

The first step is opening a dialogue. Such spirits are notoriously non-communicative, but if the investigator talks to the fetch as though it was the person it's haunting, rather than some weird ghost, it occasionally drops character to answer a few questions. It never indicates exactly how the person being haunted dies, though it might offer a few clues – this may be enough to avoid the fate for quite some time.

Hunters must take caution, though. In cases where direct attempts were made to end the haunting, the act of exorcising or driving away the fetch is often what leads to the witness' death. If the ghost isn't doing anything other than being a nuisance, it might be best to learn what they can from it, figure out a coping strategy, and leave well enough alone. As soon as the anchor dies, the fetch vanishes, its task completed.

larger than a person, though a ghost could affect a certain spot of a house – such as its supports. Success immediately brings the object down to 0 HP, disabling it (see p. B483).

## Drain

Ghosts have to spend Fatigue on their abilities. Those who have small pools can use this ability to siphon such energy directly from the living – usually feeding off the extreme emotions mortals feel after having just been haunted.

To do this, the ghost spends 1 FP and contests its Will against the victim's. On a success, the difference between their Wills is taken from the victim's Fatigue Points and added to the ghost's pool. If the victim is the ghost's anchor, the apparition doesn't have to spend FP, but must still roll.

## Ghost Fire

Some mysterious blazes are not created by accident, but by supernatural design. By spending 1 FP and rolling Will, a ghost can create a small, momentary burst of flame. This gout can set very flammable things alight, or make small scorch marks on wood. Several applications could burn a name, face, or other design into an appropriate surface.

## Illusion

Most spirits can materialize to scare onlookers, but some ghosts have learned how to change what they look like when they do. For an additional 1 FP per second (spent on top of the normal costs for Materialize), the ghost can alter what it looks like while making itself seen to the living. This is a good way to confuse hunters, as well as cause a good scare. Note that this ability only provides silent illusions – it must be combined with Terror or Noise (p. 19) to have sound.

Common tactics include appearing as hideous, frightening, or unearthly creatures; creepy statues or toys that point at the team and leer; another dead person (to throw the hunters off the track); the subject of a portrait or photograph that walks from the now-empty frame; a hideous (if silent) program on a television; "corpses" that are there and then not; and will o' the wisps and other such *ignus fatuus*.

## Levitate

Ghosts can use the Poltergeist ability to throw objects through the air, but it's possible to have more control, as well as the ability to affect more than one object at a time. For 1 FP, a ghost can levitate something into the air on any trajectory it would like, scoot it along a surface, or set its moving parts in motion (a pocket knife unfolds, an appliance turns on, etc.).

The spirit can have as many objects going as half its points in IQ, rounded down. It can't *attack* someone with this ability – that's what Poltergeist is for.

## Noise

Ghosts can let forth a blood-curdling scream that causes fear in the living (the infamous Terror ability). They can also dial it down a few notches, using the same ghostly muscles to make weird noises, spooky music, snippets of speech, and the like.

For 1 FP per second (or syllable), the spirit can make itself heard by the living without needing to be seen. The sound can be a whisper, or loud enough to be readily audible from a few rooms away. It cannot do any sonic damage or cause a Fright Check.

## Presence

Materialization can be very expensive, costing 1 FP per second of appearance. However, ghosts who have a person for their anchor can take advantage of that connection, and be constantly seen by the object of their haunting.

The ability is always “on,” unless the ghost makes the conscious choice to disappear from the anchor's view. Only the anchor can see the ghost, unless the apparition also uses Materialization or Illusion (p. 18) on others, for the usual FP cost. This is a cost-effective way to drive mortals insane, as no one can see their phantom but them.

## Ravage

Cousin to the less-damaging ability, Wounds (p. 20), this dreaded ability lets a ghost do serious damage to a living being. It also allows them to create a miasma that accelerates the decay of plant and animal life over a wider area, much like the Damage ability (p. 18).

When a ghost decides to use this ability, all harm options are possible so long as they don't make a cascading change to the body (like a disease) or cause instant death. The spook could write its name in deep cuts, cause boils and blisters, break bones, or cause extremities to blacken and drop off, but couldn't cause cancer, remove or destroy essential organs, or lop off someone's head. It's possible the victims could die if they don't receive medical attention in time, but a direct kill is beyond the realm of this ability.

To perform Ravage, the ghost must roll its Will against the HT of the subject, and spend 1 FP per point of damage it desires to inflict. It cannot remove more than three-quarters of the victim's HP pool in this manner. If the ghost wants to use the ability again, it *must* wait until the victim has healed at least one point past that limit.

Casting a miasma affect over an area requires no roll and costs 1 FP per day. All living things within the near vicinity of

the haunt begin to warp and sicken, becoming gray, twisted, and sinister. Plants turn out wrong, and liquefy too early, animal life becomes stunted, and any people who dwell there become vile and diseased. Everyone that stays in the area loses 1 HP per month until they reach one quarter of their pool, with no resistance roll allowed; if they leave, they heal as normal.

## Send Dreams

Some ghosts can enter the dreams of the living, and play with what they find there. They can cause nightmares, send messages, or create entire tableaux for mere mortals to romp through in their sleep. Sometimes they show them hell, or a heaven they can never realize, or perhaps give some meaningful clue as to what the ghost wants done.

Entering the dream costs nothing, but all the ghost can do is watch. If it succeeds in a Quick Contest of Will, it can change the course of the dream thereafter – costing 1 FP per person, place, or thing added or taken away. This lasts either until the mortal truly wakes up, or the ghost ends the dream.

Anything can happen in a dream, and often does, but whatever damage or pain the dreamer suffers vanishes as soon as it ends. Contrary to popular belief, dying in dreams does not equal death in the real world – though the dreamer may *wish* he were dead if he sees something truly horrible there.

## Smell

For 1 FP per second, ghosts can create a particular smell within an area the size of an average room, or else cover up a stench. The odor generated can be anything they want: sweet or sour, stale or fresh, delicious or nauseating. Common uses are rot, mold, decay, blood, gunpowder, and the like, but they can also create homey smells that evoke nostalgia – perhaps triggering memories in their victims, for good or ill.

## Stains

A common trope of hauntings is stains that won't come out, or reappear after being cleaned. It's possible for a ghost to use Illusion to create short-lived pools of blood or other noxious substances, but the Stains ability actually lets a ghost imprint itself on the material world.

For 1 FP per application, the ghost can make a stain up to 1' in diameter, and have it be any color or state of freshness it requires. It can appear or vanish at the ghost's whim, and should it be scrubbed away, the expenditure of another FP makes it come right back – as though it had never left. This is great for making pools of dried blood or rotted matter, as well as ghostly glowing footprints, leering faces in wooden panels that appear and vanish, and so on.

## Stonefall

One of the telltale signs of a classic poltergeist haunting, a stonefall is the sudden appearance of a number of small, white rocks – anywhere from pebble to golf ball size – that drop from the sky in an area up to a quarter of a mile, for a few seconds or several minutes. Why poltergeists use this ability is uncertain – some speculate it may be to keep the victim's family from leaving the house and seeking help.

The ghost decides from the start how forceful the rock-fall will be, over what area (minimum 50 yard radius), and for how long (minimum one minute), paying all FP costs up front. Light pebbles that only sting are 1 FP/minute. Weird rocks that float gently to the ground and bounce playfully back into the air are 2 FP/minute. Stones that hit hard enough to damage cars, people, and more cost 2 FP/minute for pebbles that do 1d-3 cr per second, 3 FP for 1d-1, 4 FP for 1d+1, or 5 FP for 2d. The rocks are chemically inert and dissipate within an hour.

## Teleport

A somewhat rare ability – strangely common among poltergeists – this rather hair-raising ability lets ghosts apparate a specific inanimate object from place to place, even from miles away. Somehow, the spirit can reach out to a small thing (no more than 5 lbs.) and instantly bring it within the vicinity of the haunting. How the ghost knows the object is there to begin with is quite a mystery.

To do this, the ghost needs to concentrate – sending its mind out to find what it needs – and spend 1 FP. The object cannot be alive, though a part of a corpse (such as a skull) could be teleported in this fashion. Often, this ability is used to bring things that terrify or unnerve the victim – especially if it was something that was “thrown away” but keeps coming back.

## Vermin

Akin to the Stains and Stonefall abilities, the ghost can generate small, short-lived swarms of disgusting creatures. It can summon up noxious, scrabbling insects and spiders, clouds of flies – even stringy clumps of rats.

For 1 FP per second, the ghost can bring forth one kind of vermin and direct their motion. They can swarm or swirl, “attack” or skitter away, even form words. The vermin can’t do any direct damage to the living, but their appearance can create quite a nasty surprise, and may cause their victims to injure themselves while running away.

## Wounds

The less-damaging cousin of Ravage (p. 19), this ability lets the ghost do superficial, almost cosmetic harm to the living. Slight bruises, scratches, raised welts, contusions, and red splotches are within the range of this ability. The wounds do no actual damage, but are painful, uncomfortable, and very unnerving.

The ghost spends 1 FP per kind of effect, and the “wounds” last up to an hour per fatigue point spent in this way – the timing being up to the spook, who can have them be there and then gone if so desired. It’s possible to use the effects to spell words, perhaps scratching entire sentences on someone’s back or face.

## Zap

The bane of ghost hunters who rely on their electronic equipment, this ability allows ghosts to create a small electrical discharge – just enough to fry the circuits in overly sensitive gauges and sensors, or erase the sound in digital tape recorders. This is, perhaps, why pros tend to use manual equipment.

The ability costs 1 FP per split second. The ghost doesn’t have to “touch” the objects to ruin them, and can do it from anywhere in the haunt. All equipment that isn’t specially protected from ectoplasmic interference – or at least power surges – is vulnerable.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

By day an unassuming bookstore clerk, J. Edward Tremlett takes his ancient keyboard from its hiding place and unfurls his words upon the world. His bizarre lifestyle has taken him to such exotic locales as South Korea and Dubai, UAE. He is a frequent contributor to *Pyramid*, has been the editor of *The Wraith Project*, and has seen print in *The End Is Nigh* and *Worlds of Cthulhu*. He’s the author of the fictional blog *SPYGOD’s Tales* ([spygod-tales.blogspot.com](http://spygod-tales.blogspot.com)) and writes for Op-Ed News. He currently lives in Lansing, Michigan, with two cats and a mountain of Lego bricks.

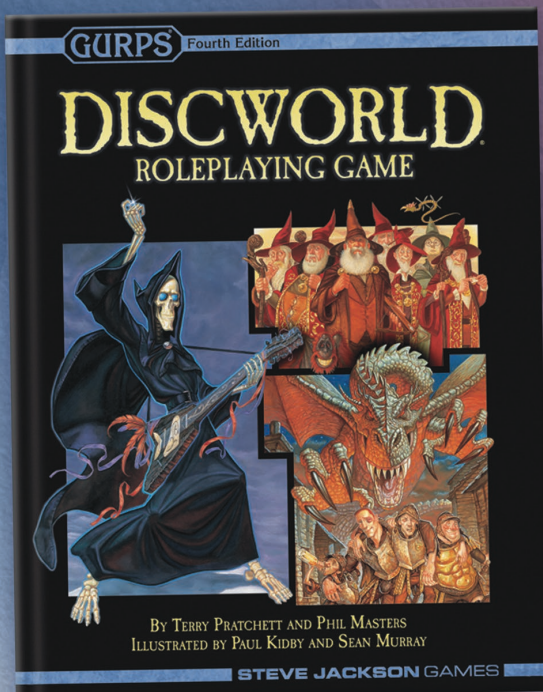
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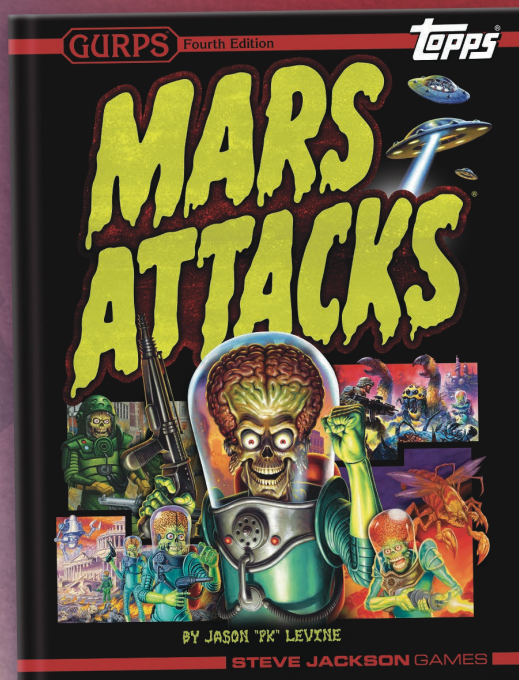


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# EIDETIC MEMORY

## THE DWYRM

BY DAVID L. PULVER

A monster is not just something to be slain. It is a body of folklore, sightings, and urban legends that surround it, some true, some false, some simply weird. This is especially true of cryptids – the GM may add verisimilitude by building a set of urban legends, reports, and myths associated with it, which adventurers can research.

This is a (fictional) collection of clues and reports about a “new” cryptid, the Dwyrn, and a related urban legend, the Hungerman. The most important thing about the Dwyrn in a **GURPS Monster Hunters** game is its mystery. Unlike some creatures, the truth about the Dwyrn (as detailed below), is not yet widely known among monster hunters.

### LITERARY ROOTS

Eric Rummage (1903-1928) was a promising West Coast amateur poet and composer. His early pastoral works, notably *A Symphony of Frogs and Other Voices* (1925), were written during long rambles in the mountains with his friend and lover Iris, and they attracted favorable literary reviews. He was also active in the circle of young authors mentored by regional editor Leroy Comb. Today his work has been largely forgotten; he is best known for his short poem “The Dwyrn,” which inspired several other works of weird fiction.

In the autumn of 1927, Rummage’s fiancée, the noted cellist Iris Pringle (age 21), was diagnosed with a serious eating disorder and confined to Copperwood Sanitarium, a local asylum. Her condition deteriorated quickly. In the course of a visit with Rummage, she somehow escaped. Despite a county-wide search, Iris Pringle was never found. Suspicion fell on Rummage, the only witness. On the day of the disappearance, he suffered a nervous breakdown; an orderly found him babbling the nonsense-word “Dwyrn.” A few days later, he seemingly recovered and was sent home, only to set fire to his house (incidentally or deliberately burning his unpublished collection of musical scores, songs, and poems). At that point, Rummage’s family had him committed to a sanitarium.

Some months into his incarceration, the young man regained his wits long enough to take visits from some of his circle of literary friends, including writer Vincent Brock and editor Leroy Crumb. He also penned several weird verses

before succumbing to a stroke that left him effectively paralyzed. His last poem was published by Comb in the small-press literary journal *Knicknacks*:

*Iris, slender yet pregnant  
Your black toothless smile  
That cannibals envy  
Swollen, bursting, over-ripe  
Prefigures a beautiful and terrible apotheosis  
No prison can hold you, beautiful Dwyrn  
Will you seal my future fate and drink my many lives,  
Slithering chariot of god?*

– Eric D. Rummage, “The Dwyrn,” *Knicknacks*, 1929

“The Dwyrn” would likely have been forgotten except that another member of Leroy Comb’s literary circle, regional poet and weird-fiction writer Vincent Brock, drew from Rummage’s poem and his and Comb’s recollections of his visits to write the short story “Dream of the Dwyrn” (1941). Indeed, in a letter Comb later claimed Brock’s story was a lightly fictionalized account of Eric Rummage’s own ravings.

### *Dream of the Dwyrn*

From “Origins of the Dwyrn Cycle” by Troy Urdang, in *Southern Screams: An Anthology of Regional Horror* (Underworld Press, 2004):

In Vincent Brock’s short story “Dream of the Dwyrn,” an up-and-coming music composer, Owen Blake, and his newlywed wife Irina, are driving through the mountains on a honeymoon. Irina is cheerful, but Blake worries about his stalled career, his fears that he will be stuck writing advertising jingles, and his plans for the future. During a weird thunderstorm, a wormlike horror drops from the sky.

After a harrowing pursuit, it swallows them. They awaken in a forest glade miles away from the mountains. Irina remembers nothing except a single word in her head: Dwyrn. Blake recalls bizarre visions, sounds, and cosmic images of past, present, and future from his trip through “the belly of the worm.” This experience gives him new musical insights; he hears the “music of the spheres” and feels he is destined to become a great composer.

Irina is irritable and complains of growing hunger pangs. They find an abandoned hunting lodge and take shelter. They trap a rabbit, which Irina tears into with savage gusto before it is cooked, then bursts into tears. He comforts her, and they spend the night together – but Irina’s hunger grows, and Blake finds her gnawing on her own fingers. He ties her up for her own safety. That night, Blake tries to comfort the hungry Irina by singing the weird unearthly melody he has composed. They fall asleep in an embrace. When he awakes, instead of Irina, he is embracing a glowing worm. Its mouth opens . . .

Brock’s pulp story was popular with readers. Over the next several years, it appeared in several weird-fiction and horror anthologies and a radio play. It was also the basis of the B-grade horror movie *The Dwyrm* (1956, directed by Ethan Matterson).

Perhaps it was not surprising, then, that during the “UFO flap” of the 1950s and 1960s, there were also a number of so-called Dwyrm sightings, in which people reported strange glowing flying worms and other close encounters that evoked the incidents of the story, mostly in mountainous regions and during stormy weather. Folklorist Mervin Kowan in *Movie Monsters to Urban Legends* (1999) records as many as 51 alleged “Dwyrm” sightings (all but two after 1957). These inspired the pop-science documentary *In Search of the Dwyrm* (1980), featuring portentous narration, extensive footage from the 1950s movie, and a visit to the boarded-up Copperwood Sanitarium to trace the movie monsters back to their original roots with Eric Rummage and Iris Pringle.

## Adventure Seed

The German B-list director Erik Krakenberg, famous for his terrible adaptations of video games and remakes of old horror movies, has turned his hand to a R-rated remake of the classic *The Dwyrm*, which will start porn star Tina Topaz as Irina. To make the movie more authentic he is filming on location in various sites, such as Copperwood Sanitarium and a hunting lodge once owned by the Rummage family, that, according to the stories, are associated with Dwyrm sightings.

However, Eric Rummage and his literary successors were not mere fabulists. The Dwyrm are real. The movie is a recipe for trouble . . . what if a real Dwyrm shows up?

## A TYPICAL DWYRM SIGHTING: BURNS-HALLOWELL INCIDENT

An odd light had been reported by several truckers on the highway near the small town of Coldbrook. The local sheriff’s department sent a car with two experienced deputies, Ethan Burns and Tom Hallowell, to investigate. They reported a bright multi-colored light approaching and then lost contact.

Nine hours later, a search party found their undamaged vehicle 12 miles from the highway on Owl Island, a small island in Rupert’s Lake. There is no ferry or bridge to the island and no sign of how the vehicle, which was dry, had been transported there. (The vehicle itself later disappeared from the police yard.)

Both deputies were catatonic but recovered on the way to the county hospital. Deputy Burns talked of seeing a glowing ring approaching and a blue darkness that “swallowed them” while Hallowell claimed to remember nothing. Some

newspapers and the local TV station referred to it as a “flying saucer” which Burns angrily denied.

Four days later, Hallowell took an overdose of sleeping pills. Burns appeared to recover, but shortly after Deputy Hallowell’s funeral, he went on a three-day eating binge, apparently consumed with an uncontrollable hunger.

## Adventure Seeds

The above incident is typical of some of the Dwyrm sightings reported since the 1950s. If this is a recent incident, the PCs could be the ones to investigate it. Alternatively, it might be an old case report they uncover while researching the Dwyrm or some other cryptid (in which case Burns was never seen again). If this is a live case, the hunters may arrive to initially investigate what seems like a “UFO sighting” only to find the witness, Burns, is now suffering from Hungerman Syndrome (see *Hungerman*, pp. 26-27) for the last couple of days. He’s been hiding out in his house and eating takeout; after maxing out his credit cards, he shambles toward the nearest food source (a local butcher shop) to demand more food, before barricading himself in the kitchen. A couple of employees are trapped there with him; when the food runs out, he’ll go after them.

*Have pity on them all, for it is  
we who are the real monsters.*

– Bernard Heuvelmans,  
*On the Track of Unknown Animals*

## A MAJOR INCIDENT: DWYRM UNDERGROUND

*Commuter delays continue as the city’s busiest stretch of subway remains closed overnight after the discovery of what was described as an “environmental spill.” Hundreds of commuters were packed into shuttle buses as the city struggled to divert residents from the closed-down route.*

*This marks yet another roadblock in the city’s subway rejuvenation project, coming only days after the start of the popular Sound Underground music program . . .*

– Jason Salazar Reporting: *News at Night*

*“Mr. Mayor, we’re going to have to say something!”*

*“Erika, this is insane! What about what that witness saw?”*

*“He was drunk! An entire subway car full of commuters can’t vanish into thin air!”*

*“It was a late-night car, sir. There were only nine people aboard it.”*

*“That’s nine too many! And where are they? What do I tell the families?”*

*“Terrorists?”*

*“Terrorists?! How can it be terrorists? The entire car is missing!”*

*“Mr. Mayor, in these circumstances, I have some special consultants we should contact . . .”*

– Transcript of crisis meeting in mayor’s office (suppressed)



## Adventure Seed

This is an example of a more severe Dwyrms incident: the subway car was swallowed by an Elder Dwyrms. The PCs are among the special consultants called upon by a panicked big-city government to find out who was responsible for the disappearance. Prowling the tunnels may lead to a fleeting encounter with a Dwyrms, but it should vanish after being briefly seen.

Eventually the subway car itself is discovered many miles away (perhaps underground, perhaps on the surface) with the dazed survivors aboard, who the party may get a chance to interview (see *Swallowed by the Dwyrms*, p. 25, for what they can relate about their experience.) This may in turn lead the PCs to further investigate the creatures and discover the Dwyrms legend.

### *The Symphony on the Subway*

Henrietta Ravenswaay is famous composer and mathematician. As part of a promotion, her "Symphony of the Comets: Music of the Outer Spheres" is being played by musicians in the city's underground subway. Unknown to her, the music she produces is similar to the mating call of the Dwyrms, and parallels the compositions hinted at in Rummage's lost works (see p. 22).

## THE NATURE OF THE DWYRM

What are the Dwyrms? We have seen how people perceive them. But what are they really? In fact, Dwyrms are plane-shifting dimensional reality vampires who occasionally visit this reality. They are nocturnal, although they are sometimes sighted underground during the day. At a distance, they appear as glowing worms, serpents, or rods of prismatic light; when they dance in the air, they often coil into hoops. When a Dwyrms warps itself, it swallows its own tail, briefly forming a circular ring-shape and vanishes. These aerobatic gyrations are often accompanied by electromagnetic disturbances and radio static. They are usually solitary, but on rare occasions, multiple Dwyrms may be observed.

Only a few sightings occur each year. Their manifestations are associated with ley-line activity, fierce lightning storms, tornadoes, dimensional nexus points, and certain harmonics, such as particular types of weird, discordant music.

A Dwyrms is a giant worm, ranging from man-sized to the size of a subway train. Dwyrms are classified as a unique species of cryptid (see *Cryptids*, **GURPS Monster Hunters 3: The Enemy**, p. 23). They are unrelated evolutionarily to any known animal, although they may have certain cryptozoic relationships with will o' the wisps, thunderbirds, and storm elementals, assuming such creatures actually exist.

The Dwyrms may be relatively recent visitors to Earth. Testing Dwyrms for genetic material reveals they do not possess terrestrial DNA. Perhaps they reached Earth as a result of Dwyrms parasites hitching a ride inside an extraterrestrial visitor, maybe some time in the early 20th century. It is even possible Iris Pringle (see p. 22) was their first victim.

They are intelligent but animalistic. They prefer high altitudes and most are found in wild, mountainous regions. They

are also attracted to flowing electrical energy, such as electrical wires on power poles or electrical rails in subways; they likely combine this with the dimensional energy they devour from victims to get the power to world-jump. A Dwyrms that has recently fed often hovers near a power source, sometimes producing a localized brownout.

As "reality vampires," Dwyrms prey on sapient beings, opening wide maws to reveal shimmering gateways. Dwyrms swallow people whole, devour their possible futures, and then spit them out again. This act of eating and excretion transports the victim, usually several miles away, but sometimes farther or to a different dimension. When Dwyrms have eaten enough futures, they weave them together to create a new Dwyrms egg. This egg is sometimes left in the body of one of their prey, attached to his aura; it drains both physical and psychic energy from him, a symptom of which is an ever-increasing hunger. After it has grown strong enough a Dwyrms embryo bursts free of its host, assumes physical form, and vanishes to another dimension. This phenomena is the source of the "Hungerman" urban legend (p. 26). Some years later, the Dwyrms returns to Earth as a far larger adult, seeking futures to prey upon.

Dwyrms seem to shift in color, intensity, and size, sometimes appearing as a thin string and others as a fat serpentine worm. Occasionally its body vanishes and only its shadow remains; sometimes the reverse is true. If seen close up, a Dwyrms has four white eyes and a small pair of feathery winglets just behind its head. Its mouth is a black void; flickering blue energy sometimes seems to writhe within it. Over a period of a few years, it grows in size from about 15' long to about 45' long and in girth from 1' to 3'.

Dwyrms are occasionally mistaken for flying saucers. Cryptid sightings of "rods" or UFO sightings of "glowing fireballs" sometimes in fact are sightings of Dwyrms, as their heads tend to glow brighter than their long tails.

### *Adult Dwyrms*

This is a Dwyrms that has recently transformed. Dwyrms of this size tend to be somewhat playful, swooping about and buzzing potential victims before carrying one off. It usually then warps to another dimension. Once in a while, it does so while grappling a person, leaving the victim stranded somewhere else.

<b>ST:</b> 45	<b>HP:</b> 90	<b>Speed:</b> 6.50
<b>DX:</b> 14	<b>Will:</b> 12	<b>Move:</b> 6
<b>IQ:</b> 11	<b>Per:</b> 17	<b>Weight:</b> 1,000-2,000 lbs.
<b>HT:</b> 12	<b>FP:</b> 20	<b>SM:</b> +1
<b>Dodge:</b> 10	<b>Parry:</b> N/A	<b>DR:</b> 4 (Tough Skin)

**Fright Check:** -3.

**Warp Mouth (14):** If the attack hits, the Dwyrms gets an immediate IQ roll; success teleports the subject (who can weigh up to 800 lbs.) a distance up to 10 miles. On a failure, the subject is not entirely teleported; he also takes 3d(10) corrosion damage.

**Grapple and Constrict (14):** If a Dwyrms is faced with serious threats that it cannot teleport, it attempts to wrap itself around the target and squeeze using Constriction Attack (p. B43).

**Traits:** See *Dwyrms Traits*, p. 25.

**Skills:** Aerobatics-14; Brawling-14.

## Elder Dwyrm

A fully mature Dwyrm, several years old, is a creature of enormous size, 4' to 8' wide and 50' to 90' long. Dwyrms of this size often gestate multiple eggs within their bodies and are especially aggressive in seeking out hosts.

**ST:** 100      **HP:** 200      **Speed:** 6.00  
**DX:** 11      **Will:** 14      **Move:** 6  
**IQ:** 13      **Per:** 12      **Weight:** 8,000 lbs.  
**HT:** 13      **FP:** 20      **SM:** +5  
**Dodge:** 9      **Parry:** N/A      **DR:** 7 (Tough Skin)

**Fright Check:** -5.

**Warp Mouth (15):** If the attack hits, the Dwyrm gets an immediate IQ roll; success teleports a subject (who can weigh up to 80,000 lbs.) a distance up to 10 miles. A mature Dwyrm has a mouth large enough to completely swallow a bus or even a subway car! On a failure, the subject is not entirely teleported; he also takes 8d(10) corrosion damage.

**Grapple and Constrict (15):** As per *Adult Dwyrm*, p. 24.

**Traits:** See *Dwyrm Traits*, below.

**Skills:** Aerobatics-14; Brawling-15.

## SWALLOWED BY A DWYRM

When a person is swallowed by a Dwyrm, it appears to an external observer that they have been devoured or even disintegrated. In fact, they experience a strange sensation, and then find they are teleported, seemingly unharmed.

The teleportation is simply the Dwyrm excreting the bits of the person that it has not eaten. And what Dwyrms devour . . . are possibilities.

Sapient beings swallowed by a Dwyrm seem to be flying through a bright tunnel of light. This journey is accompanied by a cacophony of sound, both weird discordant symphonies of music and manifold voices screaming . . . voices that they recognize are their own. Their consciousness feels like is fragmenting; they experience several subjective minutes experiencing visions of past and future lives, which are what-if versions of themselves, based on decisions not taken, a kaleidoscope of alternate future-histories. As they watch, these alternative lives each seem to vibrate apart, vanishing into nothingness, leaving the image of a single fate looming large in their mind . . . and they return to consciousness.

In most instances, the passengers awaken, confused and disoriented but seemingly unharmed. They have not been eaten, but they are usually at least several miles from where they disappeared, and possibly much farther away. If the Dwyrm was big enough to swallow a vehicle, or multiple people, everyone will arrive together.

However, the journey has not been without a price. A Dwyrm devours *possibilities*, eating its victims' alternate versions and future selves, which tends to lock their reality into one particular probability line.

Usually the unfortunate souls gain two traits: Destiny (pp. B48, B135) and Unique (p. B160).

If so, as part of the journey through the Dwyrm, the passenger also sees some hints of that future destiny; the GM should reveal a few visions of the "future self" that he witnessed, e.g., "you saw many versions of yourself . . . all of which melted away, screaming your name. The last thing you remember is an image of yourself, in pain, holding a baby cradled in your arms, looking at the burning wreckage of a crashed airplane . . ." (There's no need to reveal that they now have the Destiny advantage or disadvantage, however.)

If a person who already has the Unique trait is swallowed by a Dwyrm, he is erased from existence! However, Dwyrms will not deliberately attack individuals who exist in only one timeline (they taste flat and give little nourishment), so in most cases, those people are safe (unless they're in a vehicle full of tasty probability-rich others).

In addition to adding the Unique trait, roll 2d to see what Destiny, if any, is gained:

Roll	Destiny
2	Great advantage (15 point)
3-4	Major advantage (10 point)
5-6	Minor advantage (5 point)
7	Dwyrm egg*
8-9	Minor disadvantage (-5 points)
10-11	Major disadvantage (-10 points)
12	Great disadvantage (-15 points)

\* Re-roll if a person already has the Destiny advantage.

If someone who already has a Destiny is swallowed by a Dwyrm, the stripping of probabilities may adjust the value of that destiny (up to a maximum of a +/-15-point Great Destiny). Thus, if the person has Great Destiny (15 points) and rolls "Minor disadvantage (-5 points)," the Dwyrm has eaten part of the victim's future, devouring 5 points of the Great Destiny, reducing it to a Major Destiny worth 10 points.

Anything that isn't sapient will simply travel through the Dwyrm wormhole without any obvious effects.

### Dwyrm Traits

This set of traits are standard for all Dwyrms.

**Dwyrm Traits:** 3D Spatial Sense; Affliction (HT-2; Advantage, Warp, Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy, Range Limit, 10 miles, Reliable 10; Melee, Reach C); Appearance (Monstrous); Cannot Speak; Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Enhanced Move 3 (Air Speed 96); Constriction Attack; Flexibility; Flight (Small Wings); Hyperspectral Vision; Imaging Radar; Infectious Attack; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous); Jumper (Reliable 10); Mind Shield 4; Nictitating Membrane 5; Nocturnal; Obscure 3 (Radar) (Always On; Area Effect, 64 yards); Protected Vision; Reduced Consumption 3; Restricted Diet (Possible futures of sapient beings); Sealed; Social Stigma (Monster); Ultrahearing; Vermiform; Wild Animal.

**Notes:** The Dwyrms' Infectious Attack works slightly differently – instead of being based on damage, anyone teleported has a chance of being infected by a Dwyrm parasite (see *Swallowed by a Dwyrm*, above).

## THE HUNGERMAN PHENOMENA

Disturbing parallels to the Dwyrm legend exist in the urban legends of "Hungerman" (the earliest seem to date to the Depression era in the late 1930s). These typically involve a skinny or sometimes terribly emaciated man or woman who enters a mostly empty fast food restaurant or convenience store late at night, and begins eating everything sight without paying. When the store clerk intervenes, Hungerman eats him. Sometimes a survivor gets away. The more recent versions of these legends appear to spring from a single source, a 911 call . . .

– Judi Zhang, *Literary Roots of North American Urban Legends* (McGill-Queens press, 2010)

As detailed in the section on mature Dwyrm, someone who is swallowed by an adult Dwyrm has a chance of being infected by a Dwyrm's parasitic egg. Dwyrm egg-parasites must mature inside a being with a sufficiently developed brain. What is important for the Dwyrm development cycle is not the host-being's biology as such, but the type and level of electrical activity. On Earth, humans and other sapient beings qualify.

Dwyrm parasites psychically attach themselves to the host's aura and are initially insubstantial and invisible to most senses. They are visible to magnetic resonance imaging and to some other forms of electrical sensing. They also have auras that can be detected. Dwyrm parasite minds can be sensed, but reading their mind just signals *hunger!*

In fact, a Dwyrm parasite is a gate-feeder. It periodically opens up micro-wormholes inside the host, sucking both matter and electrical energy at a tremendous rate. The type of organic matter consumed doesn't really matter, but since the parasites can only attach themselves to a sapient, it feeds on whatever the host eats. A Dwyrm attached to a human grows on human food, one attached to a vampire takes blood, and so on.

To support the growing Dwyrm, the host must eat a tremendous amount. The embryonic Dwyrm's appetite increases exponentially. Initially, the parasite only eats when it is awake. The host starts eating or drinking something, and half way through the activity, the creature awakens and opens a gateway inside the user's stomach, transferring most of the meal to itself. One sated, it falls asleep and begins to grow again. When it awakens, its appetite further increases. Over time, the creature demands ever-greater amounts of the food the user eats.

As the parasite grows, it gets bigger. To anyone with astral sight, an five- to eight-day-old parasite is a prismatic worm, dozens of feet long, tightly wrapped around the host's spine, a remora-like head inside the stomach, or, in later stages, extending up the throat.

## A HUNGERMAN INCIDENT

Dispatch: "911 Emergency."

Caller: "This is Milly Lee. I'm a night cashier at the Stuff and Go on Princess Street. You got to send cops right now. Some dude is eating Darrel!"

Dispatch: "Who's eating Darrel, ma'am?"

Caller: "This skinny freaky dude in a black hoodie! He came in and just started grabbing junk food off the shelves, just scarfing them down, like he's eating everything in sight, packages and all. So Darrel, the manager, he ups and grabs the freak, and oh, my god, Darrel . . ."

Dispatch: "Has anyone been injured, ma'am? Is the intruder armed?"

Caller: "No, he was eating Darrel's arm! Darrel tried to grab the freak by the neck and he just opened his mouth and swallowed Darrel's fist. It just went right down his mouth . . ."

Dispatch: "Darrel's fist?"

Caller: "Swallowed his entire **arm**, the freak just swallowed it, and Darrel was screaming and his arm just went down the thing's throat, all the way to his elbow, and Darrel screams for me to run get help!"

Dispatch: "Ma'am, officers are on the way. Is there anyone else in the store?"

Caller: "Just Darrel and the freak – except I don't hear Darrel screaming no more . . ."

*Certainly life does imitate art,  
and from time to time you will  
find that what was a UL [urban  
legend] is now a true story.*

– Rodney Dale,  
*The Wordsworth Book  
of Urban Legend*

## Hungerman

The so-called Hungerman is someone who has been infested by Dwyrm parasite that has had a day to mature. The parasite has grown to several feet long inside the body and has begun interfering with the brain. The host's hunger is acute.

After about four to six days, the Dwyrm parasite has grown large enough that it moves its mouth-gate from the host's stomach up to his throat. Anyone looking down the user's throat at this stage will see a black hole behind the lips.

The creature is now awake. For the next 24 hours, it is thirsty and hungry all the time. The Dwyrm is nearly self-aware and its parasitic form is getting ready for its metamorphosis. It needs a final burst of energy and mass to break through into our dimension. The host's mind is overridden by an all-consuming hunger! The host can now eat *anything* solid just by shoving it down his mouth. He will grab anything that isn't nailed down and eat it, attempting to build up as much organic mass as possible. Sometimes the Hungerman will cannibalize other humans, especially if there is no other food in reach, or if humans interfere with him. A Hungerman may also eat pets, domestic animals, insects, or anything else he can grab.



*To them, cryptozoologists' willingness to consider as possible, or at least as deserving of inquiry, some especially extraordinary claims raises eyebrows and fuels the occasional charge of "pseudoscience" (however impeccably credentialed many cryptozoologists may be).*

– Loren Coleman and Jerome Clark, **Cryptozoology A To Z**

After the Hungerman host has consumed about 25 times his body weight, the final transformation occurs. The host's mind is filled with nothing but the desire to eat. If not restrained, he may even start tearing up his own (probably emaciated) body and feeding his own flesh into himself. However, this gruesome sight is only the beginning! The Hungerman then starts to bloat. His mouth and jaw rip open, and a dark maw engulfs his entire face. The Hungerman's body goes limp as the feeder consumes organs and bones. His emaciated skin peels off in strips like a flesh-colored banana. Then, what little remains bursts like an overripe fruit, revealing the juvenile hyper-worm within.

### Typical Hungerman

Statistics of a Hungerman vary depend on the original individual; average statistics for an ordinary infected adult human are given below. Hungerman will usually try to grapple an opponent and then bite. His bite's corrosion damage represents the victim being consumed by the matter-devouring gate.

<b>ST:</b> 13	<b>HP:</b> 13	<b>Speed:</b> 6.50
<b>DX:</b> 12	<b>Will:</b> 12	<b>Move:</b> 6
<b>IQ:</b> 8	<b>Per:</b> 10	<b>Weight:</b> 80-150 lbs.
<b>HT:</b> 13	<b>FP:</b> 20	<b>SM:</b> 0
<b>Dodge:</b> 9	<b>Parry:</b> 10	<b>DR:</b> 0

**Fright Check:** 0

**Bite (14):** 2d-1(10) corrosion. Reach C.

**Grapple (14):** Held with effective ST 15. Reach C.

**Traits:** Gluttony (6); High Pain Threshold; Increased Consumption 5 (96 meals/day); Obsession (Eating) (6).

**Skills:** Brawling-14; Wrestling-14.

## THE SEARCH FOR THE DWYRM

Awareness of the Dwyrm is not confined to pop culture and monster hunters responding to incidents. Other parties may seek out these unnatural cryptids to fulfill their own goals.

### The Indigo Grimoire

From a fragment of the *Indigo Grimoire of Athanasius Borealis* (1526; English translation 1892) as quoted in *Indices of Black Magick & Necromancy* by Nestor Graves (1859):

The great marquis DWIZARIAN, a fallen seraphim, is the master of the gate. His is the mastery of the power of transposition. He has the power to transport through space a party of men, or indeed a wagon and team.

DWIZARIAN is said to also grant the evoker other powers: To shred your enemies; to induce madness; to eat as much as you wish without gaining weight; to know the past and future of the evoker.

An invocation of DWIZARIAN requires music be performed in the depths of the Earth. When the storm rages, the following musical notes, reproduced below, in combination with the burning of basil, rosemary, and a candle made from the fat of an infant goat . . .

### The Occultist

Cryptobiologist Professor Henrietta Lockwood is hunting the Dwyrm, hoping to salvage a reputation in the community that was damaged after she was taken in by a clever hoax last year involving the legendary Dover Demon. Lockwood is also an occult scholar; she has a theory that the demon Dwizarian referred to in the *Indigo Grimoire*, a blasphemous Renaissance-era spell book (see above), contains references to the Dwyrm. She has seen fragments of the Dwizarian ritual in the *Indigo Grimoire* quoted in other books, but not a full translation. Unfortunately, she has learned the only extant copy of *Indigo Grimoire* is said to be in the library of a master vampire, Lady Oenothera. Her attempts to acquire the spell book having failed; she needs to trick or persuade monster hunters to do away with Oenothera so that she can her hands on it. Lockwood believes that the ritual may explain how to summon a Dwyrm, which she can then photograph or even capture. As funding for her own research lab is in jeopardy, she has an eye on the Sirius Prize (p. 28).

### The Strange Case of Bellhaven Church

This old church in a backwoods town has a stained-glass window that shows "seraphim opening the gates to heaven" and descending around a preacher, while an organ is being played in the background and parishioners gaze up in rapture. The creatures depicted in the stained glass are in fact accurately rendered Dwyrm.

The current preacher and his congregation are actually Satanic cultists who believe the Dwyrm are demons who grant them prosperity and good harvests in exchange for their worship. They are of course deluded in this, but the destiny-warping effects of having a few individuals each season swallowed by Dwyrm have confirmed in their minds that they are dealing with Satan. This in turn has fed a culture of guilt and fear, and the cultists will react with the usual paranoia and covert violence toward investigators.

Their ability to summon the Dwyrm comes from a prayer book that contains the same ritual found in the *Indigo Grimoire*: music that can be played on the church organ during a lightning storm has a 1 in 6 chance of attracting a Dwyrm.

## Another Dwyrn Sighting?

The noise band Eklectrophic Paroxysm were playing an outdoor concert in a field outside a hippy commune with an audience of about 70 people. Drugs were flowing like water, which may explain the “mass hallucination” that saw a “winged worm” emerge from a well. Moments later, the concert was plunged into darkness as lights went out and the generator overloaded. Total panic resulted after the light swallowed up two band members who had been standing atop an improvised stage.

### Sirius Venkman Prize for Cryptozoology

Sirius Venkman is a successful radio talk-show host with an abiding interest in cryptozoology, whose popular late night program *Timezones!* is widely syndicated. He offers an annual \$100,000 prize for the capture or verified physical evidence (remains, DNA, eggs, etc.) of specific cryptid. This year's target, the Dwyrn, has inspired a number of amateur cryptozoologists and monster hunters to go after the elusive targets.

## Simonsen Institute for Telesthetic Research

This small but well-funded think tank and laboratory (based in Redmond, Washington) is devoted to the study of mental anomalies, including psi research. Dr. Ingrid Twiberg has recently completed a detailed study of so-called Dwyrn incident survivors. Her conclusion is that there is evidence that a possible Dwyrn close encounter has a profound psychological impact. Of the dozen verified cases in which she believe with a 75% or greater confidence that an actual Dwyrn encounter

took place, at least 55% went on to achieve some form of notability within 15 years of their encounter, including:

- The founder of a successful chain of Lebanese restaurants.
- An Olympic gold medal-winning ice skater.
- A televangelist with millions of followers.
- A U.S. senator.
- A recent MIT graduate whose consumer electronics start-up was soon valued at \$150 million.
- An electronic musician with two Grammy-award winning albums.
- A serial killer who murdered at least 13 people.
- A prize-winning journalist and human rights activist.

However, not all of them had positive experiences. In addition to the serial killer, the senator's career imploded drastically following a corruption scandal. The journalist was taken hostage in the Middle East and is still being held there. Clearly an encounter with the Dwyrn was no guarantee of happiness.

Twiberg would very much like to capture a live Dwyrn, or failing that, to locate more human case studies.

## 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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# YOUNG HUNTERS

BY LIAM DUNCAN

Adolescence can be hard. Adolescence spent surrounded by flesh-eating monsters, doubly so. Urban-fantasy worlds like that of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or *Young Wizards* may seem bleak at first glance, with the constant looming threat of getting eaten (or worse), so how do they so often manage to be more optimistic than real life?

The secret to accomplishing this seeming contradiction is to take the many problems faced by ordinary young people and present analogous challenges with supernatural twists. The result is not an intractable structural issue, but a puzzle that can be solved or a monster that can be stabbed. After one problem is overcome, simply find a new difficulty to punch, from academic pressure to unrequited love, from parental neglect to the constant threat of embarrassment, from poor body image to substance abuse.

Young players (or the young at heart) will find that these themes are very much in the spirit of **GURPS Monster Hunters**. Not only do the players get hope, they also experience *agency* – they are not powerless, and their difficulties are something which they can conquer.

The best such stories remain grounded by mixing supernatural action with occasional reminders of real-world hurdles. Hunters need to be careful about getting so distracted by fighting a demonic metaphor for a standardized test that they forget to study for the real one!

Mechanically, such a setting treats children as essentially being small adults, with a slightly different – but no less onerous – set of social obligations and dramatic problems. Ignore the realistic rules for young characters on p. B20. Instead, build the adventurer as normal (using the 400-point templates from *GURPS Monster Hunters 1: Champions*, the 200-point templates from *GURPS Monster Hunters 4: Sidekicks*, or whatever other method is appropriate to the campaign), and then apply one of the following lenses to adjust for their age. This lens is in *addition* to the standard motivational lens that all hunters must take.

## YOUNG HUNTER LENS

0 points

You are 13 to 17 years old, and are most likely enrolled as a student in a local high school. As if the responsibility of saving the world and keeping your community safe wasn't enough, you also have to worry about your GPA and about finding a date to the homecoming dance!

**Advantages:** Claim to Hospitality (Parents) [1] or Emancipated Minor (p. 24) [1]. • Add the following to the advantages offered by your template: Destiny [5 to 15]; High Manual Dexterity 1-2 [5 to 10]; Intuition [15]; Perfect

Balance [15]; Pitiable [5]; Rapid Healing [5]. • You may use extra points to upgrade your Claim to Hospitality to Claim to Hospitality (Extended Family) [2], or to Patron (Parents, pp. 31-32) [5 or 10].

**Disadvantages:** Social Stigma (Minor) [-5]. • Add the following to the disadvantages offered by your template: ST -1 or -2 [-10/level], Curious [-5\*], Impulsiveness [-10\*], Odious Personal Habit (Sullen or sarcastic demeanor) [-5], Overconfidence [-5\*] or Low Self Image [-10], Pacifism [Varies], Sense of Duty (Family) [-5], Stubborn [-5], or Wealth [Varies].

**Skills:** Professional Skill (Student, p. 33) (A) IQ [2]. • Two of Bicycling (E) DX [1]; Combat Sport (any), Sports (any), or Driving (any), all (A) DX-1 [1]; Area Knowledge (any), Computer Operation, Current Affairs (any), Games (any), Hobby Skill (any), or Savoir-Faire (High School, pp. 33-34), all (E) IQ [1]; Musical Instrument (any) (H) IQ-2 [1]; Survival (any) (A) Per-1 [1]; or put one point in any skill covered by Professional Skill (Student). • Be sure not to duplicate any skills from your template.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

## VERY YOUNG HUNTER LENS

0 points

You are 13 years old or younger, and are most likely a student in elementary or middle school. In a sensible world, someone your age would be enjoying childhood, not hunting vampires and demogorgons late at night. But sometimes, a kid's got to do what a kid's got to do.

**Attributes:** ST -2 [-20].

**Secondary Characteristics:** SM -1 [0]; Basic Move -1 [-5].

**Advantages:** Claim to Hospitality (Parents) [1]. • Spend 30 points on Destiny [5 to 15]; High Manual Dexterity 1-2 [5 to 10]; Intuition [15]; Perfect Balance [15]; Pitiable [5]; or Rapid Healing [5]; or to upgrade your Claim to Hospitality to Claim to Hospitality (Extended Family) [2], or to Patron (Parents) [5 or 10]. • Add any remaining advantages to those offered by your template. • With the GM's permission, you may instead spend some of these points on potential advantages (see p. B33).

**Disadvantages:** Social Stigma (Child) [-10] (p. 33). • Add the following to the disadvantages offered by your template: Curious [-5\*], Impulsiveness [-10\*], Odious Personal Habit (Childlike lack of social grace) [-5], Overconfidence [-5\*] or Low Self-Image [-10], Pacifism [Varies], Sense of Duty (Family) [-5], Stubborn [-5], Wealth [Varies], or up to two additional levels of reduced ST [-10/level].



**Skills:** Professional Skill (Student, p. 33) (A) IQ [2]. • *Two of* Bicycling (E) DX [1]; Combat Sport (any) or Sports (any), both (A) DX-1 [1]; Area Knowledge (any), Computer Operation, Current Affairs (any), Games (any) or Hobby Skill (any), both (E) IQ [1]; Musical Instrument (any) (H) IQ-2 [1]; Survival (any) (A) Per-1 [1]; or put one point in any skill covered by Professional Skill (Student). • Be sure not to duplicate any skills from your template.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

## DRAMA IN THE CLASSROOM

A school isn't necessarily restricted to serving as a backdrop for heroic activities. In the right circumstances, drama can emerge in the classroom itself! The guidelines presented here assume that if classroom business requires a roll at all, it can be handled with a simple roll of an appropriate skill, usually Professional Skill (Student) or Teaching. However, more detailed rules for academic challenges that might face a student or a teacher can be found in *GURPS Social Engineering: Back to School*, pp. 4-8, 17-20.

Some of the rules in that book could even prove useful to a young champion's monster-hunting career; for example, the training montage (*Back to School*, pp. 19-20) is a long-standing feature of the genre. You can also add zip to planning and similar sequences with the suggestions in *I've Got a Great Idea* from Pyramid #3/53: *Action*.

## FAMILY MATTERS

In a high-powered cinematic game like *Monster Hunters*, "I live with my parents" is worth a 1-point Claim to Hospitality, and Patron is reserved for *exceptional* parents.

This Claim to Hospitality trait assumes that your parents provide you with room, board, and occasionally transportation, but otherwise don't contribute significantly to your monster-hunting career. If they do, consider Patron (Parents, pp. 31-32). Likewise, your parents expect you to occasionally do chores, and hope that you get good grades, but are not particularly overbearing or protective. If they are, take the Meddling Parents disadvantage (p. 32). Finally, NPC family members are usually considered "off-limits" to supernatural threats unless your own choices expose them to danger – if this is not true, take Dependents (Family Members) (p. 32).

If you are over 13, live on your own, and don't want spend your time dodging social workers, choose Emancipated Minor (p. 34) rather than Claim to Hospitality.

## WHERE ARE ALL THE GROWN-UPS?

It's rare enough for an adult to make the decision to dedicate their lives to fighting against the forces of evil – when a group of children find themselves forced to do so, it usually means that the situation has gotten very desperate.

*Adults Are Useless:* You have to take up The Mission because no one else can. This may be because children are naturally more open minded, or because of a widespread mind-clouding phenomenon that selectively affects adults. (For one

example phenomenon, check out the Façade, described in *Mask of Humanity* from Pyramid #3/97: *Strange Powers*).

*Not in My Home:* Your school is a locus of supernatural energy, or is otherwise a popular target for monsters. This puts its students on the front lines of the conflict, whether they like it or not. Unfortunately for the monsters, some of those students have decided to fight back.

*The Family Business:* Your parents were hunters, and their parents before them. You learned how to take down a werewolf before you learned how to drive a car. If you're an operative (*Champions*, p. 8), you can spend the points earmarked for a Patron on your parents, the organization they work for, or both (see p. 32).

*The Wild Children:* You suffer from a severe lack of good influences, ever since your parents were lost to vampires, prison, or drug abuse – or because of simple neglect. You might fight monsters as a means of coping, or simply because no one was around to tell you not to.

*All the Cool Kids Were Doing It:* None of the above reasons apply to you directly, but since they do relate to some of your peers, you found yourself going along for the ride.

*Standing by Your Side:* In some campaigns, a party of mixed ages is normal. A token adult who acts as a mentor figure to a group of younger hunters should consider the philanthropist or clergy lenses (see *Champions*, pp. 7-9).

## CHAMPIONS AS TEACHERS

Typically, any day job that champions might have outside of The Mission are handwaved away, treated as little more than an explanation for their Wealth, Background Skills, and maybe a Contact or two. However, in a campaign centered primarily around a school, special attention will need to be paid to any champions employed by that school.

If unrestricted access to school facilities and the ability to boss students around is likely to prove an asset in the campaign, an adult hunter should consider using some of the advantage points from the occupational template to purchase Academic Rank (p. 31). This Rank is usually balanced with a small, nonhazardous Duty, representing the *mundane* hassles of your job – meetings, marking homework and tests, dealing with concerned parents, and actually teaching.

## Other Educational Concerns

Someone who hopes to be a *competent* teacher should learn Teaching at *at least* skill 12. It's listed as a background skill for most occupational templates, and encompassed entirely by the Talker! wildcard skill. Administration is useful if you'd rather be a secretary or principal. Savoir-Faire (High School, pp. 33-34) is as beneficial for a teacher as it is for a student.

Teachers who tire of having to hide their frequent bizarre behavior (why should your job security be threatened just because you had to paint all the school's doors with lamb's blood?) often pursue Tenure (p. B93). Other teachers seek it for less interesting reasons.

Formal Tenure is usually associated with post-secondary institutions – a high-school teacher who avoids being fired simply by being too valuable to replace should add the Informal (-50%) modifier (**GURPS Power-Ups 8: Limitations**, p. 15), for a total of 3 points.

The Academic Talent (**GURPS Power-Ups 3: Talents**, p. 6) not only helps with Teaching but also with Research, a valuable skill for any hunter. Higher Purpose (Help my students!) can be equally useful when saving a kid from a failing grade in Spanish or from a ravenous werebear.

For a more in-depth list of appropriate traits for teachers, see **GURPS Social Engineering: Back to School**, pp. 20-24.

## NEW ADVANTAGES

Some new version of advantages are helpful in “monster hunters in school” campaigns. Academic Rank is based on the guidelines in **GURPS Social Engineering: Back to School**.

### Academic Rank

#### 2 points/level

This advantage represents a place in the hierarchy of a school's administration and a certain level of authority over that school's business. Rank 1 will qualify the person as a junior or associate teacher, or support staff like a librarian or groundskeeper. Rank 2 represents a more senior and respected teacher, perhaps a department head. Rank 3 is held by the principal of most secondary schools. Rank 4 (the maximum) represents a school system superintendent or the head of a county or metropolitan school board or of a private institution fancy enough to use a title like “headmaster,” “chancellor,” or “arch-dean” and *mean it*. In most settings, students have great responsibility but very little power and barely qualify as having an Academic Rank of 0.

The cost above assumes that, paranormal threats notwithstanding, the school is a fairly representative public high school of whatever place and time the campaign is set. Being a teacher there means a level of overwork and underappreciation rivaled only by a secret career as a monster hunter.

A more *abnormal* institution may offer certain fringe benefits. Some schools are exceptionally well-funded and give their faculty members discretionary access to a portion of those funds. Others make clandestine use of paranormal power or cutting-edge technology, possibly as the result of a secret research program. If *either* of these conditions are true about your school, Academic Rank is worth 3 points per level. If *both* of them apply, it's worth 4 points per level. If the school can project this power outside its own town (such as by funding research expeditions), consider purchasing the school as a Patron. If you do, apply your Academic Rank as a bonus to requests for aid (**GURPS Monster Hunters 2: The Mission**, pp. 26-27).

For more information about Academic Rank, including further benefits available to someone who possesses it, see **Back to School**, pp. 27-31.

## THE TOTALITARIAN STUDENT COUNCIL

Particularly enterprising groups may wish to run a campaign in a more fantastic location (such as Honnouji Academy from *Kill la Kill*) where the school administration and the government are one and the same. A student's position in the social hierarchy would determine not only that student's place in society, but that of their entire family. In a school run on such an unusual system, it's entirely possible that the principal – or the mayor – takes orders from the president of the Student Council. This sort of Academic Rank is worth 10 points per level and *replaces* Status entirely. It's available for students and may exceed four levels.

Depending on how this rank is assigned in-universe, this advantage could have as a prerequisite a matching level in some other advantage (like Magery or Psionic Talent). Alternatively, it may serve as a prerequisite for those advantages.

### Patron (Parents)

Some young hunters have parents who are willing to actively aid them in their vocation. Maybe your mother is a trauma surgeon, who patches up you and your friends and doesn't ask too many questions. Maybe your father is a sergeant in the local police department, who passes information about really strange cases on to you. Or maybe both your parents were slaying demons long before you were born, and they taught you everything you know. If this is the case for your character, you can buy a special version of the Patron advantage.

This version comes in two varieties. Either version *includes* a Claim to Hospitality – you don't need to purchase it separately, or worry about a reaction roll for basic “room and board” services. The individual you select as your Patron does not have to be your legal or biological parent – any sufficiently motivated mentor figure can qualify. If *both* your parents have a similar career, provide similar benefits, and the amount of aid you can get is not doubled, the same advantage can cover them both.

Note that you cannot claim points from negative Wealth if you have a Patron that grants you equipment.

**Well-Meaning Parent:** Your parent is understanding, at least semi-competent, and interested in helping you. He's not initially clued in on the whole “monsters are real” thing, but when he does find out, he will take the news surprisingly well.

When you purchase this advantage, choose one broad, mundane area of competence, like “medicine” or “finance.” Requests for aid (**GURPS Monster Hunters 2: The Mission**, pp. 26-27) that are covered by this category are made at no penalty, as are generic favors one might ask of any parent. Any others requests are made with an appropriateness penalty of at least -3. When in doubt, assume that your parent has an effective skill of 15 for any related tasks.

**Statistics:** Patron (Currently Available Parent; Modest Budget; Light Influence; Minimal Intervention, Specific area of competence, -50%) [5].

*Powerful Parent:* Your parent is a veteran hunter, an experienced mage, a high-ranking paramilitary official, a mad scientist, a renowned occult scholar, or an exemplar of some other career that's directly relevant to hunting monsters.

This version costs the same as an entire *organization* with Light Influence and a Modest Budget, and functions as one for the purpose of budgeting (*Champions*, p. 53) and requests for aid (*The Mission*, pp. 26-27). The reduced scope of your Patron is counterbalanced by the fact that he considers your well-being to be a high priority and is willing to dedicate a larger portion of his resources to helping you. Unlike such an organization, he does not pay you a monthly salary, although he may pay you a weekly allowance.

You will need to work with your GM to find an explanation for why, if there's somebody this powerful around, he isn't simply doing all the dirty work himself. Perhaps your parent was forced into retirement by a tragic injury, he has taken an oath of non-interference (which he is willing to bend but hesitant to break), or all his time is occupied dealing with threats of his own off-screen. He might even be an absentee parent, who spends most of his time on the road and only shows up to *actually fight* when dramatically appropriate.

If you and your parent are both members of the *same* organization, you may buy Patron (Powerful Parent) as an alternate ability to Patron (Organization), for 2 points. If you do this, you can make separate requests for aid, but *do not* get separate budgets – take only the higher sum of money, regardless of where it's coming from.

*Statistics:* Patron (Currently Available Parent; Modest Budget; Light Influence) [10].

## NEW DISADVANTAGES

While Dependents (p. B131) is not on the list of "suitable disadvantages" in *Champions*, the idea of the hero who regularly has to rescue their family members from the forces of darkness is a concept as old as the genre itself. Those wishing to explore this trope should take the following simplified version of that disadvantage.

### *Dependent (Family Member)*

-10 points

This is an invitation for the GM to put your loved ones in peril. Expect your father to blunder into a horde of zombies on his trip to the hardware store, your mother to be kidnapped by sea devils hoping to bait you into a trap, or your little brother to accidentally read out loud from a book of ancient curses on a fairly regular basis.

When you take this disadvantage, nominate a loved one (a child, a sibling, a parent, etc.). Your GM secretly rolls 3d at the beginning of every session. On a roll of 9 or less, something potentially dreadful happens to that person which requires your attention. If you want these threats to arise with greater or lesser frequency, see *Frequency of Appearance* (p. B36).

The value of this disadvantage assumes that your family consists of ordinary people with point values somewhere in the double digits, who are (at least initially) unaware of the existence of Things That Go Bump In The Night, and who wouldn't stand a chance against one in a fair fight. For a family member who is somewhat competent (whose point value

is worth more than 25% of yours, but no more than 50%), the base value of this disadvantage is -5 points.

Instead of one individual, you might have an entire family full of loved ones who find themselves the victims of supernatural attention. If so, buy this disadvantage a single time, then double its final value.

Due to the high power levels involved in *Monster Hunters* campaigns, the GM should be careful about allowing Dependents worth more than 50% of their guardian's point total – such people can almost certainly take care of themselves. If there is such a person whom you feel obligated to protect, take the Sense of Duty disadvantage (p. B153) instead. You *can* claim the same NPC as both a Sidekick and a Dependent. If so, roll separately each session to determine whether they show up as an asset, a liability, or both. This disadvantage can be combined with *Well-Meaning Parent* (p. 31), but not with a *Powerful Parent* (pp. 31-32).

When your loved ones are threatened, you must do everything in your power to protect them, but are still capable of prioritizing and evaluating dangers like a rational person. You needn't go heedlessly rushing into every ambush or accepting every silly ultimatum from a villain. However, if you value their safety over *everything* else (including potential threats to your own life, your fellow hunters' lives, or the lives of thousands of strangers), this disadvantage is worth *twice* the listed value.

Should your loved one die (or meet a fate worse than death), the knowledge that you failed to protect that person can prove extremely hazardous to your mental health. You must immediately replace this disadvantage with mental disadvantages of equal value. Chronic Depression and Obsession (Avenge my parent) are common choices, but nearly anything could work.

*Example:* You feel completely responsible for your little sister, Eve. Her point value is less than half of yours, but it's more than 25%, so her base value as a Dependent is [-5]. Eve seems to find herself in trouble almost every Tuesday (Quite Often, 12 or less), which doubles this value. You're prepared to move Heaven and Earth to protect her, even laying down your own life if necessary, which doubles it again. The final value for Dependent (Eve) is -20 points.

### *Meddling Parents*

-5 points

Your parents take a dim view of you collecting weapons, reading books about demons, and hanging out with those weird kids who have all those piercings. If you keep trying to sneak out after your curfew, they're going to have to ground you. Again. Don't you care about getting into a good college?

They may be strict disciplinarians, or merely have misguided ideas about wanting what's best for you. In either case, the end result is that your parents *get in the way*. Expect to spend significant amounts of effort concealing your activities from them. If your parents catch you disobeying them, consequences range from inconvenient (installing bedroom windows that lock from the outside) to potentially disastrous (you do NOT want to see what will happen if some idiot throws the *Book of a Thousand Screams* into the fireplace).

The GM will secretly roll 3d at the beginning of each session. On a 9 or less, your parents interfere with your life.



To change how often this happens, which will affect its point value, see *Frequency of Appearance* (p. B36).

If your parents or family members actively wish you ill, consider taking them as an Enemy instead.

## Social Stigma

Teenage characters, naturally, suffer the restrictions imposed by Social Stigma (Minor). While these can be limiting enough on their own, the more a campaign focuses on the lives of minors, the greater the likelihood that the distinction between a 12-year-old PC and a 16-year-old PC will be relevant. Very young hunters must take the following, more severe version of that disadvantage.

*Social Stigma (Child):* As an even younger character, you can look forward to significantly greater restrictions on your freedom. Expect shopkeepers to refuse you service, and police officers to ask where your parents are. Forget driving a car or buying booze – the government doesn't even trust you to sign up for an email account without your parents' permission! Not that that has ever stopped you from clicking the "Yes, I'm 18!" button.

Characters with this disadvantage are usually physically much smaller than adults (SM -1 for human children). While a teenager might be able to pass for an adult with some makeup and a fake ID, you stand very little chance of success (-5 or worse) at this use of Disguise.

You suffer -4 on reaction rolls when trying to convince a grown-up to treat you like an equal, and -2 on reaction rolls from unsympathetic teenagers.

As you leave puberty behind and are acknowledged to be a young adult, you must buy off this disadvantage and replace it with Social Stigma (Minor). -10 points.

## NEW SKILL SPECIALTIES

Certain skills have specialties which would be of particular interest to students.

### Professional Skill

p. B215

The "catch-all" nature of Professional Skills makes them useful for representing the broad array of subjects taught in a modern school, without requiring students to invest points in each individual skill.

*Professional Skill (Student):* This is the skill of doing well in school. Someone with a high level of this skill may not necessarily have a deep and nuanced understanding of every subject, but will definitely have the sort of study habits that can help one get good grades.

This skill can substitute for Mathematics (Applied), Literature, Poetry, Linguistics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography, History, and a host of other skills – but only for the purpose of a subject that could reasonably be covered in a regular high school. It will let you remember the date of the Battle of Hastings or the fact that the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell, solve quadratic equations, present a science fair project, or identify metaphors in *Romeo and Juliet*. If you're planning on doing something significantly more complex than that, you should invest more in the specific skills.

## HIGH SCHOOL SKILLS AND FAMILIARITY

While there are quite a few differences between the cultures at various different educational institutions, and a gradual progression in the content presented each year, these differences are largely below the resolution that's relevant for game play.

If it becomes relevant, simply treat each category of school as a familiarity (see p. B169) of the same basic skill. A student graduating from middle school to high school, or moving to a nearby country would be awkward at first. He would take -2 on relevant rolls until he had sufficient time (at least eight hours) to adjust to the new culture. A difference broad enough to invoke Cultural Familiarity penalties (p. B23) would require a much longer adjustment period. A homeschooled student who found himself attending public school for the first time would face similar penalties, and would most likely lack *Savoir-Faire* entirely.

It's up to the GM how far this can stretch. In most districts in the United States, the differences between the curricula at a public school and a school for the deaf are minor enough to be represented by a familiarity penalty, but the difference between those and the curriculum at a traditional madrasa or a Soviet professional technical school is much greater. Professional Skill (Magical School Student) would *definitely* need to be a separate skill, assuming that it's even relevant in the campaign.

If this approach would require too much bookkeeping, ignore it completely and treat all schools as being equivalent to each other. If you'd like to approach academic diversity in even more detail, see *GURPS Social Engineering: Back to School*, particularly pp. 31-33.

You can use this skill in place of Research for scholastic purposes, for Writing when composing a school report, and for Teaching when tutoring another student. At the GM's discretion, it may act as a complimentary skill to Research, Writing, or Teaching under other circumstances. If using the *Intensive Training* rules from *GURPS Social Engineering: Back to School*, p. 5, you may substitute an HT-based or Will-based roll against this skill, as appropriate.

Finally, you can always roll against this skill when taking any sort of standardized test.

*Modifiers:* -1 to -10 for trying to perform a task that's outside the scope of a typical classroom. Players who make a habit of doing this should be encouraged to purchase an aspected form of Wild Talent.

### Savoir-Faire

p. B218

As a subculture with established rules of conduct, both formal and informal, "High School" is a suitable specialization for *Savoir-Faire*. Note that the socially clueless are likely operating on default.

*Savoir-Faire (High School)*: This skill covers the social aspect of getting along in a high school, helping you navigate teenage politics – or, at the very least, to steer clear of them. It can help you understand the various subcultures of a high school (the fashionistas, the jocks, the computer nerds, the goths, any ethnic cliques, and so on) and the social rules under which they operate. Your GM might ask you to roll against this skill in a last-ditch attempt to avoid inadvertently insulting somebody – or to roll as a complimentary skill if you’re trying to craft an insult that will hit them right where it hurts.

It also helps you deal with teachers and school administration. It can substitute for Fast-Talk or Diplomacy to produce an excuse for why you’ve missed so many classes, to help you beg for another extension on an already-overdue project, or to deflect attention away from your role in the mysterious disappearance of yet another gym teacher.

As a type of *Savoir-Faire*, this skill can also be used to make an Influence roll with any student or faculty, rather than having to rely on a reaction roll.

## NEW PERKS

The following new perks suit campaigns focused around students.

### *Emancipated Minor*

*Prerequisites: Social Stigma (Minor).*

You may be an orphan, a child of unfit parents, or just a runaway. Whatever your circumstances, you have obtained a writ of emancipation from the appropriate court. You no longer need a legal guardian, and are treated as a legal adult for many purposes, such as employment, entering into contracts, consenting to medical treatments, owning property, or even marriage. Depending on your jurisdiction, other privileges (such as voting or purchasing alcohol) may still have to wait until you reach the appropriate age.

This does *not* eliminate the -2 reaction penalty from adults, but it might give you the opportunity to convince them to take you seriously.

When you reach legal age, the point spent on this perk is refunded and can be spent toward buying off Social Stigma (Minor).

### *Extracurricular Activity*

You’re a member of some sports team or student club – choose which one when you take this perk. Members of the same group react to you at +1. This bonus may also apply to others who respect your pastime, like a professional journalist who edited the school paper long before you did.

This membership gives you a semi-legitimate excuse for skulking around school property after hours. You may even be given a genuine set of keys. Learning skills related to your club is recommended.

If participation in this club occupies a *significant* amount of your time (such as mandatory team practices multiple nights a week), represent this with a Duty (Nonhazardous). Otherwise, you can skip meetings every now and then while still remaining a member in good standing.

## Gossip Maven

*Prerequisite: Savoir-Faire (High School) at 12+.*

You can use your *Savoir-Faire* (High School) skill in place of Propaganda for the purpose of spreading (or containing) rumors at your school. When analyzing rumors for clues, it can act as a complimentary skill to Intelligence Analysis.

## OTHER RECOMMENDED TRAITS

Less Sleep (p. B65) is useful to anyone trying to lead a double life.

Reputation (p. B26) can be extremely important for teenagers. In a campaign focused around a school, “People at this school” count as a *large class of people*, while a particular subculture would count as a *small class*. Anything smaller is usually a Trivial Reputation perk (for +1 to reactions from a specialized group) or quirk (for -1).

A quirk-level obsession can provide a quick way to flesh out a young character’s motivation. Sex and romance are popular obsessions among teenagers, as is success at a particular hobby.

## ADAPTATION FOR OTHER GENRES

Monster hunting is far from the only genre to feature juvenile heroes capable of kicking butt alongside adults. With just a little tweaking, the rules in this article could be used for a **GURPS Supers** campaign, where maintaining one’s secret identity as a mild-mannered high-school student is even *more* important; a **GURPS Action** campaign where a young heroine must balance the pressure of being head cheerleader against needing to foil the plots of mad scientists bent on world domination; or a **GURPS Mysteries** campaign featuring a group of “meddling kids” and their trusty animal companion.

For more detailed advice on turning intangible fears into tangible enemies, **GURPS Horror** has an entire chapter dedicated to doing so.

*Fairy tales do not tell children that dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children that dragons can be killed.*

– G.K. Chesterton

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Liam Duncan, from Hamilton, Ontario, comes from a family of teachers going back several generations, and a family of students going back even longer. He’s been throwing dice at personifications of his deepest fears since elementary school, and he has no intention of stopping any time soon. In his spare time, he enjoys fencing, computer programming, and debating obscure points of philosophy.

# RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

## THE IMPORTANCE OF STATIC

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

*GURPS Monster Hunters* campaigns can cover a fair breadth of tone and adventure possibilities. These can range from straightforward “here’s where the baddie is lurking; go there and kill it” tasks to more complex tales of “discover what strange phenomenon is going on, diagnose the problem, and kill it.” The trouble can be trying to keep things interesting for those periods between the “. . . and kill it” stages. That’s why many adventures revolve around mysteries or investigation.

During our lengthy car trips, my wife likes to keep me entertained while I’m driving by reading from various two-minute mysteries and other tiny brainteasing tales. One element that sets the more-challenging stories apart is revealing more than one key detail, so that you need to untangle what’s likely to be relevant. For example, if a mystery revolves around a knife currently thrust into someone’s back up to the handle, a poorer mystery might have someone give an alibi like: “I don’t know anything about that knife. I’ve never seen it before, and – besides – my knife’s blade is *much* shorter.” (See, that person did it, because – if they’ve never seen the knife and it’s buried in the victim’s back – how did they know how long the blade is?) With only one key fact revealed, all the reader/listener/player needs to do is untangle whether there’s a problem with that one fact, and then the whole thing unravels.

In contrast, a more challenging alibi might go something like, “I don’t know anything about that knife. I think I have one that’s similar, but the handle on my knife has a lighter cherry stain and three rivets instead of four, and its blade is longer. But if you want to inspect it, you’re welcome to; I keep it locked in a safe. The last time I opened it was a week ago, when I wrote down the combination on a fortune cookie slip because I was having a hard time remembering it. Here’s the slip.” It’s a lot harder to immediately see the problem with the alibi, right? (And if you did spot it immediately, then you probably feel a bit like a real detective . . . which is part of the point of the exercise!)

This ties into gaming – and *Monster Hunters* especially – by introducing the idea of *static*. In other words, it’s

useful to have enough details going on that no single element stands out as immediately out of place or noteworthy.

### LOOKS AREN’T EVERYTHING

If the only time an NPC has his appearance commented on is when that person has a sudden but inevitable betrayal, then the heroes will quickly clue in on anyone who gets more than a three-word description.

This is especially true if suspicious characters are the only ones who have any kind of negative descriptions. Many lesser horror tales (and published adventures) tend to only bestow negative traits on those who are pawns or masterminds in sinister plots. But plenty of people in the world are eerily balding with patchy hair, have odd jutting teeth, or peer at people with eyes that unsettlingly don’t focus properly, and yet they can still go on to leading productive, evil-free lives where they’re in loving relationships, serving as useful members of the community, or are *very happy to be editing gaming magazines, thank you very much*.

In short, throw in a few extra details about other people that the investigators meet. If the only time the GM describes NPCs as stunningly beautiful or unnervingly unattractive is when they’ve got a coffin full of rune-covered Mesopotamian bones in their closets, then many of the mysteries or discoveries will be rapidly short-circuited.

### HE ALWAYS SEEMED SO QUIET . . .

Very similar to appearance, mannerisms are too often given short shrift by storytellers. Frequently the only ones who are given a noteworthy personality are those who turn out to be antagonists in some fashion. You see this a lot in movies: Gee, the slightly menacing guy who’s giving the heroes a hard time turns out to be the head of the Cult of the All-Consuming Sun.



But sometimes people are jerks or adversarial just because they're mundanely mean.

Sometimes people are cloyingly sweet not because that makes the revelation they're evil all the more gut-wrenching, but because they're genuinely sweet.

And – this one is important – sometimes people do strange, suspicious things for no nefarious reason. (I knew a guy in college who would basically eat nothing but boiled hot dogs for every meal. In a horror movie, he'd definitely have a locker box of hands in the closet, but he was actually a pretty nice guy who just happened to have a sense of taste that never evolved beyond processed tubular meat.)

Again, lots of people have negative or unattractive traits. Many people are nervous, or utterly humorless, or stare at you overly long before responding, without being in league with the devil. Similarly, many people are witty, radiant, or charismatic without being monsters.

As a final point to consider about actions: Don't feel constrained to limit an NPC to one reaction or mannerism. People can change or wear different masks. One of the things that made Lando Calrissian's turn in *The Empire Strikes Back* so memorable is because his mannerisms were . . . interesting. When he meets the heroes, he seems all mad at them – oh, no! But then it turns out he's happy to see them – whew! But then it turns out he betrayed them – oh, no! But then it seems he feels bad about that . . . now what do the heroes do? Similarly, NPCs can don multiple hats or emotional states. Maybe the hard-as-nails police chief is actually a really nice guy off-duty, but he feels he needs to be laser-like in his focus and determination when he's on the clock. Maybe the bubbly, sweet librarian has a glint of steel and fire in her eyes if anyone mentions anything negative about her children. And neither one of them needs to be a secret werewolf to make the story interesting . . . but they *can* be.

## SUM ERGO ID FECI

Film critic Roger Ebert had an idea he called the Principle of the Unassigned Character (also known as the Law of Economy of Character Development, frequently shortened online to the Law of Economy of Characters). The idea is that movies are so expensive to make that all characters need to have a purpose, because it's too expensive to keep them in the movie if they don't. For thrillers or mysteries, this means that – if someone doesn't have an obvious reason to be there – that character is probably the villain. ("Why is a two-time Oscar nominee in a role as a secretary with four lines for the first 90 minutes of this film? . . . Whoops, it turns out he's the mastermind.") The weird thing is that this principle often applies to roleplaying games, even though there's no "budget" to speak of. If there's someone who just seems to be hanging around not adding anything to the plot, but she's described with too much detail to her *physical appearance* and/or *mannerisms* to be ignored (see what I did there?), then she's clearly the big bad or the direct link to Whatever's Going On.

Obviously this can be fixed by just adding more folks who don't seemingly have anything going on. Although that's a great solution for many adventures, perhaps a more interesting idea is to give those characters some tie to the story for the heroes to find . . . which throws suspicion off their "real" relevance to the plot. (Again, this ties into Lando Calrissian: "Oh, no! He's bad news to the heroes! Oh, wait he was just

kidding. Scratch that; he's bad news again.") Thus maybe the nervous business leader that the players are suspicious of is guilty of insider trading (which the PCs discover); later it's revealed that the reason he's trying to raise so much money is to afford an experimental treatment to keep the Lovecraftian horror lurking within him at bay.

*One element that sets the more-challenging stories apart is revealing more than one key detail, so that you need to untangle what's likely to be relevant.*

## PUT IT ALL TOGETHER AND IT SPELLS . . . TROUBLE?

So, what does all this mean for a *GURPS Monster Hunters* GM looking to challenge the heroes?

- *Sprinkle Descriptions.* When adding descriptions of mannerisms or physical appearance, give everyone one or both. Feel free to subvert tropes . . . or use them again, once the players grow complacent.

- *The Rule of Three.* Generally speaking, three is a great number of . . . well, *everything*. If the adventure is going to have a seemingly superfluous character who turns out to be integral to the plot, have *three* superfluous characters (only one of which is integral). If someone would be described with negative, monstrous appearance traits, make sure there are *three* such traits among the batch of NPCs. If one of the supporting cast is going to have a personality trait that makes life difficult for the heroes, have *three* traits sprinkled among the various characters. And so on. (Why three? Well, it's easy to remember, and is the minimum needed to reduce the odds of just guessing who the baddie is to less than 50%.)

- *Whittle Down With Skill Rolls.* One of the difficult things for the GM to do in any kind of mystery adventure is work in the heroes' skills, since the PCs are often more competent (and can certainly see/hear/sense more) than the players. However, by allowing skill checks to be obviously fruitful, you increase the chances of reducing the entire adventure to one roll: "You enter the parlor; seven people are standing near a dead body." "I make my Detective! check." "The gardener did it." If the adventure has introduced enough details, what the GM can do instead is have a successful check reveal a red herring: "You're pretty sure the number of rivets on any of the knife handles aren't important." If you have enough extraneous tidbits, the GM can even have the margin of success determine how many are whittled down!

## 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.

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