



ADVENTURE!

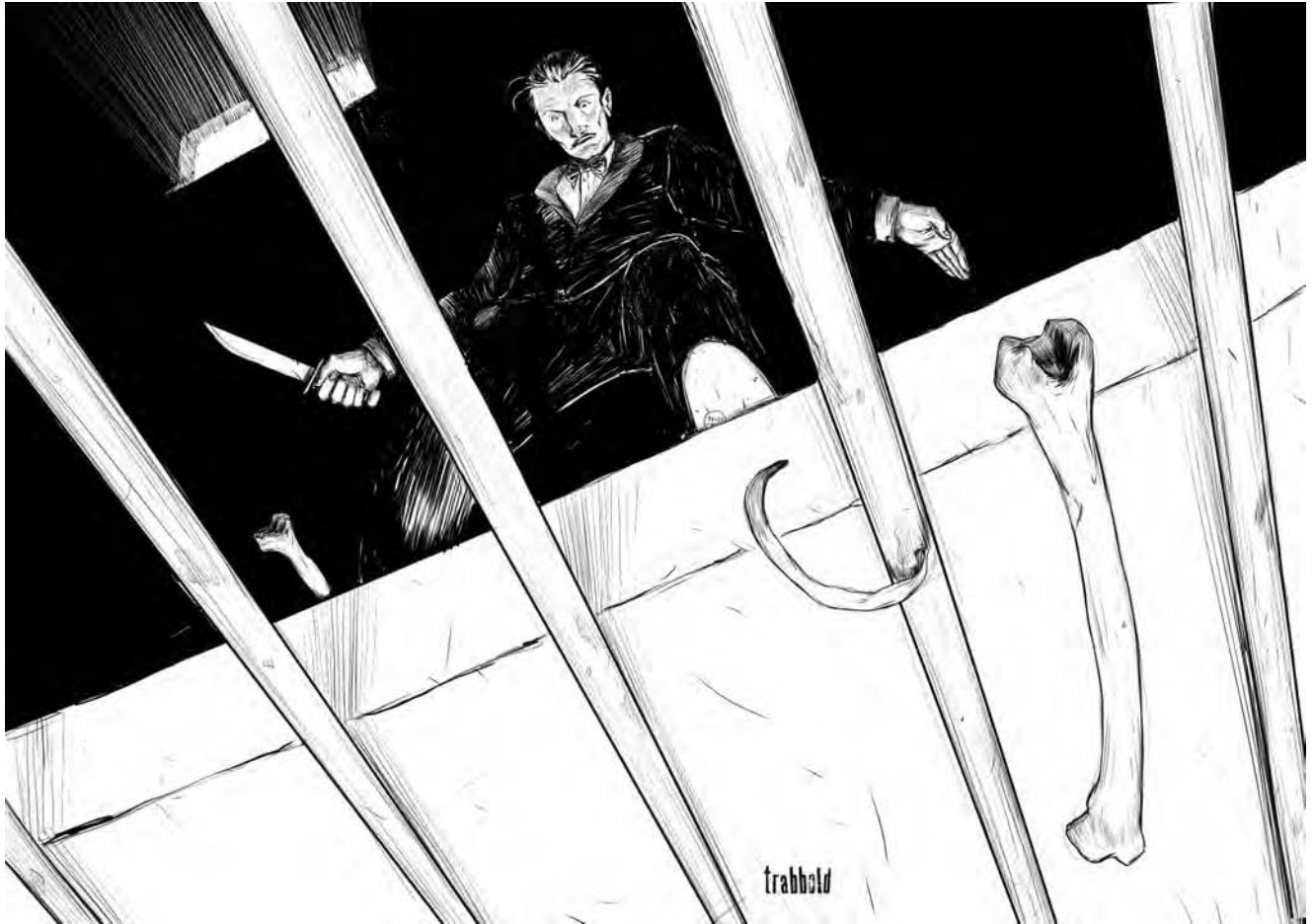
THE d20 SYSTEM
GAME OF PULP ACTION!

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TRINITY



UNIVERSE



UNDER THE MOON

An Æon

An Æon Society Adventure

— transcribed by Warren Ellis from
the journals of Whitley Styles,
published 1930

Max Mercer landed in the murder pit with a hard crack, the bones of slaughtered dozens snapping under his boots.

On the parapet overlooking the pit, the pale Lord Darkstock stood and stared down, his sickening eyes flashing in the torch-lit gloom. Laughing, he raised his infamous heavy sidearm, the Devastationer. There was blood on its thick muzzle. Mercer's blood. He had struck Mercer from behind with the gun, cowardly filth that he was. Struck from behind as Max tried to free us from the shackles that bound us to

the wall. Darkstock could have killed Max right then, of course — he had no qualms about shooting a good man in the back if it served his poisonous ways. But the crazed English aristocrat had other plans for Max.

Lord Darkstock was a member of a hidden, criminal branch of the British Royal Family heretofore secreted in asylums and institutes for the mentally diseased across the United Kingdom, of whom the King and his immediate, known relatives were, at best, embarrassed and, at worst, terrified by. The Night Royals, they were known as, in the Crown's most secret diaries and manifests.

Max's footing was unsteady. For the first five seconds, I thought this was a reaction to the crack to the brains. And then I realized the floor was moving under him. Sliding away.

A stench of dead things rose.

The floor was slowly winding into the wall, revealing a deeper pit beneath, closed off by thin bars. White bones tumbled off the edge of the floor and clattered on to the bars beneath. The noise roused things in the pit. Bad things.

“We raised them in the dark heart of Africa, Mr. Mercer,” came the mad royal’s rasp, from 30 feet above. “In the shadow of Forbidden Mountain, where the meteor fell in 1888. There were worms in the meteor, Mr. Mercer. Worms from beyond space. Imagine that!”

Darkstock laughed again as Max scrambled to stay upright. Annabelle and I struggled futilely against our bonds.

“We force-bred them with the royal beasts, our hunting animals. What you see below you is the result. The Bound Horrors of Darkstock Manor!”

Light fell in chilling stages on the things behind bars. Raw, bloody skin. Necks 25 feet long, strong and mobile. Long teeth set in infected mouths, their hard edges slick with pus. Human eyes. From his grim expression, I saw that Max was in no doubt that he could not survive an attack by these beasts. The noise of the bones continuing to clatter onto their bars maddened them. They thrashed and shrieked. And the bars shook in their stone beds.

"Their spittle is corrosive to flesh and fabric. Eventually, you will fall on to the bars, Mr. Mercer, your feet and much of your lower legs rotted away. And then, they will pull you through the bars. In pieces."

Max had less than three yards of floor left.

Max took in the entire scene and calculated.

He drew his boot knife.

He leapt down from the vanishing floor and landed on the bars below.

The Bound Horrors almost brained themselves in lunging at him. The bars shuddered and loosened some more, bending outward a little.

Max picked the largest, strongest Horror by sight as it came up to the bars — and kicked at the bars, right in its face. “Hyah!” He yelled. “Come on!”

The thing smashed into the bars again. They groaned and cracked in their settings. Max reached over and jabbed his knife into the powdering stone, digging away at one bar's foundation.

Max kicked the bars again, right in front of its face. And again. "Come on, dammit! Come on!"

And the Bound Horror, unbound, rammed into the bars with all its strength — and the bars gave way!

Max twisted out of its way and sank his knife into the beast, just below its vile head.

The thing surged 25 feet up into the air.

Lord Darkstock recoiled.

Max ripped his knife free of the Horror and launched himself up and away from the thing, toward the pit's parapet and Darkstock, less than five feet distant. In midair, Max snapped his arm down hard,

hurling the knife with incredible speed and power—
—and the heavy blade split Lord Darkstock's head in
half, dashing his poisonous brains out on the stone floor.

* * *

The spires of New York City shone in the afternoon light.

Max put his booted feet up on my desk and took in the sunshine through the broad windows of the Chrysler Building's top floor. The skyscraper wasn't completed officially, but Max had pull.

"You know what disappoints me most about the world, Whitley?" he said. His voice was soft, thoughtful. I put my pen down on the blotter, arched an eyebrow. "Go on, then," I said. The tone of his voice indicated another onset of that strange sentimentality of his that I always found amusing.

“What disappoints me most is that I had to learn to kill people.”

Max was often struck by these black moments. I guess they were the cost of a good man having to do bad things.

"And that I take satisfaction in it. There has to be a better way to deal with filth like Darkstock than putting six inches of steel in his brain. I mean, imagine what he knew. All lost now."

Max was, by nature, a philanthropist. He'd made a sheik's fortune 11 or 12 times over in his young life from radical new mechanical patents and stock market wizardry and, each time, had given it away — wholly or in increments — to charities, trusts and reform societies. His concern was always with making life better for as many people as was humanly possible. That, and his violent aversions to both boredom and thought of his own personal safety, was what tended to make his life most difficult.

“You said it yourself, Max,” I yawned, stretching. “‘Filth.’ Some things simply have no right to live. Or they abrogate their right to live by their behavior.”

“Surely you don’t believe that, Whitley,” Max said, eyeing me carefully. I hated it when Max looked at me like that. It was like he could see right through into the guts of me. I’ve seen cheap gunsels and kings alike shrink and keen like whipped dogs under that gaze.

"I surely do, sir. Bad things should happen to bad people, and that's the beginning and the end of it."

“Hm.” Max rose, walked over to the window, looked out on sprawled Manhattan below from this, the tallest building on Earth. A God’s-eye view of the world’s greatest city.

“Bad things happening to bad people. If only that were the way of it, Whit, my boy. If only that were the way of it.”

Max paused for a moment, in thought. A pause concluded by an intake of breath so sharp that it made me snap into alertness. Nothing — *nothing* — had

“Get the television camera, Jake,” said Max, quietly.
“Tell Franklin his ex-wife’s been attacked.”

* * *

Dr. Hephaestia Geary-Wexler had undergone a short, passionate, intense and violent marriage to Benjamin Franklin Dixon, which ended explosively with them both wishing virulent death on each other. Two genius-level engineers under the same roof was never going to work — particularly when Franklin was an obsessive and Hephaestia had questionable ethics. Max had known them both through the late Dr. Hammersmith and didn't take sides during the inevitable dissolution. Hephaestia did that for everyone, by leaving. She involved herself in a number of esoteric scientific pursuits in the years that followed. Yet only now, seeing her lying before us, did I realize just how far afield she'd gone. The respected Dr. Hephaestia Geary-Wexler was also the Machinatrix, a mysterious underworld figure who sold her inventor's gift to the highest bidder.

It appeared that, this time, someone had paid her in bullets.

Max was down on one knee by her, examining her. Very still, opening his senses, taking in everything about the scene.

“The scent is wrong,” he said, quietly. He touched a finger to the thin pool of blood around her prone form. Paused, taking in the sensation of the liquid on his skin, nerves exquisitely sensitive.

“There’s oil in her blood,” he whispered. “And the blood is old. There’s some chemical in it, keeping it fluid when it should have crusted.”

I wondered but did not speak. Questions would only hamper Max's detection. He already knew the questions. So I confined myself to watching and looking around the strange laboratory: something like a rifle there, something like a clockwork foetus here....

He turned the Machinatrix over. There was a bullet hole in her tight steel-gray coverall, over her breast. Blood around it. But under the hole — bruised skin. And, within the bruise, an effect like chrome cobweb, apparently knitting the flesh together.

“My God, Whitley. She has machines in her that will heal injuries! And she’s adapted her own blood to act as the fuel that operates them. Someone shot her with the intention of execution and left her for dead, and she’s lain here from then to now, unconscious and healing. What engineering audacity!”

He ran his hand around the back of her neck, under her hair. Not like she was a person. Like she was a machine. "I suspect the healing process required for such a major wound may have left her without enough energy to return to consciousness. I suspect application of kinesis to her chakra structure may boost her into waking."

I saw Max's hand flex, under her hair — as if he were flipping a switch. And the Machinatrix's eyes

snapped open. Frozen, for a moment. And then swiveled around. Her mouth curled into an ugly grin.

“Max Mercer. I’m in Hell, then.”

“Nice to see you too,” said Max, sitting back and smiling openly. “What’s the story?”

The Machinatrix looked down at her bullet wound — and then sharply across at Max.

"I'm not giving you the secret, Max."

"I could have ransacked the place and stolen it and two dozen other pending patents while you were laying on the floor in a pool of your own engine oil trying to work up the bio-energy to lift your little finger. If I wanted it, I'd have it. But what I need is in your head."

Jake appeared, lugging the televisor system.

“Don’t look at him, look at me,” Max snapped when Hephaestia’s attention wandered. “I want to know who you built an artificial moon for. I want to know who you built the launch system for. I want to know who shot you. Because I’m damn sure all three answers are the same name.”

The Machinatrix sat up, ran a hand through her hair and nodded at the televisor, which the Ace was activating. “Who’s on the other end of that thing?”

I smiled. I don't think it was a very nice smile.
"Guess."

She favored me with a contemptuous glance. I had made it quite clear whose side I was taking, during the divorce. “Hello, Whitley. Still grubbing around in the shadow of the Boy Scout? Has he thrown you any pennies lately?”

The television hissed into life — its camera lit up, and its reception screen sparked and illuminated. Frank Dixon's face resolved on the small screen in grainy monochrome. "Hello," came his voice through the copper sound grille.

“There goes the neighborhood,” sighed the Machinatrix.

“We need to know what you’ve done, Hephaestia. Mechanics, equations, trajectories, Z-ray cone numbers. There are 500 people dead in space because of you.”

Her eyes widened. “Because of me?”

“The cone effect you used to cut off gravity waves. An entire office block was pulled into space.”

"I don't know what you're talking about. Yes, I launched a satellite, and yes, I installed a Z-ray mirror and projector on board, but... severing gravity waves?"

There was a long pause, as Franklin studied his ex-wife through the televisior from Manhattan. Then his voice echoed through the grille.

"She's not lying, Max."

"So, who shot you?" Max ground out.

Hephaestia shook her head, resigned. “He came back for more inventions. He was obviously also fairly

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ON SALE THE THIRD FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH

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Welcome to Adventure!

Call me Max. We're through with formalities for now, so let's leave them outside and talk about the *interesting* part now.

So, what time is it?

No, it's not a trick question. And I don't mean what a time-piece says. If you move those experimental aviator goggles over — it's a design Danger Ace is tinkering with, and I'm sure he'd be glad to explain it when he gets back — you can look at my desk calendar and confirm that it's the first day of June, 1924. Behind me, with the Great Bone Spear from Borneo's gorilla people on one side and a gear from a Sanguine Promethean robot heart on the other, is a clock that will tell you it's just after 1 PM. But that's not the kind of time I'm talking about.

Mr. Einstein showed that time is relative. If you went off to the stars fast enough, you couldn't count on that clock and calendar anymore. Well, the tide in human affairs flows very fast these days, and the real question is, what is it time for you to do?

We live in an extraordinary age. Just in the years you've been alive, we've all gone through countless technological and industrial upheavals, global war and a complete reworking of maps and the societies within the new borders. You know from watching the world that we human beings are capable of greater good and greater evil than almost anyone ever imagined. And it's not stopping. We're all racing into the future along roads we build as we go, and you're as much a part of that as everyone else. The future isn't just built in mirrored halls and university laboratories, but in the dying and renewing hearts of cities, in farms and towns, everywhere people imagine a future and act to make it happen. You build it with each step you take and every word you speak.

Mr. Veblen and Mr. Spengler say it's all up for us, and all we have left is carnivals until the new dark ages come. Mr. Nietzsche would have us make a world where supermen herd the rest of us like so many cattle. Mr. Poincaré thinks all will be well if we just do what the lords and diplomats tell us to. I want to offer you a different vision.

Have you ever been to Europe? Oh, of course, you were there in the Great War and afterward; we didn't meet up in the relief effort, but you knew some of the same heroic men and women I did. I'm not here to reminisce about the good work of the past, though, even though I think that what we did to end famine and rebuild wrecked countries is right up there on the list of good works for this century. I wanted to

ask if you'd ever seen the Roman roads. Yes, those are the ones, some of them still in use every day, nearly 2,000 years after the empire fell apart.

They're magnificent, but they're also limited. The imperial roads only take you where emperors and their servants thought people should go. If it didn't appeal to the emperor, then you're out of luck, no nice road for you. Contrast that with, well, with the autogyro we flew in this morning. It goes from anywhere there's a pilot to make it take off, to anyplace the pilot can land. That's freedom, for those who can afford it — like Icarus but with sturdy steel and plastic that won't melt like wax.

I want to give humanity wings. No, not real ones. I'm not out to be my generation's Dr. Moreau, and I don't need you to be your generation's Dr. Frankenstein. I'm talking about a liberty inside to think and feel freely, instead of only thinking and feeling what the authorities say is okay. In the Æon Society, we aim toward an age where *everyone* is master of their destiny.

You've done enough flying yourself to know that you need more than a machine that can hold you up. You have to know how to operate it. You need charts of the land and tools to measure what the air is doing. A successful solo flight works because of a great many people, most of whom you'll never know, all doing their part at each step along the way. Well, setting a society's worth of people free to master their destiny is much like that. To choose for themselves, they need to know what's happened in the past, what the world is like now and how to evaluate all that and make wise decisions for the future.

One way of thinking about what we do in the Æon Society is this: We're mapmakers for tomorrow's free fliers. We dedicate ourselves to charting the world as it is right now, in all the places people don't otherwise think to look. We head into jungles and war zones, haunted sewers and empty deserts, wherever there are mysteries to explore, and we bring back the stories of what we find. In our files, there's the raw material people will need to make the next decade, the next century, the next thousand years the best it can be.

Along the way, we deal with some of the people who want to chain the rest of us, cut the wings, yoke us up. Some of us here relish a good scrap, and some of us don't find it all that much fun but are pretty good at it anyway. It's an adventure in its own way, even if fighting would-be villains is more like preventative maintenance rather than curing a disease or breaking open new territory. It's necessary, too.



We're not the only ones out there doing this kind of work, you realize. Talk to Whitley, and he'll be glad to tell you more than you ever wanted to know about our friends and rivals; he knows the files probably better than I know the backs of my own hands. I don't mean to suggest that you have to join us or that have no chance of helping the world in any other way. I *do* say that we do more good work, more thoroughly,

than anyone else I know of and that we do so in large measure because we're more flexible about who we take in. You met Enkidu this morning. He and his people are as much a part of the future we're making as the rest of us.

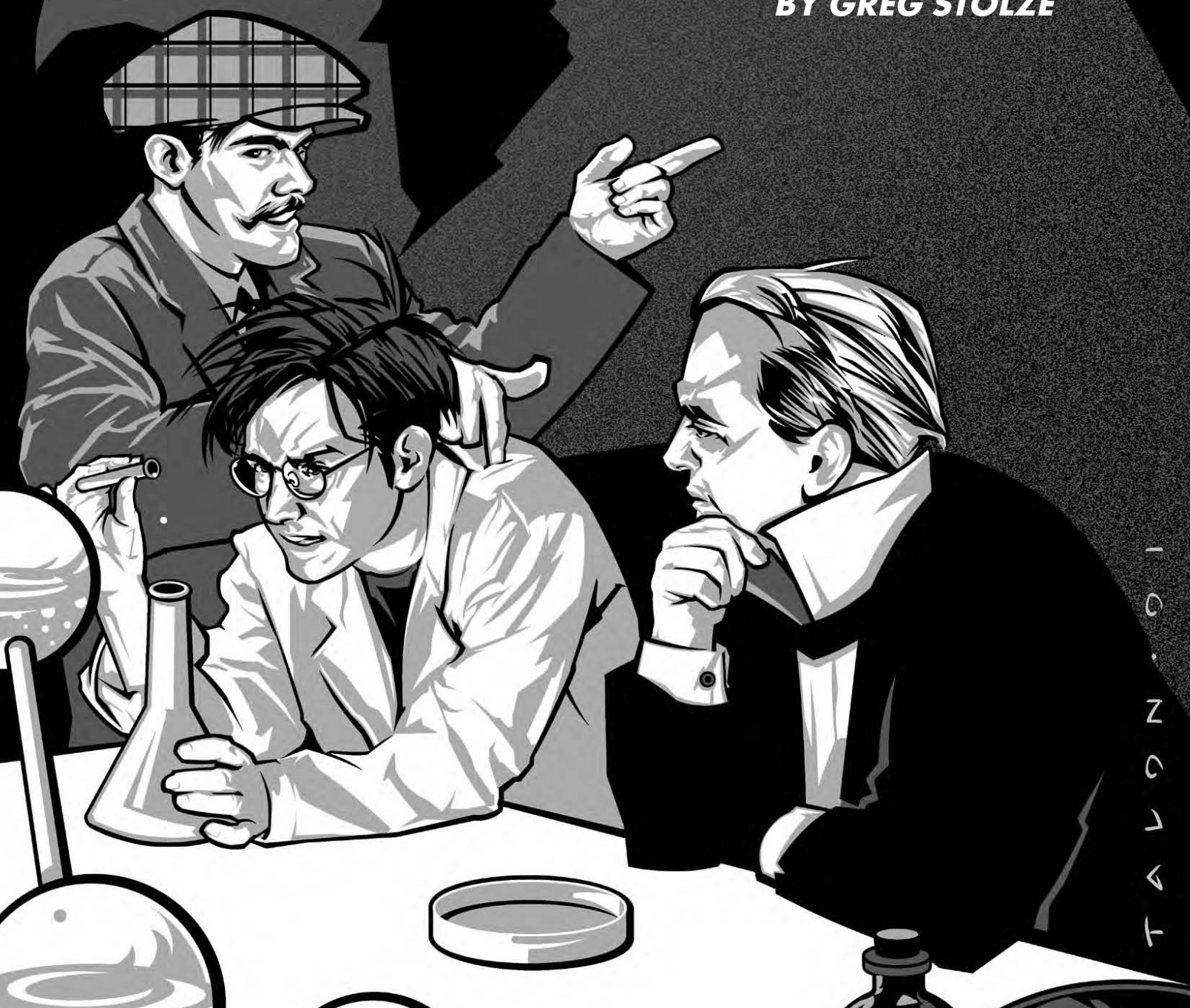
I want you to join us, too. While you think it over, let's look around. Let me show you what you'd be getting into. I'm confident that, when you see it all, you'll make the right decision.

ADVENTURE!

**TALES OF THE
ÆON SOCIETY**

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**DUST OF DEATH!
A THRILLING STORY
BY GREG STOLZE**



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DUST OF DEATH!

An Æon Society Adventure

—transcribed by Greg Stolze from the journals
of Whitley Styles, published 1924

The sprawl of dead men made me uncomfortable. It brought back memories.

My eyes were drawn to their blue lips, hands clutching throats as if to somehow draw forth breath. They'd smothered, clearly. The question was... how?

I knelt and reached out to close a dead man's eyes, but Primoris stopped me.

“Leave them, Styles,” he said. “Leave them just as they died.”

“But common decency, man!”

“Any detail might be a clue — even the position of their eyes. I suspect these men would prefer us to find their killers, indecent or not. That is, assuming they’re in a condition to ‘prefer’ anything.”

I was silent a moment, looking around the laboratory. Primoris and Dixon could probably read the tangle of tubes and pipes and flasks like a book, but it was Greek to me. For a moment, I let myself wonder why I'd been sent. But I knew. For a scientific mystery, Mercer sent his great minds. For a puzzling asphyxiation, he sent me.

“They were smothered,” I told Primoris, just to say something. He’d know, of course. That restless mind of his had surely fallen on every detail like a hawk on a hare, tearing it apart to suck out every last bit of information.

As expected, he nodded impatiently. "A magnificent deduction," he said sarcastically. "But now, can you tell me the color of the sky?"

“Smothered,” I repeated, gritting my teeth, “but not strangled. There are no marks on the throat. A skilled assassin could strangle without a mark, but someone that talented would attack the jugular to starve the brain of oxygen. It’s a fast kill. These men died much slower. You can see it in the posture and in the blue lips. Something was keeping air out of their lungs altogether.”

Primoris raised his eyebrows. "Yet how could one attacker — or even a number — perform this hypothetical 'slow kill' on several would-be drug purveyors without disturbing the lab? Other than spilling a quantity of yellow dust on the floor, that is."

“What do you mean ‘would-be drug purveyors’?”

He gestured at the extensive lab equipment. "They were trying to make artificial opium," he said. "Isn't that right, Professor?"

"Sorry?" Dixon looked up from the yellow smudge on the floor. He had put a small sample in a petri dish

and was dripping something on it from an eyedropper. He frowned at the result.

“The dead men, Professor. They were trying to synthesize opium?”

He glanced around, shrugged. "Looks like it."

"Is such a thing even possible?" I asked.

“Oh certainly,” Primoris said. “I expect someone will make artificial opium within 10 years. Fifteen, if they’re lazy.”

“But... that’s monstrous! If a criminal could simply make opium in a basement lab instead of importing it or growing it....”

Primoris nodded, a sardonic smile creasing his lips. "I suspect I now know why these men were killed. But the question of how remains."

“God’s wounds!” Dixon muttered. “Have a look at this, Primoris.” He’d prepared a slide of the yellow substance and was examining it under a microscope — seemingly oblivious to the dead scientist slumped next to him. Primoris bent to look and made a small, surprised sound in the back of his throat.

It was the first time I'd ever heard him surprised.

“We’ll have to get this back to my lab for a proper analysis,” Dixon said, but at that moment something caught my eye. The door to the lab was creeping open, and six men were creeping in. Short, swarthy men who looked uncomfortable in their cheap suits.

“Doc, Professor, we have—” I didn’t have a chance to say “trouble” before all six had produced strange knives of midnight blue metal. I saw the late afternoon light glint off glass sheathes before the blades came out — not drawn, but cracked free, flicked hard against a doorjamb or countertop.

They held them competently but not expertly. I didn't expect six to be enough until thick yellow smoke began to pour off the blades, collecting in a small cloud near their ankles. I'd never seen such a thing, and I didn't like it, so I drew my guns just as they lunged forward. I still wasn't nervous; Primoris and I could probably take four of them unarmed, if it came to that, and heaven only knew what Dixon had on him. I almost felt sorry for the first attacker as I aimed at his heart and pulled my right-hand trigger.

The bullet clicked on a dud, and I heard the same when I tried with the left. I dodged a wild swipe and felt a strange breeze drawing toward the foreigners. I drew a breath to warn the others when it felt like a

black tunnel was closing around me. Suddenly dizzy and weak, I fell to my knees, just as a knife wreathed in yellow smoke slashed across my face....

* * *

When I opened my eyes, the first thing I saw was a lovely visage wreathed in blonde curls. I blinked, and before my mind could get up to speed, my mouth had opened. The words “Oh, bugger,” fell out, followed immediately by, “I died and this is heaven, isn’t it?”

The blonde woman's cackle brought me back to earth. That and her immediate use of a spittoon. No culture I know believes angels chew tobacco.

"Oh, Whitley," she said. "How you do go on!"

As my head and vision cleared, the afterlife hypothesis became increasingly remote. First and foremost, I was in pain. It felt like my entire head from the ears up had been boiled. Tentatively, I rolled my eyes. It hurt neither more nor less. Not a hangover, then. This was more a full-head, throbbing pain — exactly the sort of pain one gets after being choked unconscious. But there was more to it than that.... In my forehead, a complex amalgam of pains played counterpoint to the dull throb. There was the icy ache of a fresh, shallow cut, but underneath that was a peculiar burning pain, much like an overexerted muscle.

“I’m surprised to see you at my bedside,” I said to Annabelle (for the blonde woman was none other than my comrade Annabelle Lee Newfield). Then I winced as I realized the impropriety of what I’d said. The wince provided a new pain — a tugging tightness across my brow. Stitched, it felt like.

“Er, what I mean is, I thought you’d be out hunting down my would-be assassins.”

“Oh, they’ve been captured. Dixon used one of his doohickeys on them... a ‘glueotron’ or ‘gluematic’ or something like that. Last time I saw them, they were just starting to get them separated.” She leaned in and gave me a wink. “When he makes his joke about ‘hardened criminals,’ be sure to laugh because he probably saved you and Primoris both.”

“Really?” I blurted. “Primoris too? I should have thought....”

“Here, look at this.” Annabelle reached into a drawer next to my bed — I now recognized a familiar suite at the Emily Mercer Memorial Clinic — and produced a glass jar. Inside were several thin, red objects. They looked like rusty wires, perhaps 40 gauge.

“What’s that, then?”

“Your blood. When that knife cut you, it somehow made your blood turn into... this. They pulled these out of the veins in your forehead. Lucky for you the blood vessels up there are small. Primoris was stabbed deep in the side, and a lot more of his blood got... converted.”

Cautiously, I sat up. Not too bad. "Is he all right?"

"He's still in surgery. I couldn't quite follow all that they were saying, but Dixon and Tallon were concerned that a piece of... solid blood... might block a

valve and cause a heart attack. That or get propelled into his brain and cause a stroke.”

I slid my legs toward the edge of the bed, then stopped when I realized I was wearing nothing but a hospital gown. "If you'll excuse me," I said, "I think I'd like to put on my pants and have a talk with our attackers."

"You can join Mercer in that, when the police finish up. Hurry though. *His* pants are already on."

* * *

As I was leaving the clinic, a flawlessly clean Bentley pulled up. A door opened, an aroma of cigars and leather wafted out, and Dixon's voice floated up. "Need a ride?"

“Thanks, Prof.” I got in, then jumped in alarm as padded leather clamps hugged my chest and thighs.

"A safety feature," he said. "I should have mentioned."

I wondered what other “features” he’d added to Max’s treasured auto but kept my questions to myself. “When I said thanks, I meant for more than just the ride. Thanks for saving my life.”

“Ah, well, that. I’m sure I can count on you to ‘pick up the next round,’ as it were. Besides, I really was looking for a chance to test the Dynamic Gluten Ejaculator.”

“The what?”

“A glue gun I’d been toying with.” A smile played around the corner of his mouth. “We wound up with…”

“...let me guess. Six hardened criminals?”

He frowned, disappointed. “Four. Primoris killed two before they got him. I guess they didn’t consider me as much of a threat.”

“Turnabout’s fair play. I didn’t think *they* were much of a threat. They handled themselves well, but without those knives....”

“Ah, well, the technological advantage!” He clucked his tongue softly. “Science is ever an unpredictable mistress. Not unlike—”

“Do you know what was going on with that smoke?” I interjected, not wanting to hear the tribulations of his unusual romantic life.

“Not smoke, my friend; *dust*. The knives produced the same dust that was on the floor of the lab.”

“What was it?”

“The dust is an oxide — the byproduct of a chemical reaction, like ash or, yes, smoke. This particular reaction is extremely dramatic and dynamic. Whatever those knives were made of, it sucks in vast quantities of oxygen and traps it in an oxide.”

"You mean those knives drew all the air out of the room?"

“Not the air, no. Just the part of it we need to live. Tell me, does your forehead feel overexerted? Like you’ve been lifting weights with your eyebrows?”

“How’d you know?”

“Lactic acid, my friend. Our muscles produce it when they become oxygen-starved.”

“So when the knife cut me...?”

“It reacted with the oxygen in your blood. Nasty, nasty stuff.”



“Is that why my guns misfired?”

He nodded. "No oxygen meant the gunpowder couldn't ignite."

“What are those knives made of, then?”

"Well, that's the interesting thing. Such prodigious rates of oxidation are quite simply unheard-of. Whatever it is, it's a compound or element unknown to man."

* * *

The swarthy assassin sat, one hand cuffed to a wooden chair. Blood trickled from the corner of his mouth, and one eye was swollen shut. Seeing the direction of my gaze, Sergeant Murtry narrowed his eyes and said “He fell.”

"Chicago jails have such slippery floors," Mercer replied. He said nothing more, but he fixed the officer with his steely gaze, and the hulking cop flushed and turned away.

"Good luck getting anything out of him," Murtry said as he departed. "He h'ain't said naught."

We entered the room. The man looked up, dully.

"Cat got your tongue?" Mercer asked.

"Perhaps the testicle-crushing machine will loosen his lips," I said — in Arabic. The prisoner's eyes only flicked to me for a moment, but I knew he'd understood. Mercer nodded.

"You speak no English?" he asked, also in Arabic.

We got no reply.

"He's from Bahrain, unless I miss my guess," I said, switching back to English.

Mercer slapped himself on the forehead. "Of course. If you have a weapon that steals oxygen, whom do you pick to wield it? Someone trained from childhood to hold his breath. Someone like a Bahrain pearl diver."

For the first time, the captive broke his silence.

"Are you Max Mercer?" he asked.

"I am," Max replied.

The diver nodded gravely. Then he lunged to his feet, grabbing the chair arm with both hands and swinging it at Maxwell's head.

He was fast — a lifetime spent moving through water makes one speedy in the thinner air. But Max was more than ready for him. He moved according to his own notions of fighting science, picking an angle perpendicular to the arc of the makeshift club, applying just the right pressure to swing the man off balance. With a crash, the fellow slammed to the floor, his wrist pinned beneath the chair he'd tried, so clumsily, to use as a weapon.

Max placed his thumb on a nerve joint at the corner of the Bahraini's jaw and held him down.

"What would make a man travel across the world, only to risk his life so foolishly?" Mercer asked.

A tear leaked from the diver's eye.

"They have my daughter," he whispered.

Dear Sir,

You are cordially invited to a scientific exhibition of the greatest importance. I do not exaggerate when I say that this discovery could change the world forever. Nor am I trying to flatter you when I say that you are in a position to help make those changes a reality.

Please attend the demonstration of my Telluric Engine at my laboratory in West London on 21 July 1922 and discuss the implications of this grand discovery.

If you are conversant with current developments in the physical sciences, you will have read or heard of the theory that the vacuum itself has energy to it... that there is energy even in nothingness! If you are not, consider that even nothingness has characteristics that define it: length, width, breadth, time. If energy is bound up in the physical dimensions of matter, as Einstein showed so brilliantly, then it stands to reason that energy is also bound up in the physical dimensions of space-time itself. If energy can deform space and time, as Einstein's general theory of relativity postulates, then space and time can store energy. Quite simple once you get over the apparent nonsense involved in the idea that in nothing there is something.

This energy of nothingness I call telluric energy. Literally, "energy of the Earth," although it, in truth, goes far beyond Earth itself: a sort of cosmic background energy that permeates all existence, much as we once thought the aether did. My Telluric Engine draws, or will draw, upon this seemingly limitless source of power! My experiments to date show that any attempt to remove this telluric energy results in more energy rushing in from all sides to maintain the integrity of reality. And since the universe is unimaginably vast, so is the supply of energy that may be obtained in this way.

So please, attend my demonstration. As you no doubt can already conceive, this has implications far beyond the advancement of science. A new tomorrow beckons, and I would wish for you to help greet it!

Doctor Sir Galvin Hammersmith

Atlas Cross

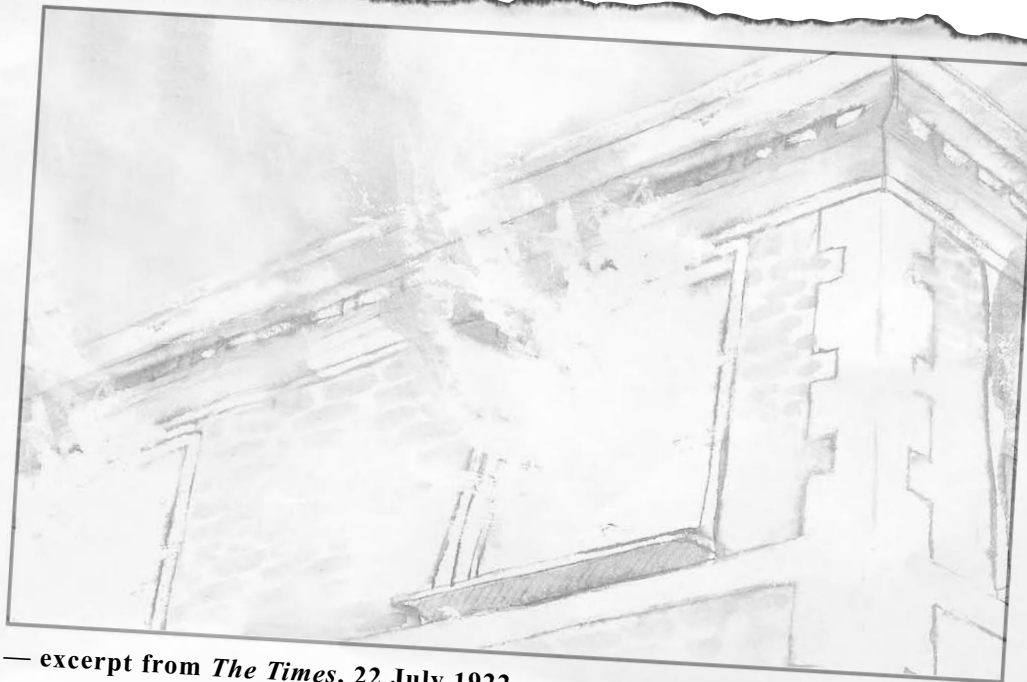
Bushy Park

London

1 May 1922

Why me? What brought me there to witness that magnificent, tragic spectacle of fire and lightning from room-filling machinery run amok, the devastation to the estate, Dr. Hammersmith's heroic self-sacrifice to save the rest of us, those dazed moments on the greens as each of us felt fresh stirrings of power?

Destiny.



— excerpt from *The Times*, 22 July 1922

FIRE SEVERELY DAMAGES WEST END MANOR

Death Toll Unknown; Famous Inventor Lost

One of the most distinguished members of London's scientific community, albeit one of its most eccentric, is no more. Dr. Sir Calvin Hammersmith perished in a fire at his Bushy Park home late last night. He was in the process of demonstrating a new scientific apparatus to the sort of cosmopolitan, eclectic audience so familiar to those granted the opportunity to participate in his salons. This time, however, something went tragically wrong.

American scientist Professor Benjamin Franklin Dixon, onetime assistant of Dr. Hammersmith and known to many in this city for his own scientific demonstrations, gave us this account, refined for public presentation by your reporter.

"After a short introductory lecture, Dr. Hammersmith turned on his 'telluric energy' accumulators. As his special battery apparatus charged, he demonstrated a variety of measuring tools, to chart the movements of what he hoped would be a revolutionary new power source. The moment the batteries reached full capacity, well..."

At this juncture, Prof. Dixon became understandably moved. He valiantly gathered himself after a moment and continued: "Unfortunately, the device exploded. Perhaps it was the capacitors or

the batteries; we may never know. Fire swept through the lab in seconds and spread to the rest of the manor in mere minutes. Curiously, a peculiar ripple effect created a pocket of calm in which some of us sheltered, but those so unfortunate as to stand outside were incinerated instantly.

"Dr. Hammersmith stayed by his machines, desperately attempting to activate dampers or other safety measures. I must make it clear that at no point was there anything foolish or careless in his demonstration. Indeed, he showed profound courage. His self-sacrifice did, in fact, save us, as in his final minutes some compensatory system damped down the fire for just long enough to let those of us in the calm pocket flee outside. He turned to join us, but a second surge burst over him. He died on the spot.

"I and the other survivors mourn his passing and regret also the loss of the unique scientific insights that he had not yet shared with the rest of the world."

It is unclear at present how many attendees perished in the tragedy. Thankfully, none of the survivors were seriously injured. Examination in local hospitals showed no major burns or other damage, and individuals suffering from smoke inhalation and the like were treated and released this morning.



The Æon Society

Beginnings

— from the journals of Whitley Styles

December, 1922

Donighal has called. He asked if I had heard from Maxwell Mercer, since the events at Hammersmith. I haven't heard from Max since just before the two of them left for London, and I told him this. He said that Maxwell has been missing since right after the event, and no one has heard from him at all. I've promised to be on the next boat to London, to look into this disappearance myself. Mrs. Austin will be disappointed, but her jewels can wait.

January, 1923

He's gone, without a trace. I've tracked every false hope, wild goose and red herring in England and have come no closer to finding Maxwell Mercer. It is as if the man has disappeared into thin air. Apparently, no one has seen or talked to him since the Hammersmith Affair. Donighal cabled me from the Far East, saying he's had no luck and not to waste my time. I've booked passage on a fast liner back to America for tomorrow. Perhaps Mercer's returned there. I'm a little worried — Mercer's a tough one, but this is truly unusual, even for him.

March, 1923

I've given up the search, though reluctantly. Months have passed, and I'm no closer to finding Mercer. I haven't heard from Donighal in weeks, and the last telegram makes me think he's giving up as well. I can't keep looking, for other matters require my attention, such as Mrs. Austin's jewels. I'll just have to keep hoping Max will turn up.

June, 1923

Max is back. Let me write that again — Maxwell Mercer is back. I can't think of anyone else who could have so completely hidden from me for months and then popped up right under my nose in Chicago. He's been in the care of Dr. Primoris for the last few months, but he can't remember how or why he ended up there. Amnesia says the Doctor. I'm not sure, but I think Mercer might have introduced Primoris to me, back when he rescued me from the Thuggee. The Doctor seems familiar, at least, and has apparently known Mercer for years.

We're going out for steak tonight, to celebrate the sudden return. Max says he's had some time to think and wants me to consider joining him on a new venture. I'm looking forward to hearing this. It's good to have my friend back.

— excerpt from *The Chicago Times*, July 19th, 1923

NEW CLUB TO OPEN DOORS

Æon Society for Gentlemen Promises Big Things

CHICAGO — Noted philanthropist and adventurer Maxwell Anderson Mercer announced yesterday that he was opening a new gentleman's club, the Æon Society for Gentlemen, here in Chicago. "We are looking for people of an adventurous nature who are interested in exploring the new worlds around us," Mercer said.

Maxwell Mercer has been instrumental in funding and leading expeditions into the darkest parts of Africa and South America.

The First Months

— from the journals of Whitley Styles
July, 1923

That was some steak dinner. Max seemed on fire, more so than usual. What ever happened to cause his amnesia, it certainly did no harm to his mind. I don't think I was halfway through my steak before he spilled the beans. His grand scheme: gather a group of brave, intelligent and open-minded people who, together, will explore the world. "Not necessarily the best at what they do, Whitley," he said to me, "though I'm sure many of them will be that. No, the best people for this will be the ones who ask why and want to find the answer."

Part of me thinks it's madness, but then, so many of Mercer's best ideas have always been tinged with madness. It was madness for a single man to take on the Thuggee, all for a lost boy. Yet, that turned out well for both of us. I'm sure his new idea will too. Max has already put together a list of likely recruits, and he wants me to contact some of them. When I asked why there were women on the list, he said "You must disabuse yourself of the notion that the fairer sex is suited only for certain things. Whit, my boy. Women are as capable as men in discovering the wonders that await us in the wide world."

Typical.

The First Meeting

— transcript of Maxwell Mercer's remarks,
July 21st, 1923

I would like to call this meeting to order and begin with a short speech.

I asked you to join the Aeon Society for Gentlemen because each of you represents the best chance the world has of answering the question "Why?" We are not just a social club, but an organization dedicated to answering that question by exploring the mysteries of the world around us. We are out not to remake the world, but to understand it and to share our knowledge so that others may build their own futures.

To that end, we will not be policemen, vigilantes or a Star Chamber, passing judgment on mankind from our wood-lined halls. We will be delvers into mystery, explorers of the "why" and seekers of hidden truths. By understanding our world, we can prevent others from diverting its secrets to their own ends.

Along the way, we will conflict with those who seek power for its own ends, who oppress the weak and abuse the defenseless. We will deal with those people as we come upon them, with mercy where possible and decisive action where not.

We are here at the dawn of a new age, and I'm proud to have you with me.

AEON



August, 1923

We've had the first real rumpus in the club. Stefokowski and Tallon had some heated words with Annabelle. She didn't like how they'd treated her during that affair in New Orleans, and they hadn't liked how she'd ignored their orders. Mercer ended the whole argument, pointing out that Annabelle had earned the nickname "Crackshot" for good reason. Stefokowski grudgingly admitted that Annabelle had saved them in the end and made peace. Tallon grumbled a lot, but I think he'll come around.

Max has been pushing himself nonstop since the first meeting. While half of us were mucking around in New Orleans, he and that reporter Gettel were off in Haiti battling the undead. (I'm amazed I just wrote that word, and not in jest!) Since he's been back, he's sketched up a new two-way radio device for Professor Dixon to perfect, purchased an office in London for the Society and has me looking into recent disappearances in the meat district.

I suggested to Mercer that he slow down, and he gave me a typical reply: "This is a bold time, Whitley. No time to waste enjoying it. We've got work to do!" I'm not sure why he's putting so much energy into this. I can't see it taking more than a year or two to find all the answers, after all.

October, 1923

Mercer and Stefokowski stopped into the club today to see how the construction was coming along. Jake managed to corner me, giving me a run down on how he and Mercer had managed to save the day in Mexico City. As always, somehow, his plane and flying skills figured prominently. Glad he's still aboard, though - his planes make traveling much easier.

We're making a lot of progress, I think. The attack suggests we're bothering the right types of people. I was surprised no one quit on us. Mercer just gave me an "I told you so" look and commented on these people being the type to do something about it, not sit around and watch. He's right, of course. After all, I'm one of them.

November, 1923

It's been four months, and no one is dead. I'm amazed, sometimes, at the scrapes we manage to escape.

Stefokowski crashed in the Yukon and managed not only to survive, but came out with the Furry Man in one piece. Safari Jack Tallon led that Smithsonian expedition into the Congo, and when it all went bad, he escaped by intimidating the locals. I barely made it out of San Francisco after my run in with the Ubiquitous Dragon and his Dragon's Coil Tong. And we nearly lost Annabelle to a stunt during the filming of a movie in Los Angeles.

— excerpt from *The Chicago Sun*,
September 21st, 1923

EXPLOSION ROCKS DOWNTOWN

No Fatalities In Late Night Bomb Blast

CHICAGO — An explosion rocked the residential neighborhood of Wicker Park in the early hours of this morning, destroying the main floor of the Mercer home. Police report no deaths or injuries, though damage is estimated to be into the thousands of dollars.

The Mercer home was the headquarters of the Aeon Society for Gentlemen, which opened a few months ago. Its membership includes Jake "Danger Ace" Stefokowski, "Safari" Jack Tallon and Annabelle "Crackshot" Newfield. The president of the Society is noted philanthropist Maxwell Mercer, who made his family residence available to the club.

Police speculate the bombing may be in retaliation for the recent arrests of several crime figures, based on evidence uncovered by Maxwell Mercer.



I'm pretty sure Safari Jack got a little carried away with those locals, so Max has been reminding us not to take any of it personally, that we're not pursuing personal vendettas or out to force people to change. After all, the Æon Society is not a secret government and has no intention of becoming one. We fight against secrets.

Some of the secrets we've uncovered have left me in shock, and I'm not sure even Professor Dixon is accepting at face value some of the stories we're reporting. I'm not talking about the ones where Danger Ace again manages to save the day with his plane, either. Lost worlds, people with strange abilities, secret organizations I never suspected – everything goes into the files.

Mercer tells us that these files are the measure of our success. We're not keeping any secrets, so they're open to anyone. So far, not many have asked to see the files. Sarah, of course, when she's in town, but no other reporters. I'm not sure if I'm glad or worried. If some of what we'd discovered made it into the papers, it'd mean panic. At the same time, I think people should know what's going on.

I think Mercer is right to keep things on the up and up. It'd be easy to forget we're doing good things if we hid from the public eye. The fact that only the newspapers are interested in what we're doing is disappointing, but others will come around.

I've been treating this as a bit of a lark, but I think I had better talk to Max. Maybe I can do more.

December, 1923

Max just returned from Macao, and already, he's thrown together an impromptu meeting. Somehow, he knew that everyone had just made it back into Chicago, and somehow, he was already on top of the question everyone was going to ask. "Whit, I should have thought of it before. We're not the police, but we've got to do something with the people we stop," he said to me almost as soon as he came through the door. I guess some of my mail reached him.

There are already many suggestions being thrown around. Professor Dixon suggested we set up a psychiatric facility, to study the nature of the people we're up against. Tallon has offered one of his remote compounds in East Africa or Arabia as a location. Stefokowski asked why not just turn them over to the police, so I pointed out that many of these people aren't guilty of any local crimes. How do you charge someone for developing a "death ray" before they use it?

Mercer's given the go-ahead on the psychiatric facility, saying "it's not enough to understand the wonders of our world, we must understand the people who experience them."

January, 1924

Mercer's idea of having us spend Christmas together was perfect. It was like a second family. We're all committed to this cause, driven by Mercer's dedication. It's infectious – I even saw Jack crack a smile or three. We're doing something good here, and I'm part of it. I can hardly wait to see what's next.

Telluric Energy

From the Journal of Doctor Primoris

April 1, 1924

Perhaps the most amazing thing about the life I have chosen to lead is how so many men and women without my advantages also choose to lead it. Many die the first time they don their masks or take to the sky in their modified aeroplanes or raise a fist to protect the weak. Too many....

I am convinced that the ones who survive again and again are more than human, even if they seem completely normal. One outrageous coincidence in a lifetime is more than enough for most, but these adventurers often do six impossible things before sunrise each night they patrol the alleys, rooftops and skyways.

"Fortune favors the bold," they explain. This remark is flip and simplistic, but what if it is correct? The fact that most people can use devices that focus pseudoaetheric waves suggests that a great portion of humanity has the potential to personally manipulate such energies. Perhaps boldness helps spark that potential, bringing out the best of humanity in those select few who otherwise remain human?

These "daredevils" cannot tap pseudoaetheric waves for their use, but deep inside them, hidden potential expresses itself in small ways. Guns aimed between their eyes just happen to jam. The wind is strong enough to blow them onto an awning after being pushed from a roof. That aeroplane wing remains intact just long enough for a safe landing or an insane stunt. Their bodies hold together despite terrible damage until the villain is defeated, then the heroes collapse to wake later in a hospital.

The impossible does not follow these people as it does those of my ilk, but the improbable is their constant bedfellow. I suspect that their minds manipulate the pseudoaether in some subconscious fashion; in turn, it manipulates reality in small ways in the adventurer's favor.

April 24, 1924

Reflecting on my entry of April 1, I realized I inadvertently used a classification created by Styles, Mercer's young apprentice. As I have already committed the intellectual sin of categorizing broadly that which is unique and should defy such facile labels, I may as well compound my error and explain the other appellations.

- excerpt from *The Physical Review*, October 1923

"An Alternate Construction of Recent Probabilistic Theories in Quantum Physics."

by Professor Karl Holtz
Stanford University

ABSTRACT

Current studies into the nature of the atom point toward a mathematical description of the wave nature of electrons and other particles. This paper will present an argument for an interpretation of these phenomena involving a field of energy that underlies properties we are able to measure. This field, to be called the probability stream, permeates all reality at a level that cannot normally be observed using current technology and scientific methods. All matter and energy interact with the probability stream, which itself shapes the pattern of events.

While no quantitative data will be presented in this preliminary work, efforts will be made to reconcile this new theory with the proven aspects of modern physics. The probability stream does not represent an aether-like absolute reference frame. It may allow transmission of signals faster than the speed of light through itself but, in theory, should not generate interactions in normal energy and matter that violate Einstein's special theory of relativity.

Aside from "daredevils" and their preternatural luck, those affected by the Telluric Engine fall into two other broad groups: mesmerists and stalwarts.

While not bound by the laughable theories of Mesmer himself, the so-called mesmerists are masters of the powers of the mind. The strange energies unleashed by Hammersmith have given these people phenomenal mental talents, from simple hypnosis to the power of mind over matter. The noted escape artist, Harry Houdini, made a crusade of exposing charlatans who claimed to be able to perform these feats, although he focused on spiritualists rather than mesmerists. He has since been astonished to find that not all mentalists are frauds. The expression on his face, a mixture of surprise and joy, was something to behold. I am told he has since given up his stage career and devoted himself to finding a true medium. I could tell him of the ones I know of, but perhaps it is best to allow him to quest on his own. After all, in the process of seeking out the inspired, our newsworthy contortionist may find inspiration of his own.

Stalwarts wield comparably tremendous powers of the body, even to point of the flat-out impossible. The actions of daredevils and mesmerists can be explained away as luck or trickery, but anyone who sees one of these stalwarts in action knows something incredible has happened. Hair-thin wires may replicate a mesmerist's mind over matter power to lift a teacup, but they cannot explain how a man flexes his thews and knocks a diesel locomotive on its side! From great strength and remarkable resistance to pain to control over the elements and the ability to hurl lightning from their hands, the stalwarts are the true portents of what the future may hold.

These are broad generalizations and, like all such statements, incorrect in some fashion. There is much blurring between groups, and the names Styles picked for them obscure as much as they reveal, if not more. I have met scientists with perfectly sedentary lifestyles who bend probability in ways Styles calls "daredevil-like;" I have seen so-called "stalwarts" who were craven weaklings... albeit weaklings with some phenomenal ability no human ever possessed. Nor, naturally, are all mesmerists involved in the manipulation of men's minds.

I think we can look to myth and legend for a different way to categorize the new breed walking the earth, should categories be desired. Daredevils are the heroes of myth, the Daedaluses as well as the Jasons. Mesmerists are the wizards, witches and sorcerers who haunt the corners of our past. And stalwarts? Stalwarts are gods. Gods of the dawning age.

But... if we are to be gods, where will mere mortals fit into our world?

July 6, 1924

In the two years since the Hammersmith incident, I have given much thought to the matter of his so-called telluric rays. That I still feel the need to commit my thoughts to paper in order to organize them might be mere sentimentality or, perhaps, a sign that I am still relatively human. But regardless of the cause, I have decided to condense my thoughts on this matter tonight.

Doctor Hammersmith called his discovery telluric rays. Others have called them Z-rays or harmonic vibrations or even "magic." My old friend Mercer is given to calling it simply "Inspiration," and you can practically hear the capitalization of the word in his voice. None of these labels is quite adequate to my purposes. I'm not totally sure any human language is sufficient to the task. But I have a name that will suit me until I find a permanent solution.

This mysterious energy field seems to behave in a manner consistent with the old theories of the

MAGIC IS REAL!

Do not SCOFF, dear reader. It is Plain as the nose on my face, Magic is a real presence in the world today. The GOVERNMENT does not want you to Know, nor do the owners of the Press. They pass the MIRACULOUS off as science or mere chance... but they know the TRUTH, and so should YOU.

Consider the Æon Society. You may not have heard of them, but they sit like SPIDERS in the middle of the web they have cast about the city. Backed by money from the Rockefellers and the Bolsheviks who are their ALLIES, Æon seeks to use Magic to help establish a One World Government and make slaves of us all.

But YOU can fight BACK! Magic is real, and it is out there for anyone to use. Just attend the seminars of Doctor (Div) Peter Batar, who will teach ALL who wish the use of this NEW and POTENT force. Magic is in ALL of us, not just the RICH MEN of the Æon Society.

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luminiferous aether in many ways, even though Messieurs Michelson and Morley ironically proved the nonexistence of such a medium in their attempts to prove its properties. This mysterious radiation seems to propagate at nearly infinite speed, at odds with what men thought they knew about the aether. Hence, I call this fundamental force of nature the pseudoaetheric wave.

Pseudoaetheric waves can penetrate any known matter, although they may be slowed or diverted by particularly dense substances or those prepared in a wide variety of special ways. They also interact strongly with electric and magnetic fields and often express themselves via mundane electromagnetic waves in the visible spectrum. For some reason I have yet to ascertain, these waves interact strongly with the minds of certain individuals; I have seen some evidence that all brain activity contains a pseudoaetheric component. Manifestations range from impressive mentally guided abilities such as telepathy or energy manipulation to simply bending probabilities here and there... extraordinary luck, if you will.

More tomorrow. Other matters beckon.

But Dr. Alexi Cavopol, formerly of Bucharest, Romania, believes he has a simpler explanation for the strange happenings around the world of late.

"Radio is to blame," he asserts. "And I do not mean to say that the public imagination has merely been inflamed by the sensationalism of this new medium. No, it is far more than that."

Dr. Cavopol went on to explain how a radio aerial works, then claimed, "The human nervous system carries electric current, making it also a radio aerial. We are now always bombarded with radio signals, and our bodies act to pick up these impulses. How our brains interpret them is still a mystery, but I believe that many of the mass delusions reported in the media are the result of these signals. Simply reading the news over the air might make people think that a man is flying."

In addition to mass hysteria, Dr. Cavopol thinks that much of what legend calls magic might be the result of certain people being able to not just receive radio signals, but also broadcast them. He calls these broadcasts "ElectroEncephalic Radiation" and says that mesmerism may be a result of this newly-postulated form of energy.

But how can the general public defend itself against either normal radio broadcasts or insidious ElectroEncephalic Radiation? "You must wear a better aerial to block the signals from your body," the doctor explained, showing me the metal rod and battery pack sewn into the lining of his jacket. Of course, the whole apparatus weighs about 10 pounds and has to be recharged daily, plus it looked quite uncomfortable. "The price of freedom from the modern insanity," Dr. Cavopol observed.

July 7, 1924

The "other matters" revealed themselves to be an action by a newly "Inspired" madman who sought to destroy the city with his psychic lightning. Several of our number fell to his powers but none with permanent injuries, and the madman was eventually lured into a feedback loop by Professor Dixon's metalloceramic microspheres and destroyed himself utterly.

This does, however, provide a convenient context for the consideration of individuals of great power such as the madman who died last night.

The first thing to note is that they — we, more correctly — are rare. For every man or woman with outlandish talents fighting on the side of good or evil or madness, there are dozens with either more subtle Inspiration or none at all. There seems to be no rhyme or reason to who is granted these gifts... many of us who were present at the Hammersmith incident were naturally so gifted, as we were at the center of the unleashing of this pseudoaetheric energy. But people who never came near the site of the Telluric Engine's destruction have also demonstrated powers beyond mortal ken.

The Engine is definitely the key to these talents, the few claims I have heard of powers possessed prior to 1922 are generally untrustworthy or the result of self-delusion. For instance, our mesmerist "dance partner" of last night, Fulminatore, claimed to be a son of Jove and a master of lightning since his birth. Clearly, the man was driven mad by his power and concocted a new life story for himself. But in any case, the mechanism by which the pseudoaetheric waves triggered such powers is unknown to me. Many has been the time I have cursed our incomplete understanding of the human body — I feel I must push medicine forward by a century with my bare hands simply to understand why I have become what I am! It cannot be an evolutionary mechanism, not if the adherents to the Church of Darwin (a rather zealous



— excerpt from *The New York Times*, September 23rd, 1922

“BOTTLED HEAT!”

In his Staten Island laboratory, Professor Irving Klass claims to have found a new way to store energy and, at the same time, explode the current theories about heat and electricity.

“Ben Franklin was right all along!” says the Professor. “Electricity is a fluid. And so is heat. While the old caloric theory has been disproven by molecular chemistry, my neocaloric proves old Ben was on the right track!”

The excited scientist demonstrated by opening a metal can of some sort. He explained that it was made from aluminum, one of the few substances that could hold this “neocaloric fluid.” He cautioned against touching the can or its contents, although the can appeared to be empty. In truth, the fluid was invisible to the naked eye! With some tongs, he poured this invisible fluid onto a steel bar, which proceeded to melt after what he claimed to be only a few droplets had struck it.

“This will revolutionize the world,” Professor Klass claimed. “A single truck could carry enough neocaloric to power a city for a day. Isolated towns need not wait for electrical wiring to be strung all the way to their location... and the power output of hydroelectric plants can be moved more efficiently than through wires!”

However, there are still safety concerns, the scientist claimed. A spill of even a few ounces of neocaloric could destroy a city block in an instant.

When asked about Professor Klass, Dr. Emerson Ralston of Empire State University dismissed him as a crackpot. “Neocaloric is nonsense. The man’s been trying to publish his work for years, and no one who has read it takes it seriously.” Dr. Ralston dismissed the demonstration as “obvious fakery” and pointed out that even with detailed notes from Dr. Klass, no one had been able to repeat the man’s work.

Mixed state of wave/particle PA energy? Pity Klass died 1923. Accident? Murder?

lot) are to be believed, although their rivals among the Russian Communists might disagree. While the pseudoaetheric waves may have an effect on evolution, such an effect cannot be expressed in those already alive, only in those to be born.

Science gives balm to my frustration in one respect, however. I know that I am not exactly human anymore, not in terms of my living tissue (and perhaps not in any terms!). Samples of my cells do not appear to match those of normal humans when examined under the microscope. While the chromosomes of the nucleus do not seem abnormal within the limits of my ability to observe them, the smaller bodies called mitochondria seem far more active. It is clear that I am what De Vries called a "mutant" in his 1901 paper. If that is true, my chromosomes should bear some differences, as they are the carriers of Mendel's alleles. But here, technology fails me. I do not know how the chromosomes are structured, nor can I, given the current state of science. Such frustration!

Unfortunately, it has not been possible for me to obtain samples of cells from others like me without arousing suspicion. Some already suspect that I know more than I admit to, and I do not wish to confirm those suspicions. For now, I will have to content myself with self-study. Perhaps an X-ray for gross physical differences is in order, assuming I can secure a fluoroscope without attracting undue attention.

A pity that Fulminatore was reduced to ashes. It would have been to my advantage to obtain a small piece of his corpse for study.

July 21, 1924

While I continue my studies of abnormal biology, I sometimes wonder if a more mechanical approach might not prove more useful for now. Not only would advancing the cause of technology provide me with better instrumentation for my biological pursuits, but there is much to be said about the strange and wondrous inventions of this era.

To be sure, some of the more fanciful creations seem to be simple crutches for those who cannot accept that the power of the pseudoaetheric waves flows through their bodies. Such contraptions are easily sifted out, however, for they only work for their creators. A rickety framework of wires and wooden slats becomes an impenetrable "electrobarrier" when operated by its inventor but falls to pieces when he is not around, or a death ray is opened up to reveal only a rat's nest of wires, no power source to be found.

At the other end of the spectrum are inventions that result from an extraordinary genius advancing normal technology by years or even decades. Roadmaster's upgraded Duesenberg contains improvements I am sure will revolutionize the automobile industry, if he ever chooses to sell his patents to them. The Stone Monkey's chemical solutions seem to be an advanced form of polymer much stronger than Bakelite. And so forth.

But in between fall the creations that truly intrigue me. This "super-science" employs pseudoaetheric waves directly, although the inventor almost always has his own name for the energy source. Highly purified aluminum, alone among the lighter elements, seems to focus pseudoaetheric rays in the same way it was once claimed to focus N-rays. In fact, many of those who work in that metal claim to have validated the old N-ray theory, despite a conclusive debunking years ago. Otherwise, heavier metals capture and focus pseudoaetheric waves when placed in the right configuration. Many of the more maniacal "evil masterminds" steal vast quantities of gold or platinum to use in their inventions... the metals conduct electricity well and then turn that power into pseudoaetheric rays that may be used for a variety of purposes.

Of greater concern, however, are those who have turned to the new elements discovered by Mme. Curie and her colleagues. These heavy elements are dense enough to channel and focus pseudoaetheric waves and are also powerful sources of more conventional waves, such as gamma and alpha rays. As we proceed with scientific probing of the secrets of the atom, it strikes me that the radioactive actinides such as uranium will be the secret to great power even without pseudoaetheric effects. Should the two be combined... I shudder to think of the consequences.

Enough doomsaying. Regardless of the medium any given inventor employs, such devices have these features in common:

1. Conventional electrical or mechanical energy is converted to pseudoaetheric energy or vice versa. Some strange effect almost always accompanies the forward operation. In the reverse operation, normal

effects usually result, but the inventor claims to be drawing energy from some new source: Tesla's *Electromagnetic Harp*, telluric energy, the fundamental energy of creation, God or gods, &c.

2. Counterintuitive things happen. Granted, much of the new science runs counter to intuition, but these inventions are quite strange, even by that standard.

3. Despite these devices' violations of natural law, almost anyone can use them, unlike the "crutch" inventions. However, no one can seem to reproduce them independently, and mass-production is almost always impossible. Perhaps it requires a certain talent to create these things in the first place... they are devices not native to normal reality but seem comfortable enough existing once created.

A recent postulate by de Broglie suggests a mechanism for some of the stranger effects many such creations generate. For instance, the Weaponsmith's "never-empty" gun seemingly creates bullets out of nothingness. But between Einstein's assertion a score of years ago that matter and energy are interchangeable and de Broglie's work this year on the idea that waves and particles may be the same thing, I think I have a solution. Pseudoaetheric waves are also particles. Because these waves permeate reality at an arbitrary density, they can be coaxed into particulate form in any shape or density by the right focusing apparatus (or mental power, explaining the tricks of inspired conjurors). The pseudoaetheric waves condense into lead bullets or whatever the creator desires. Granted, the whole truth must be more complex than this, but I feel this is a good start.

Similarly, to touch back on the subject of personal powers, I believe my friend Mercer's ability to travel through time could be the result of a similar phenomenon. His physical body dissolves into pseudoaetheric waves that then travel through time and condense back into a body. Because pseudoaetheric waves travel faster than the speed of light, they are not bound by the causal rules with which Einstein has been binding his general theory of relativity. I have seen at least one "matter transmitter" device that seems to work on this same general principle. Too bad it was utterly destroyed when the dirigible it was mounted in crashed. Now that I know what I do, I know I could have modified it into a time travel device.

For now, however, I must be content to travel through time one day at a time, like the rest of mankind.



Agents of Change

Inside the Files

Congratulations, you've been given access to some of the most interesting and disturbing discoveries of the Æon Society for Gentlemen!

Various members collected the information here, and I, Whitley Styles, have summarized it where possible. While I am the author of many of these reports, I am not always the source. Where possible, I will indicate the appropriate member to contact for a more direct retelling of events.

The groups detailed here are not all enemies. Some are possible allies, others are, at best, neutral observers of our work. We recommend caution in every case. While the Æon Society has managed to piece together a good picture of who and what these groups are, it is by no means complete.

You may be wondering why these files are open to the public. Part of our charter is to uncover secrets. As our founder is fond of pointing out, if we were to keep our own secrets, it'd be hypocritical. Therefore, what we know is available to anyone who comes by our headquarters and asks. A risk, maybe. But a risk we're all willing to take if it helps.

The Air Circus

– from the journals of Whitley Styles

When Stefokowski finished with the war, he wasn't finished with airplanes. He took his aerial skill and know-how and put them to work entertaining people. The Carnival of the Air was one of the first air-shows to crisscross the United States like the ground-based circuses before it. The Carnival included more than just planes, of course. Mechanics, hangers on and even some vaudevillians accompanied Danger Ace as he risked death for the crowd.

Of course, Stefokowski, being the Danger Ace, couldn't just fly his planes and move on. Everywhere he went, he'd turn up some kind of trouble or mystery. In his retellings of these early days, the solution invariably involves some kind of daring aerial stunt to save the girl, the day or the town. It seems to be in Stefokowski's nature to assume he's not alone in seeking out danger, and he started wondering if he was the only flier to find himself in these predicaments. Surprisingly, it turns out he wasn't. More than a few air shows regularly encounter criminals and the weird during their travels, both in the US and (for the rare ones who put on shows there) Europe and Asia. Stefokowski exchanged telegrams and letters with these far-flung fliers, working to arrange for a meeting. The place chosen – Kansas City.

As many of you are aware from the newspaper accounts, that was the first time Doctor Zorbo made an appearance. He really chose the wrong time and place to debut. Zorbo's "Death Balloons" were little match for the flying skills of Danger Ace and his friends. After driving off the Doctor, Stefokowski had his great idea: The Air Circus.

The Air Circus is a way for pilots and air shows to exchange information and keep in touch. It also acts as an informal alliance dedicated to protecting the "crowds" from those unscrupulous sorts who would use the skies for evil. From the initial handful who attended the Kansas City meeting, the Air Circus has grown to at least a score of danger seeking pilots and their crews. As Danger Ace likes to say, "whenever danger threatens, wherever there is a mystery to be solved and however the innocent are threatened, the Air Circus will be there to save the day."

The Air Circus attracts more than its fair share of adventure, danger and mystery. This is due partly to the nature of the members and partly to their constant travel into new territory. A typical Air Circus "team" consists of one or two pilots, their mechanics and possibly a hanger-on or two (managers, girlfriends or boyfriends, etc.). Thanks to its ability to pool expertise, money and knowledge, the Air Circus has access to the cutting edge of aircraft

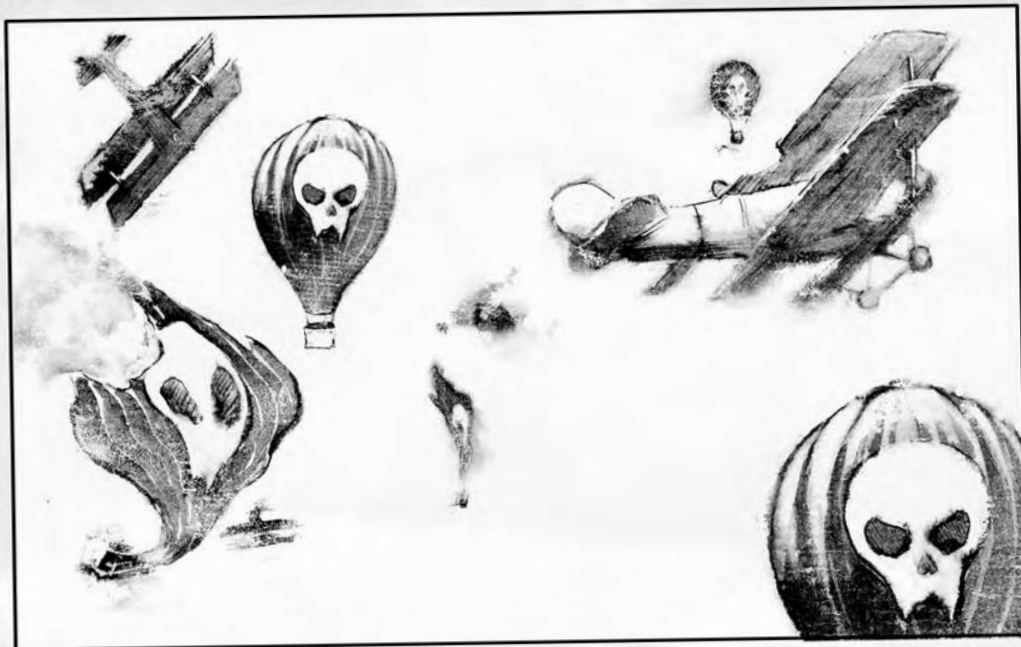
technology. The stunt planes of Air Circus members can out-fly nearly everything short of Igor Sikorsky's record-breaking designs.

The Air Circus doesn't recruit its membership in any formal manner (in fact, I'm not sure if it does anything in a formal manner). Instead, the group relies on a friend-of-a-friend network to ensure that suitable pilots and mechanics are part of the loop. Spending any time with the members of the Air Circus is an invitation to experience something unusual. These pilots seem to attract excitement and danger. Be careful if you must spend any long period around them.

From conversations with Stefokowski, I know that the Air Circus has worked with various groups during its short history. The International Detective Agency has actually employed Air Circus pilots to deliver packages and people quickly, for example. The Ponatowski Foundation has also hired members of the Air Circus for similar duties.

The Air Circus is on uneven terms with the United States Army. The Army is developing its own air corps and finds it embarrassing to rely on civilian help to save the nation. Other foreign military forces seem more inclined to welcome the Air Circus and its aid. The Germans, for example, with their Versailles-restricted air force, always welcome the arrival of one of the Air Circus' traveling shows.

Obviously, the prime enemy of the Air Circus is the infamous Doctor Zorbo, who has attempted to use his own peculiar lighter-than-air weaponry to terrorize the world. To date, the efforts of the Air Circus and the Æon Society have prevented the good doctor (or should that be "bad doctor"?) from succeeding.



— excerpt from *The Kansas City Star*, May 28th, 1922

DANGER ACE SA VES DA Y

Death Balloons Destroyed

Despite promises of destruction should he be interfered with, Doctor Manfred von Zorbo was shot down earlier today. The so-called Death Balloons that have threatened the city since yesterday afternoon were destroyed with no loss of life in a spectacular air battle.

The noted air showman, Jake "Danger Ace" Stefokowski, led the aerial charge of a number of show pilots against the Death Balloons. Armed only with pistols, the pilots were able to disable the balloons before any of their deadly cargo could be dropped. While police

had expressed concerns that engaging the balloons would only lead to deaths and urged the city to pay the ransom, the air battle resulted in no casualties.

Doctor Zorbo, the mastermind behind this plot, was able to escape authorities after his balloon was shot down near the Kansas River. Danger Ace speculated that Zorbo may have had accomplices waiting in the city.

The pilots were attending an air show just outside the city when the Death Balloons made their first appearance.



Branch 9

– from the journals of Whitley Styles

It'd probably be best if you didn't admit that you read this here, and whatever you do, don't pass it on to anyone. Branch 9 is one of the best-kept secrets any government has, and the Æon Society would like to keep it that way. Yes, this seems to go against our goals, but Branch 9 does a lot of good work; letting just anyone know about the organization would severely reduce its effectiveness. If Annabelle hadn't crossed paths with one of their Operators during some trouble in Arizona, we wouldn't even know about them. She earned the following secrets saving his life.

Annabelle's Information

The Operator Annabelle rescued never did give her his name. Instead, he referred to himself as Operator B1. We can guess that there is at least one other Operator, likely titled A1. It seems equally likely that there are others, with similar titles, though how many is impossible to tell. Based on what B1 revealed, though, the number of Operators in the United States is quite small.

Branch 9 exists outside normal government operations. The Branch's powers far exceed those of the US Marshals, the G-men, the Justice Department or the Attorney General's office. The Operators report directly to the President – not even Congress is aware of their existence. The Branch owes its existence to Teddy Roosevelt, who approved its creation as a means to deal with increasing international and interstate crime. Its mandate has expanded since then, to include dealing with crimes not yet on the books. It is a specialized arm of law enforcement designed to work where local and federal authorities have their hands tied. And it is very good at what it does.

The Operators of Branch 9 focus their attentions on the kind of crime that doesn't make it into the daily newspapers, the kind we've become familiar with in the Æon Society. Things that most people would be better off not knowing. Branch 9 makes a point of uncovering. When a scientist develops a death ray and begins testing it on cattle in Nebraska, Branch 9 gets involved. According to Operator B1, there was an agent on the way to Kansas City to deal with Dr. Zorbo's balloons, until Stefokowski's friends dealt with the problem (see the Air Circus files).

Operator B1 seemed to take pride in the fact that one agent is often all the Branch needs to send to deal with any problem. Operators are highly trained and well equipped to deal with the strange and unusual things they encounter on nearly every mission. Their training includes Asian fighting styles, firearms, engineering and sciences, languages and lessons in the use of the special gear handed out for missions. Most of the Operators have wartime experience, though some civilians find their way into service as well. According to Annabelle's information, the Branch won't recruit from law enforcement, to avoid complications about its extra-legal status.

A final note from Annabelle – apparently Operator B1 had a license to kill, though he was reluctant to exercise what he called "extreme sanction."

Æon Society's Analysis

A secret organization operating beyond the bounds of the government seems tailor-made for trouble. However, from what we can tell, Branch 9 operates with restraint and professionalism. Since Annabelle's encounter, other members of the Society have crossed paths with the Operators. The meetings have uniformly been on good terms and have helped us build a better picture of Branch 9's activities.

Perhaps the most important discovery is that Branch 9 doesn't operate solely in the United States. Apparently, Teddy Roosevelt spread the idea to his fellow heads of state in Britain, Mexico, China, France and probably other countries we don't yet know participate. These



foreign branches (each with some suitably cryptic name, such as Britain's Supplemental Resources Office and France's Field Research & Development Unit) operate mostly independent of one another, each reporting to its respective head of state. Joint ventures are planned on those rare occasions when presidents, kings, prime ministers and the like gather for their summit conferences.

Funding is mostly hidden in government expenses or in inflated purchase orders. Branch 9 uses the money to develop the special equipment issued to the Operators. Equipment we know about includes: a bullet-resistant blue suit, a belt radio and a lockpick that can defeat any known lock. We've heard of other, more specialized equipment being issued to the Operators on an as-needed basis. The remaining funds pay the salaries of the Operators and the costs of their training facilities.

Jack Tallon shared a whiskey or three with one of the British Operators in Kenya. Jack learned that all the Branches have a similar structure. A single Branch Head and his (or her – apparently the Chinese Head is female!) lieutenants dispatch the Operators, which number anywhere from a half dozen to a dozen agents at a time. According to Jack's friend, no Operator has an "M" designation, due to a series of rather bad ends agents assigned that letter came to.

Recovered Correspondence

The following was recovered from the ruins of a villa in Argentina by Sarah Gettel. The original was in Chinese and has been translated.

– translation of recovered letter fragment.

...continues without interruption. At the current rate of replacement, the entire operation will be ours in another two years.

No one suspects. The confusion here is great, and we can expect tremendous success. However, I must warn you that Operator F3 has reported on recent activities in the South China Seas. She is asking permission to investigate further. I need your guidance on this matter, Master.

You faithful Servant,

Qui-Ju

In the margin of the letter, in red, was written "Kill."

Addendum

There's some reason to believe that the head of the Chinese version of Branch 9, Jiao Qui-Ju, is actually an agent of the Ubiquitous Dragon. Recent events in China have left the Branch ripe for this kind of infiltration. We urge members of the AEon Society to avoid contact with Operators of this Branch.

The International Detective Agency

– from the journals of Whitley Styles

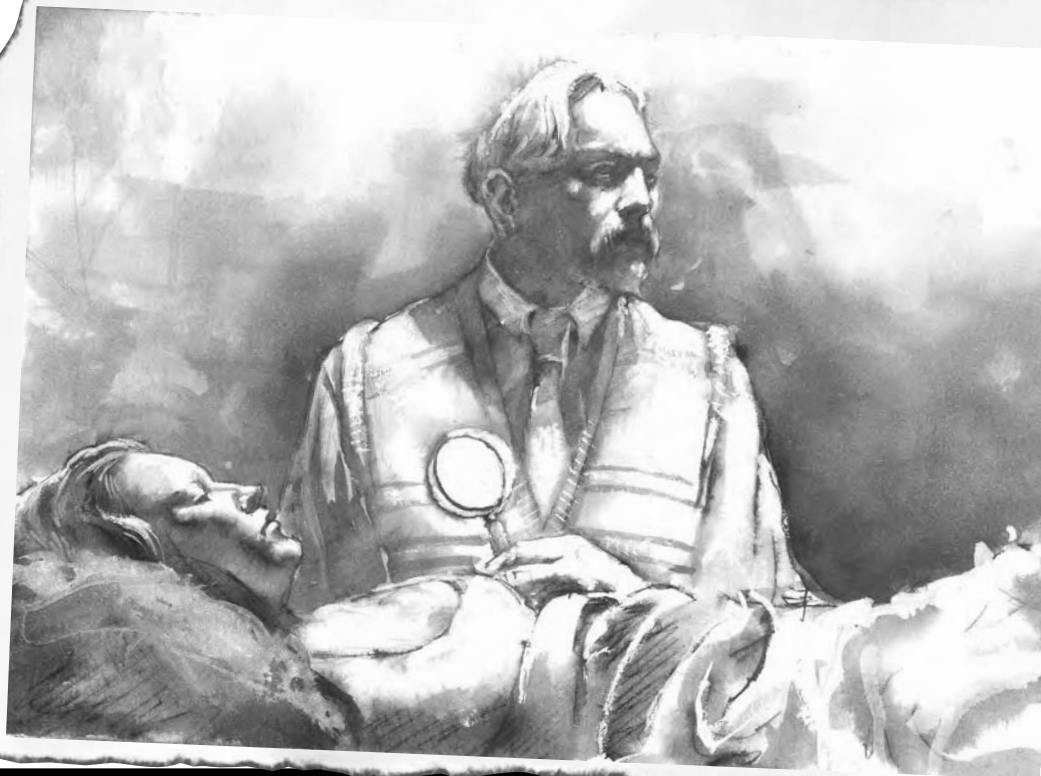
In the last half of the 19th century, the idea of a private detective became very popular. The Pinkerton Detective Agency established itself as a model of a continental investigative agency, working cases anywhere in the United States. In the 1890s, it faced its first serious competition when the International Detective Agency formed in London, England. In the course of a decade, the IDA opened offices in places as far-flung as Macao, Johannesburg, New Delhi, Rio de Janeiro, San Francisco, Istanbul and Paris. The Agency established minor offices across the world, providing the IDA with an international network of contacts and resources the envy of many governments and corporations.

The Agency is run from London by the Old Man. No one knows his name, and very few people actually meet with him. The rules and organization of the Agency are entirely of his creation. The regional offices each have their own Old Man, typically a veteran of police or detective work, though occasionally a lawyer can earn the position. Each Old Man directs the operation of anywhere from a handful to scores of detectives, or Irregulars. These Irregulars are picked based not only on their ability and experience, but also on their internal moral compass. Irregulars may not be nice people, or particularly "good," but they are, to a man (and woman), immune to the lures of corruption.

I first encountered the International Detective Agency after Mercer rescued me, back in '18. He had worked with the New Delhi office to find me, and the Old Man took a personal interest in helping me recover from my experiences. I learned a lot about the job from that bunch – the importance of legwork, how first impressions have to be backed up with facts and how vital it is to have a personal code of ethics.

Here's what I know about how the IDA operates:

It was created in the late 1890s to combat the increasingly international nature of crime. The IDA's goals are similar to those of Branch 9, but its methods and operations are not. The IDA is not bound to any governmental policy and is available to any private citizen able to afford its standard rate.





The International Detective Agency recruits its Irregulars from the police, from other detective agencies and from the ranks of prosecuting attorneys. Existing Irregulars compile a dossier on a potential recruit, focusing on his personal ethics and job skills. The Irregulars present the Old Man of the region with this dossier, and he makes the decision to approach the potential recruit or not.

New recruits undergo training in the Agency's methods and procedures. They learn how and when to contact other offices, how to deal with various situations and how to work with other Irregulars without stepping on any toes. By the end of the training, an Irregular is one of the best.

The International Detective Agency provides Irregulars for bodyguard duties, auxiliary police assignments and as investigators for insurance fraud. An Irregular may also be involved in divorce matters, missing person cases and kidnap victim recovery. The IDA may also provide armed messengers, do background checks and consult on security matters. All this for \$5 a day, plus expenses.

The IDA deploys its Irregulars solo or in teams of two or three agents. The number of agents assigned depends on the nature of the job. If an Irregular requires additional agents, these are made available when possible. The goal of any IDA investigation is success, not efficiency or profit. A happy client is a good thing. While there is no official dress code in the IDA, Irregulars tend toward clean suits. Somewhat scandalously, the IDA employs female Irregulars and encourages them to dress in suits (with low heels).

The IDA's international nature allows it to pursue leads across the globe and across national boundaries. Its multinational recruiting allows it to combine the best of many nations' investigation techniques. Thanks to the Old Man in London's encouragement, the IDA has adopted many of the newest methods of identification – fingerprinting, ballistics and even some stuff I've only read about in dime novels.

I strongly recommend that AEon Society members who have the chance work with the International Detective Agency and learn a thing or two from its operations. Given the Irregulars any aid you can, should they need it. These are the good guys.

- excerpt from memo to the Old Man, author Roland Broomfield, 10 October 1922

I believe I have found more evidence of the existence of the so-called "King of the World." There has been a recent wave of thefts, all involving diamonds, all precisely coordinated to occur within hours of each other, in eight cities around the globe. In each case, the diamond was the only item removed. As per our standing instructions from the Old Man, I have noted these thefts in the attached document.

While it is not impossible that these thefts are the result of coincidence, it is highly improbable. As we know, that's always a clue to something deeper.

The Denberg family has retained me to recover their lost Denberg Diamond and I will use this opportunity to investigate possible links to the other crimes. I strongly advise that we attempt to get other Irregulars involved in these cases.

- excerpt from memo to Roland Broomfield, author "The Old Man," 11 October 1922

Once more, I must urge caution upon you, Irregular. The individual you pursue is dangerous beyond measure. Do not make any missteps, and be certain to report all your findings to the local office at regular intervals. We have lost many Irregulars pursuing this "crime lord," and I have no desire to add you to the list.

- excerpt from The Times, 17 October 1922

The body of Roland Broomfield, a private investigator in the employ of the International Detective Agency, was recovered from the Thames late last night. The police are reporting the death as a suicide, as the body showed no signs of violence. Initial reports suggest that Mr. Broomfield placed bricks in his jacket pockets, and then leapt from the London Bridge. He leaves behind no next of kin.



The Ponatowski Foundation

– from the journals of Whitley Styles

We are not alone in our quest for answers to the mysteries of the world. I hesitate to call the Ponatowski Foundation our competition, but some evidence suggests it might consider us that way. In recent months, I have noticed that whatever exploration we might attempt, there seems to be a member of the Foundation either a few days ahead or behind us. However, I don't believe this is anything sinister. The Ponatowski Foundation has been around for decades and has funded some of the more important explorations of Africa and South America in that time.

According to its official history, a group of Russian and Eastern European nobles came together in 1902 to establish the Slavic Scientific Foundation. The stated goal of the Foundation was to finance and encourage the exploration of Russia for scientific purposes. In the period from 1902 to 1912, the Foundation sponsored over a dozen expeditions into Siberia and the Gobi Desert and even sponsored an attempt to explore the bottom of the Black Sea. The results of these expeditions appeared in print in the foundation's *Journal of Exploration*.

In 1912, the Foundation moved from Moscow to Warsaw, adopted the name of Count Wladisaw Ponatowski in return for his donation of land and buildings and announced that it would now fund research and exploration into Africa and South America, as well as Russia. With the expanded focus, the Foundation attracted the interest of a more international group of anthropologists, archeologists and scientists. In the two years before the war, the Foundation funded a half dozen expeditions into Africa. Unlike previous expeditions, the results of these were not published and remain secret even today. The stated reason is that the related files were lost during the war.

The Foundation apparently closed up shop for the duration of the war. In 1919, the Foundation reopened and resumed pretty much where it left off. Rumor suggests that the Foundation was actually active during the war, smuggling wealthy Russians out of the country before the October Revolution. It is clear that the resources of the Foundation have greatly increased in recent years, and it's attempts to fund the White Russian Army in 1919 and 1920 gives some weight to the suggestion that it is a front for Russian expatriates.

The Foundation resumed publication of its journal in 1923, but as a details-light entertainment magazine. The Æon Society library has some back issues, and you can see that, while the magazine appears to give a comprehensive account of an expedition, it leaves out important evidence and conclusions. I'm unclear why this is, though I've heard Mercer and Dixon suggest the Foundation is finding stuff that people would be better off not knowing. Given what we've found, I wouldn't be too surprised.

The Foundation seems willing to back almost any expedition that can put together a reasonable proposal to catch the directors' fancy. I have heard that it funded an expedition to look for an underground kingdom located beneath Germany, with an entrance located somewhere along the Rhine. I know the Foundation funded a research trip into the Amazon, to determine if the local tribes were actually descended from Atlanteans. It's also behind the current attempt to find Noah's Ark. I would be more amused if our Æon Society hadn't found some strange stuff itself.

Addendum

--dispatch by Sarah Gettel

It is my belief that the Ponatowski Foundation is actually a front organization created in the days before the Russian Revolution by the master criminal known as the Czar. As part of his grand plan to remake the world as a Russian empire, he intends to use the Foundation's discoveries. Whatever secrets or artifacts it uncovers go into the general pot of materials to be used in his schemes.

It is notable that a number of the Foundation's members physically intervene in local matters, shaping policy to suit their own views or those disturbingly in keeping with the Czar's agenda. They are also not above using intimidation and extortion to get their way. I must admit that this belief remains conjecture at present. Aside from a few disquieting coincidences, I have no proof. And I must admit that most of the Foundation's members seem to pursue exploration and research honestly. Still, your Aeon folks are advised to use caution when dealing with the Foundation.

— excerpt from *The Times*, 3 January 1924

Polish Foundation to Search for Eastern Atlantis New Theory of Human Origins to be Tested

City connoisseurs of the avant-garde will no doubt remember last September's striking exhibition of Slavic artwork, all presenting Biblical and mythological themes reinterpreted in motifs taken from Eastern barbaric cultures. Some observers apparently found truth as well as grandeur in the exhibit, as the Ponatowski Foundation, known to us as the patron of scientifically valuable if sometimes conceptually obtuse expeditions, has announced that on May next it will send a fleet of vessels to dredge portions of the Black Sea for evidence of antediluvian civilizations there.

Count Felix Ponatowski, a distaff cousin of the foundation's patron, told gentlemen of the press gathered in this city that the expedition will attempt to establish the preexistence of a highly refined society in the Eastern marches. "It is our hope," he declared, "to show that, in

fact, the classical writings known to all educated men that portray barbarians and savages beyond the Grecian and Persian pale are a sort of propaganda, the machinations of the jealous kaisers of the day."

When asked by one particularly skeptical reporter whether it was the policy of the Foundation to take scientific hypotheses from artists admittedly under the influence of narcotic substances, the Count laughed and replied, "In fact, you yourself reported more than eight months ago on preparations for an upcoming expedition of ours. Check your own notes, sir, and remove the beam from your own eye." He went on to explain that the work had been in progress for some time and that there were mutual influences extending back to the Ponatowskis' work with some of the artists as displaced persons immediately after the war....



The Contedorri

– from the journals of Whitley Styles

I think that, by now, we are all familiar with the stories of a “King of the World” or mastermind directing organized criminal activity around the globe. In my work with the Irregulars, I’ve often heard it mentioned and filed it away. Every police officer or district attorney I’ve crossed paths with denies the existence of any one central figure, chalking up questionable events to coincidence and chance. Even Mercer has suggested the idea is something better suited to cheap magazines, not serious study.

Until last week, I didn’t even half-believe in it. Last week, though, I ran into Lefty Gomez for the 14th time. Lefty Gomez is a fairly gifted thug – his talents lie in his fists and his absolute lack of fear. He keeps turning up like a bad penny, though. I’ve found him working for everyone from a common street tough to a rather wealthy oil magnate. We’re talking about a man who is lucky to have crossed the tracks, yet he seems to have no problem finding work.

I cornered him and put some questions to him forcefully. I think he believed me when I explained how it would be in his best interest to talk. What he told me has me thinking we’d better reexamine our assumptions about the criminal activity we’re seeing.

Lefty Gomez, you see, doesn’t work alone. In fact, according to Lefty, he’s part of something bigger than any of us can imagine. I suspect there’s some exaggeration involved, but I believe him when he claims to be more than just a common thug. He’s “contedorri,” he says. Like from history – he’s a mercenary soldier, working for the highest bidder.

I pressed Lefty for more details and convinced him that, while he might be killed later if he talked, if he didn’t talk, I’d see to it he was going to be killed sooner. I wasn’t happy about that, but this information seemed important.

The Contedorri is a group of criminals that trains other criminals, then hires them out to whoever can pay the price. According to Lefty, it provides safecrackers, demolition specialists, engineers and thugs as required. The price isn’t cheap. Lefty apparently costs his employer \$8 a day (which might be generous, given my experiences with Lefty). A specialist in a particular field can go for as much as \$20 a day. Members contract out for special jobs, helping those groups or individuals that need talent but can’t develop it locally. The Contedorri also provides legal assistance to its members, along with medical aid when required.

I hope you understand the significance of this. We have here a group that acts as a central switching house for criminal talent. No wonder I’ve run into Lefty so many times, in so many different situations. He’s been contracting out. From what I’ve learned, the Contedorri must number into the hundreds worldwide, all well-trained and dedicated criminals.

Lefty couldn’t tell me the name of his leader or much about the history of the group. Well trained or not, he admits he is still just a thug. I strongly suggest we track down others from this organization and find out more. The mere existence of this Contedorri makes the suggestion of a criminal mastermind far more credible, to my mind.

Addendum

Speaking with other AEon members in the field and piecing together further anecdotal evidence, I believe we have a decent working hypothesis regarding the Contedorri. Not that we can prove any of it, of course.

As long as there have been societies large enough to support professional criminals at all, would-be masterminds have organized criminals. It’s possible that some cells within the Contedorri run back in continuous or nearly continuous lines to ancient Roman and Etruscan gangs. However, the overall organization dates to the religious wars of the Renaissance. A band of a dozen professional mercenaries set up a home base for themselves in the Alps of northern Italy in the 1650s and, thanks to luck and determination, managed to last long enough to pass on a network of contacts to their heirs. The second generation nearly lost it all, since most of them lacked their parents’ ruthless ambition and talent for careful slaughter, but the offspring of the founders’

lieutenants included enough good soldiers to keep things together. Since then, the Contedorri has continued to take in fresh blood and weed out useless lineages with each new generation.

Here's an interesting detail: The de Winter family has ties to the Contedorri running back to the group's founding – de Winters at the court of Louis XIV were among the Contedorri's first regular clients, calling on the mercenaries for hit jobs and harassment of court rivals. After the French Revolution, a handful of de Winters escaped to Italy and met up with the Contedorri again. For more than 50 years, up until the revolutions of 1848, de Winters provided the Contedorri with bookkeepers and other administrators, all the while stockpiling funds for a glorious return to nobility and power. It didn't work; once again, nearly all the de Winters perished. The last of her line, the lovely Lady Argentine de Winter is somehow involved with the Contedorri; we're just not sure in what capacity.

The Rational Experimentation Group

— *from the journals of Whitley Styles*

Ever wonder why there are laboratories in remote locations around the world, just waiting for some scientist to move in and begin experimenting with something dangerous? Back around 1922, Safari Jack Tallon wondered enough to try looking into the matter. What he discovered concerns even Max.

The laboratories are constructed under the watchful eye of the Rational Experimentation Group (REG). Sounds official, doesn't it? We were surprised to find that the REG doesn't officially exist, except in a handful of letters and memos sent to architects and construction firms around the world. Trying to trace those letters leads nowhere – empty offices or post office boxes that don't exist.

I've dragged from Tallon half-remembered conversations with site foremen and pieced facts together from various notes of his concerning what he's been able to get out of the occasional scientist he's found working in one of the laboratories. What these various pieces to a larger puzzle tell us is this: The Rational Experimentation Group is encouraging some researchers to push the boundaries of ethical science and is providing them with the ways and means to do so.

Some particular crimes we've been able to link to the REG include: providing human test subjects, encouraging live tests on human populations and outright theft of the results of such experimentation. I'm talking here of scientists developing death rays, poison gases and new plagues – and being given free rein to produce results on human subjects.

Okay, so that's what the REG does. How it does this is much less clear. As near as we can tell, it must have two groups – the one that arranges for laboratory construction and the one that kidnaps and provides the human test subjects. The first group is easier to pin down – despite the false addresses, this group still pays for work. We've been able to trace things back to a trust fund, administered by the Rational Experimentation Group of Switzerland. The trail dies pretty fast up against the Swiss, however.

A drunk banker did manage to let slip a few details to me in a friendly conversation one night, though. According to him, the REG gets regular infusions of funds from three separate accounts. The accounts belong to wealthy scientists... but my friend could not be persuaded to part with any names or nationalities.

The second half of the Rational Experimentation Group seems to be a regular employer of the Contedorri. Using these criminals, the REG singles out those who have little or no family and kidnaps them (in the case of those with little family, the REG seems inclined to grab all the relatives as well). These people are then delivered to the scientists who need them. Investigation into the kidnappings is discouraged with either bribes or intimidation (a few local sheriffs were willing to explain this process to me on the promise of anonymity).

Perhaps most troubling of all the information uncovered about the Rational Experimentation Group is that it may well be the product of an alliance between the Machinatrix, the Ubiquitous Dragon and Mister Saturday. It seems evident that each benefits from the products of the research. Unfortunately, they're all too slick to leave any hard evidence connecting them to anything. The final question – just why does the REG do what it does? – is the biggest mystery of all.



— excerpt from the *Los Angeles Times*, June 17th, 1919

STRANGE DOINGS IN SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department reported today that it has discovered the whereabouts of more than a dozen youths kidnaped throughout the Southland over the last two months but that the answer itself raises fresh questions. Following a tip provided by local astronomy buffs observing from various San Gabriels' peaks, police discovered a freshly constructed private road leading north from Echo Mountain to a ravine furnished with three concrete bunkers, all evidently erected since the last severe winter rains. Inside, police found a variety of scientific apparatus and cells for all the kidnaped youths, plus room for as many more.

According to the youths, they never

saw or heard anyone from the moment of their kidnaping, performed with the aid of chloroformed cloths. Attendants of unknown identity provided food and water while the youths slept; police suspect that there may have been regular administration of drugs to keep the youths on a synchronized schedule.

Deputy Sheriff Dana Jones told the press, "This is by far the most inhumane plot ever uncovered by our officers. We suspect Bolshevik influence; no God-fearing American could have set out so methodically to prepare children as lab animals." Deputy Jones provided supporting details, which are too gruesome for repetition here, and several reporters were overcome during the hearing....



The Order of Murder

– from the journals of Whitley Styles

I first encountered this bunch while investigating what appeared to be a routine murder of a wealthy industrialist, whom I'm not going to name here. The deeper I dug into what looked like a robbery gone bad, the more I found to suggest that there wasn't much robbery but an awful lot of bad. The evidence was staged, and not in a shoddy way. It easily fooled the local police and, eventually, even the old lady who'd made a habit of poking her nose into strange crimes. However, things just weren't adding up.

The only items missing were of sentimental value. The body didn't look quite right, when compared to photos. The broken window was broken from the inside. They were all the standard signs of a true mystery, rather than some plain homicide. I was intrigued and did some more digging.

I found a chink in its wall of silence, thankfully. I'm going to keep the source's identity a secret, since I know our records here are not secure. However, I'm not sure how much I trust the information, given the source. It's nothing I can get confirmation about, for obvious reasons, but from talking to other members of our Society, I think this bunch has been on the opposite side more than a few times.

I've traced the Order of Murder to a cabal of English noblemen during the reign of Henry VIII. They had some quibbles with the decision King Henry made regarding Anne Boleyn, so they faked her execution and spirited her out of the country. A few years later, they performed the same favor for Catherine Howard, and so began their existence as the *Ordo Occisionis*. The nobles and Henry's ex-wives began to assist other wealthy people in faking their deaths for a fee. The Order soon developed into a full-fledged secret society that fakes the deaths of those able to pay its price. Its clientele during the 16th century consisted mostly of unfaithful wives and treasonous nobles but expanded in the 17th and 18th centuries to include anyone who could meet its price. Each individual rescued joined the Order, sworn to secrecy on pain of death. The Order's coffers got a good amount of the new member's portable wealth in the process.

According to my source, things have changed recently. In the days before police, the *Ordo Occisionis* operated without much need for care or skill. You bribe a headsman, find a handy peasant to stand in for the body, and you're set. Then along comes some Frenchman with a good idea, and the whole scheme is in jeopardy.

Its members could have given up at that point, but the money was too good. They changed the organization's name to the Order of Murder and changed their methods. In the last few decades, the Order has employed a cadre of specialists in plastic surgery and forensics, along with the typical forgers. Apparently, with surgery, the Order can change someone's appearance enough that his own mother would never recognize him! Experts on its team are pioneering work in replicating fingerprints and identifying suitable phrenological matches. These experts falsify the evidence at the scene of the supposed crime and disguise those rescued. In many cases, those rescued by the Order of Murder can resume a semblance of their old lives, claiming to be long-lost relatives or old associates (with falsified documents to support the assertion). Others take up residence in different countries around the world and attempt to begin their lives again. Teams of three to five members handle the field work for each case.

While the method may have changed, the clientele hasn't. The Order still makes the wealthy and powerful disappear, for a price. The Order of Murder occasionally employs members of the Contedorri to take the fall for a falsified crime. The nature of the organization's work puts it at odds with most law-enforcement agencies – not that the police are willing to believe it even exists. (The exceptions being those so corrupt that they actually work quietly with the Order in exchange for money.) So far, I've identified at least three cases where the individual in question was facing arrest, bankruptcy or some other form of personal ruin.

ation. With an apparent death, the investigations came to close, and the individual escapes scot-free. Convincing the local authorities of the Order's efforts without evidence has so far proven futile.

Despite appearances, the Order no longer resorts to murder. The bodies it uses in its disappearances are the result of a cellular duplication process the Order developed with the aid of a Dr. West in the late 1800s. This process produces a nearly perfect body double but one lacking intelligence or free will. I suspect the Order produces these doubles in its headquarters and laboratory, located under a brownstone in London.

The three highest-ranking members of the Order go by the titles Lord Scrope, Lord Cambridge and Lord Northumberland, in that order. Currently, Reginald Farshingham (an Englishman supposedly slain at Khartoum) holds the position of Lord Scrope, while Genevieve St. Cyr (wife of a wealthy Frenchman, believed murdered in her bed in Paris) is Lord Cambridge. The position of Lord Northumberland is currently open, as the last titleholder passed away from old age.

While Æon does not involve itself in personal vendettas, I will be pursuing this one on my own (I suspect that various governments' Branch 9s are also expressing an interest). One of the things that worries me is this: what happens to the offspring of the Order's members? Are there whole families, generation after generation, living secretly out there somewhere, thinking of themselves as the ones who really run the show? The world suffers enough from the schemes of visible nobles and lords; there could be real trouble if there are unknown princes and kings trying to steer things their way.

— excerpt from *The Times*, 18 May 1923

Prominent Financier Dead in Bushy Park Possible Revenge After Commercial Tragedy

Well-known financier J. Ainge Lawoys was the victim of a grisly murder last night, this paper learned from a source at Scotland Yard. The police have not been forthcoming with information on the death because of surrounding confusion, according to our source. As was reported in Tuesday last's financial news, Lawoys Security funds were discovered in substantial disarray, apparently as the result of systematic manipulation, by party or parties unknown, intended to secure immediate cash at the expense of all longer-term concerns. Mr. Lawoys himself was under suspicion, and police fear that some private citizen took it upon himself to exact a more certain revenge than the law might provide.

American tourists discovered the body this morning in the northeastern corner of the park, while on a birding stroll. Mr. Lawoys had been shot by a large-caliber handgun no less than four times in the head and twice in the chest, and the arms and

portions of the chest had been drenched in some flammable liquid and ignited. Identification of the body was indeed delayed for some hours, owing to the relative deficiency of marks on which to base a certain establishment of identity. Distant relatives came down from Cambridge and confirmed the presence of minor, but distinctive, birthmarks.

These relatives, not identified further by our source, also told a tale of Mr. Lawoys' investigation of a somewhat similar death in his youth as a colonial policeman in the Punjab and agreed with the police speculation of revenge over investment handling as a motive. However, they strenuously denied any culpability on the deceased's part and shared correspondence indicating his substantial distress over the affair. A record of their remarks made available to us indicates....

--dispatch by Sarah Gettel

Imagine my surprise at finding Hans Kupperman alive and well, drinking in a shanty outside Marrakech. This is a man who died in Munich, before the war, sitting here hale and healthy, drinking schnapps. You might recall the matter -- there was an outraged household servant, questions of propriety involving the use of company funds and an impending arrest. Hans Kupperman turned up dead in a back alley in Munich, apparently the victim of a robbery gone awry. Yet, unless I saw a ghost, he still lives.

I approached and introduced myself, knowing my name would likely mean little to him. He introduced himself as Walter, with a passable attempt at an American accent. We talked of things travelers talk of -- the weather, the food and the accommodations. He consumed much schnapps, more than I did, and it loosened his tongue.

He spun me a fantastic tale of how, in his darkest hour and the victim of terrible lies manufactured to gain control of his company, an angel approached him. This "angel" was an Englishman who promised a new life and rescue from his demons in exchange for simple money. Money was something Hans could part with. The Englishman, who used the name Lord Scrope, whisked Hans away to Marrakech.

Hans was now part of something larger than his problems. Since the time of his "rescue," the Englishman has often returned to ask for Hans' advice and aid in saving others in similar predicaments. Apparently, Hans belongs to something he calls the Order of Murder, which finds his particular talents with pharmacology to be of great use to them. He tells me that Marrakech has proven an excellent laboratory for his work in sedatives and anesthetics. "There are others like me, all over the world. Men and women who are dead to people like you, lady. But we aren't dead. We just wish we were."

With that statement, Hans stumbled off to his home and I to my room. Did I imagine the resemblance? Were these merely the ramblings of a drunken man looking to earn free schnapps? I fell asleep hoping it was so.

Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux

- from the journals of Whitley Styles

In the vast majority of cases, it doesn't take long for me to figure out what I think of a new group, whether I approve of its goals and methods and how I think the Society should deal with it, if at all. A few organizations take me longer to evaluate because of their complexity. A very few leave me baffled and torn between enthusiastic agreement and passionate dissent. *Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux* is one of those few.

I must start by writing as clearly as I can how much I agree that women around the world suffer unjustly. Sometimes I still dream of the suttee fires I witnessed while held by the Thuggee: widows burned alive when their husbands died, for those who don't know the word "suttee." The British have done their best to stamp out the custom, but there are always men (and even women) who think it's so important to burn widows alive that they're willing to risk punishment for it. When we went with Mercer on that trip to China, I saw the custom of foot binding still practiced, even under a supposedly enlightened new post-imperial government: girls' feet broken and broken again until they become a tiny mass of deformed bones, to satisfy the Chinese belief that smaller feet are sexy. I've seen women subjected to every kind of harassment and abuse, in "civilized" and "barbaric" lands alike.

Even if I didn't care about justice as a principle, I would like to think that I could still recognize the practical cost of losing the insights of half the race's population. We simply cannot have too many strong minds and bodies working to make the world better, and any belief that would have us cast some aside is clearly the enemy of the kind of future all of us in the Society hope for.



So when I first heard of an international alliance of women out to take control of their own destinies, I was immediately favorably inclined. Yes, I thought, good for them for banding together to address their distinctive concerns.

I first learned of the Salon last winter, in the Caribbean. Stefokowski and I were following rumors of a white slavery ring somewhere in the leeward islands, which we thought (wrongly, as it turned out) might be connected to one of the Ubiquitous Dragon's many plots. By the time we came across the slavers' den, their prisoners had all been set free, and the slavers themselves had been crucified in their own den, many of them clearly tortured to death. "For the New Woman" was written on the walls in half a dozen languages.

We've seen the handiwork of these New Women several times since then. In northern India, they engineered a brilliant series of raids that liberated women condemned to suttee and transported them to safety with sympathetic émigrés in Europe and America. The Femmes Nouveaux managed to escape detection at every step along the way – without detectives as good as the ones we've got, nobody would ever have put the pieces together. Our interviews with the rescued women didn't give us much beyond a general impression of formidably competent women who didn't strike their rescuers as at all "manly," but did seem fit for every task that arose in the course of the rescue. In Argentina and Brazil, money came to support women trying to engage in labor organization, in the name of the Salon. The rest of our encounters fell somewhere between those extremes of direct action and quiet help from afar.

Safari Jack, of all people, was the one who discovered the Salon itself. It wasn't in Paris or some other French city, but in Indochina, in what had been a mission until a generation or so ago and some petty bandit's deprivations. Tallon came riding out of the jungle in search of whatever his prey of the day was into a small clearing, where, in moments, he was completely surrounded by armed women and girls. They made him dismount and questioned him very thoroughly, offering few explanations in return. I gather from his description and the amusing little loopholes in it that he may have tried to brazen it through with his brand of swagger and gotten nowhere fast.

Just a few weeks ago, a dour Indochinese woman who identified herself as "Minh Truong" approached Sarah on the streets of Chicago and offered to tell her about the Salon. Sarah remembered Jack's tale and promptly accepted. The rest of this file belongs to her.



--dispatch from Sarah Gettel

Sarah Gettel: Thank you for offering me this opportunity, ma'am.

Minh Truong: I am one of the Femmes Nouveaux. You don't need my real name.

SG: No, I don't, not if you'd prefer not to share it with me. Tell me about the Salon.

MT: When I was a girl, the missionaries taught us about the creation of the human race. "Male and female created He them," the book said.

SG: So it says, yes.

MT: Don't patronize me, miss.

SG: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to.

MT: You see me as some shopkeeper or maid or something harmless, maybe somebody who did something once but now only bears tales. You're wrong. Now let me speak.

SG: Certainly.

MT: So I grew up believing that each of us carried the mark of God. But it soon became obvious that men didn't see the mark in us, or didn't care. They use us and destroy us at their whim. When the bandits came for the missionaries, I survived only by disguising myself as a little boy. They laughed at me and told me I could grow up to be just like them. They killed the priests, raped the nuns and dragged off the other girls for more lingering fates.

You have a tear in your eye. But why should you cry? If you are not willing to do what it takes to put an end to such things, then you should accept them as a fact of life. I decided that I would not accept them. I realized that men had forfeited the mark of God and that there would be no peace or justice until women rediscovered the mark within themselves and forced men to submit.

SG: Aren't you just planning to do back to them what they've done to you, then?

MT: Absolutely not. My sisters did not deserve death. But the men who brought death to them do. And the men who let those men bring death deserve the punishment of accomplices. This is the simple, pure form of justice, such as prevailed in Eden and will again when we rule the world.

I traveled the world, in whatever disguise I could manage, to see what other women experienced. I learned languages and customs, and I taught my simple message. In every land, a few are willing to hear it. It was a Parisian lady who referred with a smile to my "salon." I keep the name to honor her memory.

SG: Her...?

MT: She died fighting the good fight, under circumstances that are none of your concern.

SG: So the Salon is...

MT: Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux is an insight. We are restoring the lost face of God, which is female. We are building tomorrow without the taint of the sins men have carried forth from Eden. We do whatever's necessary to make redemption a thing that happens now, not in some indefinite never-never land.

And when you are ready to hear the truth of what we say, we will be there to speak it to you and welcome you to join us. Until then, you are part of the masses that we pity but do not let stop us.

Postscript: At this point, I became momentarily dazed. When the confusion passed, the woman was gone.

I must admit that I believe the Salon is precisely what this woman Minh Truong says it is. Depending on their assessment of the needs of the moment, its members can be warriors, scholars, teachers, healers or just about anything else. The Salon itself, headquartered deep within the Vietnamese jungle, aims to produce women capable of excellence in all fields and assembles its students into teams who, between them, have all the skills that its founder, the aging Minh Truong, deems necessary. She then sends them out into the world to spread the word of women's destiny as harbingers of a redeemed humanity.

Further investigation suggests that would-be successors to Truong disagree among themselves as to whether the forceful end of male oppression should take priority over education and the like, and when (if) Truong passes away, the struggle to be her replacement will shape the Salon's future direction.



The Inquiry

— from the journals of Whitley Styles

This entry began as a note about the absence of something, rather than its presence. In the summer of 1922 – before the founding of the Society itself, though at this point several of us were regularly working together – my mathematician acquaintance David Aramission, then completing his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago, did an informal study comparing the distribution of income changes among graduates of his college and others over the last decade. (There's some complicated argument I don't really understand going on around such things, with diatribes about whether this or that level of income is socially detrimental or something.) While studying the data he'd acquired, David noticed something odd: The careers of the graduates who got involved with postwar diplomacy and reconstruction were, on the whole, significantly stunted. They didn't get promoted as fast, they were more likely to run into office politics problems, they were even more likely to have serious accidents.

He mentioned it to me on one of our visits, and it sounded interesting enough to warrant follow-up. After all, we of the Society have a particular interest in the fortunes of people out to build new worlds. I passed along his information to some of our scholarly associates and let them go to it. Three months later, I heard from David again, and now, he sounded worried. "Whitley," he said, there's something going on here that isn't just accidental."

It took him most of two days to summarize the evidence for Mercer, Primoris and myself. I'm not even going to try to repeat all of it; you can consult the appendices yourself for the details. What it boils down to is pretty straightforward: People who took part in war efforts, both during the war and after, are suffering. The tricky part is that they're not suffering in really big, dramatic ways. The murder rate is up a little, and the disappearance rate is up more, but mostly, it's a matter of cumulative minor misfortunes. The really tricky part is that the targets aren't people at the top – not heads of state or even ministry heads nor chairmen of the board – but the often-anonymous people several rungs down the ladder of command. The people behind this were and are aiming at chiefs of staff, heads of file departments, interoffice liaisons and the like, the people most often involved in interpreting general directions and applying them to specific cases.

This hooked Primoris' interest. He's fairly sympathetic to the whole idea of that kind of "social engineering" (as anyone who's heard him argue it with Mercer knows), and I think he saw these mysterious adversaries as somehow crowding onto territory he regards as his. Certainly, his response reflected at least as much purely intellectual curiosity in it as genuine moral outrage. Mercer decided to let him do some more investigating, while we attended to other matters.

It was the spring of 1923 before I heard from David again. He mailed me the following.

— excerpt from the *New York Post*, February 2nd, 1923

Professorial Scam Uncovered Scandal in Ivy League

Officials in the New York Stock Exchange confirmed today that they have been working with police to identify and arrest a network of would-be stock frauds in the halls of academia. Police in Boston and elsewhere made their arrests today, and full details

about the culprits will be forthcoming. Preliminary reports indicate that the scheming professors sought to exploit their knowledge of advanced mathematical processes to manipulate stocks in ways that would generate quick gains followed by sustained losses....

I called him up, and we met the next day. He looked haggard. He said that someone had been mailing him a copy of the article once a week for the last month. And I didn't have to ask; he confirmed that the arrested professors were the ones he'd consulted about this problem. "I don't know why they didn't include me," he said. "But I got the message. I'm through." He's still willing to talk with me about other matters, but as far as he's concerned, that inquiry is over and done with forever.

— *dispatch from Doctor Primoris*

On the whole, I prefer not to do extensive fieldwork on matters that are not fundamentally of my own initiation, but this mystery uncovered by Styles' friend caught my fancy. After a year and more of occasional traveling to supplement research closer to home, I can prepare a reasonably comprehensive summary.

The Inquiry takes its name from the multi-disciplinary academic force that advised President Wilson at Versailles. The first Inquiry's members sought to analyze the postwar situation as thoroughly as possible so that the diplomats could draft treaties grounded wholly in reason and evidence rather than petty vengeance. When it became clear that political powers wouldn't allow what the scholars thought of as a just, sane agreement, a handful of participants decided to act on their own. Their first targets would be their own colleagues, whom the dissenters see as traitors laying the groundwork for future wars.

That in mind, I quickly realized the overall thrust of the manipulation identified by Aramission and the others. It's aimed specifically at what a propagandist likes to call "warmongers," those who mobilize the resources of industries and nations for war, arrange the conduct of the war, and dispose of the spoils afterward. What distinguishes this set of manipulators from their ranting, banner-waving colleagues is a certain subtlety. They are clearly willing to work entirely in the shadows and to strike at those who actually implement decisions rather than those who are merely figureheads.

I believe the Inquiry intends to keep warmaking groups in a constant state of turmoil and at a loss of relative advantage. It is possible some members would like to engage in corresponding intervention to strengthen and reward anti-war groups, but further investigation suggests there are too few participants to devote to the task. Considering the organization's overall configuration, I reasoned that recruiting new members into the Inquiry is necessarily a slow and careful task, since the group can afford no leaks.

This fact suggested to me that the manipulators might themselves come from among the ranks of their victims. Few people can work so effectively against a class as its own members, if they decide to compensate for (real or imagined) sins by acts of collective atonement. I therefore decided to begin my own investigation by going over the rosters of Versailles conference participants in search of individuals whose actions were such as to allow room for suspicion about their involvement in an anti-war conspiracy.

It took me a full season to build a roster of highly viable candidates. There were half a dozen Americans and one or more individuals each from a variety of colonial or otherwise marginalized nations: Ethiopia, India, Abyssinia, Norway and Czechoslovakia each provided four members, while Italy contributed two, and more than a dozen other nations contributed one each. I started my investigation with those listed as having passed away, knowing from close experience that a plausible death can greatly enhance one's freedom of decision... but it occurs to me that a discourse on my methods isn't precisely the point here.

Suffice it to say that I was able to identify a core constituency of individuals from eight nations who had indeed faked their deaths and a periphery of individuals from 10 nations more who, from time to time, used a variety of disguises to gain more freedom of movement. It took the rest of a year to trace their movements; the Inquiry operates entirely in secret, spending months or years studying the workings of an organization, such as a government ministry or corporate branch, then striking at the largely unseen people who occupy crucial links in the chain of command. This behavior makes them understandably difficult to track down. I did persevere, however, and having finally identified them, it was time to move.

To my lasting regret, I did something wrong. I had hoped to present myself to them as a kindred spirit. I have no use for their apparent utopianism, nor do I think warmongering in any sense a necessarily undesirable activity. But I did feel some sincere admiration for their care and cunning and felt that I could plausibly feign a sympathy of outlook that would let me infiltrate their group and perhaps even turn it to my own purposes. Instead... I spent the better part of three weeks fending off assassination attempts, and when I regained the breathing space necessary for fresh evaluation, I found that all my targets had changed their patterns of movement. I would have to begin all again over to track them down, and at this time, I don't have an interest in doing so.

A cursory review of recent data suggests that the Inquiry is lying low. I think this outcome suffices.

ADVENTURE!

**TALES OF THE
ÆON SOCIETY**

**THE MYSTERY OF
VOLCANO ISLAND
AN EXCITING STORY
BY GREG STOLZE**

10¢



THE MYSTERY OF VOLCANO ISLAND

An Aeon Society

An Æon Society Adventure

— transcribed by Greg Stolze from the
journals of Whitley Styles, published 1927

I never expected to confront the world's most dangerous botanist. But then again, I never expected to be in the middle of a possibly permanent thunderstorm over a volcanic island, standing inside a living house that quite possibly wanted me dead.

But perhaps I should start at the beginning.

* * *

Initially, I was looking forward to our journey. Doctor Eggbert Chinswithe had invited the entire Æon Society for Gentlemen to visit his experimental botanical garden on distant Bokaniwatitanu, and we were all, I think, pleased by the offer. It was a cold winter in Chicago, and the opportunity of getting away to a Polynesian island was attractive in and of itself. Meeting the famed Dr. Chinswithe held great appeal for Dixon, Primoris, Tallon and Mercer — not only for his undeniable scientific accomplishments, but for the chance to meet (they thought) a great philanthropist and lover of humankind. Jake, Annabelle and I were less interested in his experiments with high-yield, Z-ray mutated crops and more interested in getting a bit of sun and surf. But (as Max made sure to remind us) the Hammersmith incident also started out as a polite invitation to a scientific demonstration.

It struck me as odd, I'll admit, that Dr. Chinswithe himself met us at the dock. He was a round, sunburned, sweaty man but extremely enthusiastic. He moored Jake's seaplane and greeted each guest effusively, even to the point of offering to help haul our luggage.

"Oh, that won't be necessary," Dixon assured him. "Our luggage hauls itself!"

I knew how keen Professor Dixon was for a chance to show off his latest oil-fired miracle, and at the turn of a key, our trunks produced wheels and proceeded up the pier, one after the other, in an obedient single

file line. All except for Safari Jack's portmanteau, unfortunately. Due to what was later diagnosed as a poorly oiled wheel bearing, his motor-case spun in three rapidly accelerating circles before flinging itself off the wharf. But Tallon was a dashed good sport about it.

We fished out the wayward valise and made our way up a gravel path, pausing to right Dixon's automatic suitcases when, now and again, they tipped over. He kept muttering about using treads, or possibly legs, while Chinswithe apologized over and over for not having a paved path.

“No matter,” Mercer said. “Paving a road would be a waste of your time and considerable talents. What can you tell us about your work?”

“Oh, well, it’s not so impressive, really. Not yet. The biggest breakthroughs have been in crop yield.”

As we rounded a corner, we saw what he meant. Off in the distance were towering structures that I initially thought were some sort of tropical tree. They had something of the shape of palm trees, but where a palm trunk is naked of leaf and branch, these seemed to be covered with greenery. It was only as we neared that I could see the poles, thick as railroad ties and easily 20 feet tall, strung with wire cables as thick as a finger. But what prompted gasps from all of us were the bright red globes nestled within the winding vines.

"Surely, those can't be... tomatoes?" Jake gasped.

"Oh, yes," Chinswithe said, beaming. "Quite as large as pumpkins. You should see the watermelons — we've one the size of a cottage."

"How is this possible?" Primoris asked.

"Simply a matter of enhancing the growth factor using Z-rays. The biggest problem, really, was that such large plants would normally take years, or decades, to develop. But with Z-radiated fertilizer, or 'zetalizer,' they can grow at a rate swift enough to be visible!"

“Doesn’t it wear out the soil?” Tallon asked.

“Initially, that was a problem. That’s why we came here, don’t you know. Volcanic soil, very rich indeed.”

Off in the distance, we could see a figure silhouetted on a hillside, methodically hoeing the ground.

"Ah, that's Henry," Chinswithe said. "Quite the conscientious chap. Hard workers these natives, once they catch on."

“How would these plants do in less hospitable soil?” Mercer asked. I could tell immediately that he was thinking of the starving peasants in the Ukraine, whose cruel Communist masters were too proud to admit their deaths.

“Given four qualities — my seeds, sufficient zetalizer and sufficient sun and water — these plants could grow in the Gobi.”

“This is a beautiful thing,” Primoris said. “I believe I am looking at an end to world hunger. Doctor Chinswithe, I salute you.”

Chinswithe simpered.

"Speaking of an end to hunger," Jake said, "Might I ask about our dinner plans?"

"Oh, certainly. I'll have dinner ready in a trice," the botanist replied. "Actually, we might want to hurry. It's clouding up."

We reached the large Nissen hut at the heart of his compound just as the first fat drops fell from the sky. I held the door for our bags, and as I did, I could see, out on the ridge, a figure — now indistinct through threads of rain but still monotonously hoeing the ground.

* * *

Dinner was interesting on several levels. The food consisted of a varied salad, followed by roast chicken and a sweet sort of custard called “Eggs Chinswithe” for desert. The conversation was fascinating, of course — Tallon scandalized us all with his anecdotes about the habits of the Etoros, Annabelle told a charming story about the first time she used a boomerang, and Mercer’s unrehearsed musings about the political climate in the Pacific Rim were both trenchant and insightful.

Surprisingly, one of the topics discussed among this literate and erudite company was the weather — usually an issue of default among those with nothing better to discuss. But in this case, Stefokowski made a comment about the weather reports he'd studied before flying in and about how it seemed as if this summer there had been thunderstorms every day — usually at the same time in the afternoon. This observation prompted some vague musings from Dixon about what could cause a stochastic and contingent system such as the weather to settle into a predictable pattern. I believe he was about to ask our host about Z-wave interference from his experiments when we were all distracted by supper.

“And how, hmm, are you finding your Eggs Chinswithe?”

“Very interesting,” Tallon said, furrowing his brow. “What species produced the eggs? They taste like simple hen’s eggs, but the texture is more varied.”

"I must confess, I've played a little joke on you," Chinswithe giggled. "Behold."

Before our eyes he held out an oblong, green object resembling an avocado. With deft movements he peeled it, revealing what seemed to be a hen's egg within. He cracked it, and a standard-looking white and yolk dripped out into a bowl.

"You... *grew* these?"

"I was going to hold off telling, but I couldn't contain myself. Everything you've eaten was grown here on the island. The chicken? Fake. Plant fiber — but with the same proteins and minerals as the real thing."

“How is this possible?”

"I call it *Gaylussacia baccata veronica*."

“*Gaylussacia baccata*... so it’s a huckleberry?” Primoris asked.

“It was,” Chinswithe said dismissively. “The mutations are so extensive that I really could have begun with any genus and species. Hence, ‘veronica’ — ‘vera iconica,’ the true image. Veronica can, with proper prompting, imitate any organic material!”

* * *

The evening's surprises weren't over. After supper, we were each escorted to a bungalow — not prefabricated huts like his main buildings, but bowers grown from the ground and shaped into chambers. At this point, I shouldn't have been surprised by any vegetable miracle, but I was still astonished as I crawled onto a leafy mattress and pulled up a surprisingly soft, fleecy blanket — still vital and rooted in the ground.

"What's next, a plant for indoor plumbing?" I wondered.

The next day, Max suggested that Annabelle and I might enjoy a walk along the shore while the “eggheads” discussed matters in detail inside Eggbert’s latest “house plant.”

"Perhaps Jake would want to come as well?" Annabelle asked.

"I believe he's working on the plane," Mercer required. "I told him I thought I heard a 'ping' in the starboard engine."

With that, I found myself alone with the beautiful (albeit deadly) Annabelle Lee. Naturally enough, as we walked along paths fused magma had cut through the dense jungle, we discussed the wonders we'd seen. Presently, however, we heard a soft but urgent thrashing sound from the undergrowth. Curious, we pushed aside thick leaves to uncover a scene of horror.

"What *is* it?" I gasped.

"I think it... it used to be a monkey."

The poor creature lay on the ground, twitching spasmodically. Flecks of blood were matted in its golden fur, co-mingling with smears of sticky green sap. Droplets of both beaded on the leaves surrounding it as well, and the co-mingling of plant and animal continued out of the environment and into the poor creature's frame. Its tail thrashed helplessly among twining vines, and thick tendrils were sunk in its ears and clogging its mouth. In a vile burlesque of anatomy, its eyes had burst, and two velvety blue flowers unfolded in the ruined sockets.

"I think we'd better get back to the others," I said.

* * *

As we cautiously approached the hut, we heard Chinswithe's voice, raised high in anger.

“...Oh, I’ll alleviate hunger, all right! Believe me, the starved and ignorant darkies of the world will flock to my banner when they see the cornucopia I hold! Their simple minds are easily swayed by creature comforts, but their natural savagery will lay waste to Europe at my command! France and Germany will be green, and I their verdant GOD!”

We crept up to the window and peeked within.

“You’re mad, Chinswithe,” Safari Jack observed conversationally. His sang-froid was admirable: Like Mercer, Dixon and Primoris, he was held immobile by thick vegetable cables. Primoris and Mercer were still struggling, but it was clear the stubborn shoots held them fast.

“Mad, am I? They called me mad at University. But I’ll show them. I’ll show them all! Oh, we’ll see who’s mad

"The one thing I don't understand,"

Mercer said, “is why you invited us here.”

Chinswithe snickered, his face slick with sweat. "Don't you? It's quite simple, really. I need Z-rays. And according to Doctor Gröebstadler's research, the strongest reservoirs come not from 'tellurgic batteries' and 'aetheric generators,' but from human beings — particularly those present at the Hammersmith explosion! Once Veronica has absorbed *your* qualities, its growth potential will be nigh-infinite!"

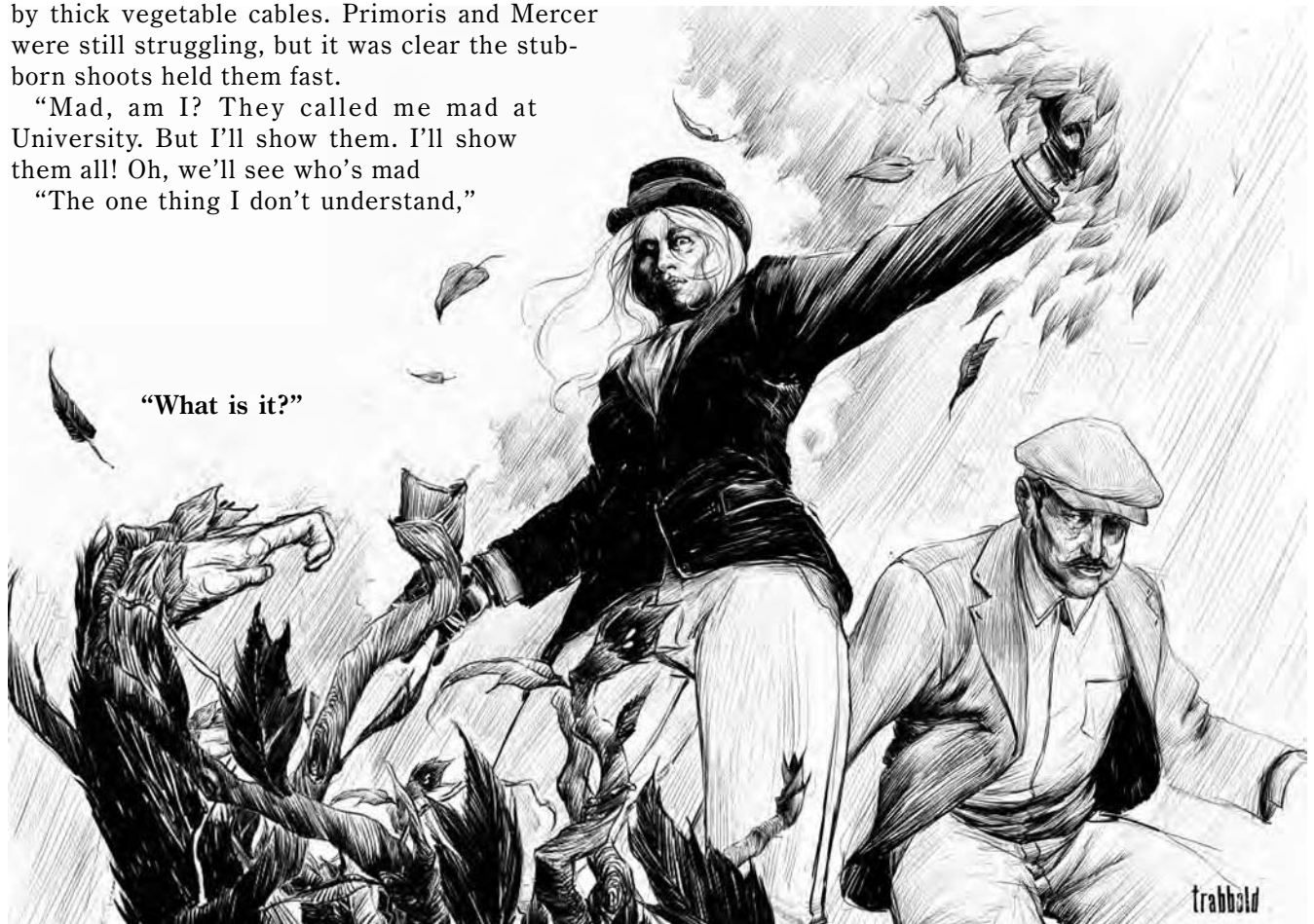
“Don’t do it,” Dixon warned. “You’ll only destroy this island and your creation.”

“Do you really think I’ll fall for such a patently transparent ruse?”

“No ruse. Think about the weather. Think about the *mathematics*, about thermodynamics. Contingent systems only develop spontaneous order when energy is added to them — otherwise entropy drags them down. Weather is a notoriously unruly system. What could make it predictable over your island? Z-rays.”

As if to punctuate his words, a great crack of thunder smote the sky.

“Your plants are leaking Z-rays into the atmosphere, drawing storms that are torn apart and dispersed by their own violence. But you’re approaching the tip-



This World of Wonder

--dispatch by Sarah Gettel

Greetings, Maxwell. Thank you for an all-expenses paid trip around this fabulous globe we live on. The horrors of the past 24 years, from the South African massacres that began this century to the so-called "Great" War that killed close to nine million people, are all behind us now. We have begun a new era of hope. I believe in hope because I have seen a man fly.

Nobody knows his name or how he flies. On January 25th, 1923, I was covering the city beat for The Cleveland Press and praying that there wouldn't be too many bodies. Some mad firebug torched 10 square blocks, while his buddies tried to loot the Federal Reserve Bank. The inferno trapped fireman Jerome S. Parker on the roof of the Wexler chemical plant. His goose was cooked. But then, the man next to me fell to his knees. Tears streamed down his cheeks, and he pointed skyward. I looked up and nearly fell myself. My first thought was, "I have to go to church on Sunday." For an angel, complete with wings, swooped down out of the clouds like a Fokker biplane. Just as the floor gave way under Parker's feet, the angel snatched the fireman from the blaze's hungry jaws and gently deposited him on the ground. When he landed, I could see that this miracle was not one of Biblical lore, but of one man's genius. The wings were mechanical! The "angel" wore a heavy harness with clockwork wings. It was the most amazing thing I had ever seen. He handed the coughing fireman over to his comrades and lunged back into the heavens, mechanical wings beating furiously. I couldn't make out the flying man's features due to the soot covering him, but I saw his smile. His smile said, "Things are going to get better."

After reading the article about my search for the flying man, your "Society of Gentlemen" (and do give my regards to Miss Newfield, by the by) graciously paid my way around the world "to report on the



changes the world has seen since Hammersmith's experiment." My ship recently docked in New York, and I finally have time to compile my notes and catch up on my correspondence. I include a few letters and clippings that you (and your Society) may find interesting.

I do wonder if it may be premature to attribute all of the wondrous changes of this past year to a science experiment, no matter how extraordinary. The history of mankind includes innumerable stories of heroes just like the ones now fighting on the side of right. Is Miss Newfield's ability with virtually any weapon any more outrageous than Annie Oakley's mastery of firearms or even Robin Hood's fabled accuracy? Are the mental powers of your "mesmerists" the same ones that Merlin wielded? Did the same energy that fills Doctor Vigorous' muscles allow Hercules and Samson to perform their heroic feats? Is this a new phenomena or perhaps an older power, now returning to the world? Is this modern science an old magic? All these questions, and so few answers.

Let us begin with what we do know.

In every country, in every corner of the world, men and women are making this world a better place. Perhaps the Great War lanced a boil in the human spirit. I have seen more hope sparkling in the human eye in these past few months than in the entirety of my life before. These hope-filled eyes peer out from behind domino masks, from under slouch hats and from amid strange equipment in secret laboratories. They tell me that, as a people, we are no longer willing to stand by and let injustices go unanswered. I would be completely remiss if I did not note that the hope of this era is also reflected in the eyes of everyday men and women. I see it in a bank officer who comes every Sunday to sweep up at a Bowery soup kitchen. I see it in a young girl who told me with all sincerity that she would be a doctor some day. I see it in an old gentleman who braved grievous personal injury to testify in court against a corrupt policeman. Sometimes I truly wonder, are these heroes the cause of the hope I see or merely the reflection of this wondrous time in which we live?

While this spark of hope for the betterment of the human species burns as bright as has perhaps ever bloomed, I do fear for this new one. Dark forces work night and day to snuff out the candle of hope. Some of them are bitter bastions of a long-lost era, hoping to turn back the clock to a time when they were more than they are now. Their day has passed (in some cases, by millennia), and yet, they still fight on. Were their goals not so horrific, I would have much greater respect for them. Others wish to take the great gifts of this modern world and use them for petty, selfish games. These mad scientists infuriate me, with their test tubes and their ever-present Jacob's ladders. Had they dedicated one tenth of the time they did to their latest death ray to the problems of world hunger, perhaps children would not have to go to bed without supper in so many corners of the globe. And while I have long admired the inherent goodness of everyday people, I also dread the darkness that can oh-so-easily take hold of the human heart. The difference between a madman who threatens a city with destruction and the slumlord that throws old women into the streets is merely a matter of scale.

But through it all, I still have hope of a better world.

Rising From the Fire

--dispatch by Sarah Gettel

Years of Empire

Six great empires dominated the world at the beginning of the century: Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and the Ottoman Empire. They enjoyed relative stability at home, but economic realities and imperial egos drove a tide of conquering armies to

every corner of the globe. They carved out colonies from Africa, Asia and South America and ruthlessly exploited the resources they found there to line nests back home. Even the United States, once a bastion of isolationism, fell prey to the temptations of conquest, with imperial adventures in Honduras, Cuba, Nicaragua and the Philippines.

Naturally, it was only a matter of time before these great nations found themselves at war over particularly tempting pieces of real estate. Germany and France fought over Ottoman-held North Africa, and Russia went to war with Japan over Chinese Manchuria and Korea. The great powers used gunboat diplomacy and brinkmanship to negotiate, bully or outright seize territories to bolster their global power and prestige. This intense politicking produced a complex series of non-aggression pacts and defensive alliances engineered to maintain a tenuous balance of power both in Europe and among their many colonial possessions. Germany could not attack France without fighting Britain as well. Austria-Hungary could not attack Russia without automatically incurring the wrath of Britain and France; likewise, Russia could not entertain designs on the fractious Balkan states (Romania, Serbia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Albania) without immediately facing Austria-Hungary and Germany. Though intended to keep the peace, the increasingly convoluted alliances became like a house of cards, waiting for but a single stroke to bring the entire mass crashing down upon itself.

The Great War

In 1914, the deadly stroke fell. Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, was touring the annexed province of Bosnia in his role as Inspector General of the Army. A radical faction of

Bulletins From A Brave New World

— dispatch by Sarah Gettel

The ramshackle cottage was dark, but I could see a glimmer of electric light seeping between the boards of the old barn. I was out of the Packard before Wallace could kill the engine; his startled shout chased after me as I threw open the barn's side door and raced inside.

The place stank of petrol and oil, not the typical earthy smells of agriculture. The huge plane sat like a hooded hawk, eager for the sky. There were machine parts and schematics everywhere. An old, scarred desk, salvaged from the University, sat up in one corner, likewise papered with O'Malley's technical drawings. The red-bearded giant was facedown amid his plans for aeronautical conquest, snoring like a badly tuned table saw.

"Rise and shine, ace!" I called out, giving the side of the desk a solid *thump* with my boot for emphasis. "Duty calls! Let's see if this big gooney bird is half as good as you say it is."

"Huh? Whuzzat?" Britain's leading aero engineer said, picking up his shaggy head and blinking like an owl. "Sarah? What're you going on about now?"

"There's a war, brewing, Professor!" I replied. "There's been an urgent cable from Sofia—"

"Sofia? Who's she?"

"Not *who*, Professor, but *where* — Sofia, Bulgaria. There's been an incident. Bulgarian troops have crossed the Greek border. A Greek soldier has been killed. Reports from the area have been confusing — or intentionally manipulated. The League of Nations is convinced that someone has instigated the whole affair." I paused, looking him in the eye. "I suspect that fiend Count Orlan is up to his old tricks."

"Orlan!" O'Malley straightened, hearing the name of his longtime nemesis. "Why didn't you say so, lassie!" He rose from the desk as the rest of the crew bustled into the barn. "Help me get those doors open!" he called out to Wallace and Little John. The burly professor dashed for the wide barn doors. "As it happens, I've reformulated the superchargers on *Queen Mab's* engines," he called over his shoulders. "I've been eager to test them out! You want to fly, lassie? Get ready for a trip you'll never forget!"

Serbian soldiers, dedicated to the liberation of all Slavs from Austro-Hungarian rule, made two different attempts on the Archduke's life, both of which failed. Hours later, as the Archduke was on the way to the hospital to visit one of the officers injured in the attack, his motorcar took a wrong turn and, through outrageous fortune, crossed paths with yet another of the Serbian assassins. Caught totally by surprise, the killer nevertheless acted without hesitation and shot the Archduke and his wife, Sophie.

The death of the Archduke unleashed a firestorm of rage in Austria-Hungary, as members of the royal family cried for revenge against Serbia and accused the Serbian government of orchestrating the attack. Serbia had alliances with Russia and France, but Austria-Hungary likewise counted on support from its neighbor Germany and declared war on July 28th. Suddenly, all the markers of 14 years of diplomacy were being called due, and all the leaders of Europe found themselves on the slippery slope to disaster.

Germany, Russia and Britain struggled furiously to keep the war from widening, but conflicting desires of territorial gain and political advantage drove each country to protect its own perceived interests and gamble against the resolve of their neighbors. Germany invaded France and Russia, committing itself to a war on two fronts, and Britain, unable to see a way out of its continental obligations, reluctantly declared war on Germany.

The Ottoman Empire joined Germany and Austria-Hungary against the Allied powers, determined to defend its interests in the Balkans and the Middle East, while Italy and Japan fell into line with the Allies. Events spun furiously out of control, and millions of men were sent to front lines all across the world. A disaster of epic proportions began to unfold. "Monarchy and privilege and pride will have it out before they die at what a cost!" US ambassador Walter Page wrote to President Wilson on July 29th. The Great War had begun.

Incredibly, the warring nations exulted in the early days of the war, gripped with nationalistic fervor and a sense of duty and patriotism, welcoming the conflict as a chance for adventure and glory. No one reckoned on the horrible weapons brought to bear on the field of battle: massed artillery, machine guns and within a year, poison gas. The fields of France and Eastern Europe became charnel houses, where generals hurled their troops across churned wastelands and counted their victories in mere yards. Within a year, the conflict bogged down into near-static trench warfare which consumed lives at a staggering rate.

Something besides those many soldiers died on the battlefields of the Great War. Western civilization as a whole lost its innocence and blind devotion to the wisdom of hereditary rulers. No one alive today escaped the touch of the War to End All Wars, either as a survivor or as someone who lost family and friends in that awful struggle. The sheer brutality of the war and the even more terrifying stubbornness of the rival powers in the face of sanity or reason showed us the very worst humanity had to offer. The seeds of the modern era were planted in those dark times, as men and women found the courage to question the wisdom of the old order.

The Great War ground on for four terrible years, the deadlock in the trenches broken only after the United States entered the struggle on the Allied side. American troops and the mobile armored fortress known simply as the "tank" allowed the Allies to defeat the exhausted Central Powers at last. The cost in lives and materiel was staggering

literally millions of lives were lost, and the great powers were reduced to mere shadows of their former glory. The Russian Empire suffered worst of all: In 1917, its people, weary of defeats and starved past the point of endurance, revolted against the Tsar, their hereditary leader. Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, also known as Lenin, led

the Bolshevik movement to power in his guise as a "man of the people."

Armistice and Upheaval

The surviving leaders of the Allied Powers resolved that the world should never again suffer the nightmare of modern warfare. Following the lead of US President Woodrow Wilson, the Allies created a League of Nations to mediate conflicts between nations and deter acts of aggression. (Ironically, the US Congress then refused to endorse the League.) At the same time, the leaders of the Allied Powers drafted sweeping diplomatic agreements to disarm Germany and break up the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, so that they could no longer foment aggression. The Versailles Treaty of 1919 (and its less-famous companion treaties) stripped Germany of nearly a third of its industrial power and all of its overseas colonies and forced the defeated empire into adopting a democratically elected government. Never before had an alliance of nations made such sweeping changes to the political landscape, and they set loose unforeseen changes in every segment of society.

The imperial powers' overweening ambitions and demonstrated disregard for their losses during the war fostered an inevitable backlash. Common men and women had learned the hard way not to blindly trust in hereditary leaders and hoary traditions, and after the horror of the war, they found the courage to face nearly any challenge head-on. Socialism gained new strength in the face of the capitalist institutions of Europe, and the Bolsheviks' success in Russia gave the governments of the world just cause to be concerned. Indeed, Lenin wasted no time pressing the cause of the People's Revolution wherever an opportunity could be found, and the last six years have seen numerous, bloody uprisings in Germany, Austria, Hungary and elsewhere.

These modern times give more cause for hope and optimism than ever before. Art and literature flourish, as bold souls question established mores and find new ways to celebrate the human condition. World industry, once marshaled for war, now uses the techniques of mass production, refined during the war years, to produce cheaper, faster and better products to ease people's lives. New technologies push back the frontiers of science, philosophy and even religion. It is a time when a single individual, with courage and strong character, can roll up his sleeves and make a mark upon the world.

The Era of the Uncommon Man

Today we live in a period characterized as much by exceptional individuals as governments people of courage and vision who apply the best aspects of science and philosophy to make a better life for those around them. As a race, we gained courage from the terrors of the Great War and are willing to apply our virtues for the common good.

Not all change is good, to be sure; the rise of fascism in Italy and the brutal Spanish rule in North Africa are prime examples. And change is not welcome in every culture there are parts of the world today where people not only turn a wistful eye to the simpler, prouder past, but in some cases, they actively struggle to bring about its return. It is an era of tremendous possibility and potential peril, for the ascendancy of the individual is double-edged. Each man and woman is responsible for the deeds they do and the works they create, and great ability carries with it the risk of temptation.

Nevertheless, it's an exciting time to live in and a world more full of adventure than ever before.

Europe

—dispatch by Sarah Gettel

"We're gonna get plugged," Moriarty moaned, looking up at the brightly lit manse like a 10-year-old facing his first haunted house. "Those palookas are gonna take one look at us and fill us full of lead." He turned and looked at me, his big, blue eyes wide and pleading from a boyish, freckled face. "C'mon, Sarah, do I look like a German count to you? Why can't Wallace do it?" Moriarty jerked his head at Wallace, busily negotiating our borrowed Daimler along the twisting road. "He looks German."

"Wallace can't do it because Count Luden saw him in Rome," I said, eyeing the manor house and counting the number of sedans already parked in the spacious drive. "Now is not the time to turn yellow on me, Abe. If we don't find out where Luden and the Thule Society hid that bomber prototype, London is finished." Wallace pulled the Daimler smoothly to a stop in front of the grand entryway. Two burly men in archaic livery stepped forward to welcome us, their suspicious stares peering into every shadowy corner of the car.

I turned to Moriarty. "Remember your cover. Your war wound. You don't have to say a word," I whispered, just as Wallace emerged from the car and gave the lead steward our forged invitation. The second steward extended his hand to me and helped me from the car as his companion read the calling card. "Count and Countess von Weinhopf," he said and performed a sharp, heel-clicking German bow. "Welcome, my Lord. If you will please follow me."

Britain

Britain remains one of the most powerful nations on Earth, despite its hideous wartime losses. Once the United States' Senate refused to ratify America's membership in the League of Nations, Britain took the lead in the nascent organization, working tirelessly to further the interests of peace and stability throughout Europe. British agents and diplomats are at the forefront of mediations from German war reparations to border conflicts in the Balkans. They're not all wonderful people, but many of them strive to put the best interests of the continent ahead of the agendas of individual countries.

Britain says that the punishing terms of surrender orchestrated at Versailles may well create a desperate, antagonistic nation out of Germany, instead of a future European ally. Therefore, the British, working with the determined American civilians Charles Dawes and Owen Young, hammered out a proposal whereby Germany could still make its reparations without ruining itself in the process. Though the Dawes Plan was accepted by the League signatories, it did little to mollify the French Premier Poincaré, who (like many in his generation) has little desire to see a revitalized Germany. In addition to providing skilled diplomats and investigators for the League of Nations, Britain has also reportedly formed a small bureau attached to the Admiralty that is dedicated to acquiring intelligence information about potential threats to the country's security. This "secret service," the first of its kind, is reputed to be headquartered somewhere in London.

Of all the European countries, Britain remains the most outwardly conservative, though there was postwar social unrest in London just like elsewhere. Disputes over worker's rights and a grassroots socialist movement led to the foundation of the Labour Party, which garnered enough popular support in 1924 to briefly elect Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister as well as Foreign Secretary. The Labour government fell within months over the "Zinoviev Letter," a document indirectly linking MacDonald with the British Communist Party, leaked to the press and trumpeted widely. As a result, a conservative

government was elected, though the Zinoviev Letter later proved a fraud. The Conservative Party managers supposedly paid a considerable sum to the men who'd "discovered" it in the first place. The incident showed just how much influence the press now wields in shaping public opinion and how powerful a tool it is for manipulators. The recent political strife between the Labour and Conservative Parties has also engendered a small but significant amount of sympathy among the upper classes for the brand of quasi-fascist national socialism advocated by Adolf Hitler in Germany.

The sciences and technology flourish in Britain. John Baird, a Scottish engineer, successfully demonstrated the transmission of crude images via electronic emission in London, advancing development of what some engineers call "television." Another exciting development is the production of a series of lightweight airplanes by the DeHavilland Corporation. Called the DeHavilland Moth, this design utilizes proprietary engineering and construction techniques to provide greater speed and longer range than hitherto possible. Naturally, this news has attracted aviation enthusiasts and aspiring test pilots from across Europe and even as far as America, but DeHavilland worries about the potential for a competitor to try and sneak a look at its designs.

London remains the cultural and political center of Britain and is the financial nerve center for the whole of Europe, with Lloyd's of London insuring the vast majority of the world's international shipments. The great insurer has a veritable legion of investigators and security specialists on retainer to both protect vital cargoes and track down the ruffians responsible for any theft. The city is also well known for its theater district, entertaining citizens and foreign dignitaries with everything from Shakespeare to Douglas Fairbank's *The Thief of Bagdad*. Another, less well-known institution has also gained a renewed lease on life in the new climate of global exploration. The Explorer's Club, a Victorian organization originally founded by gentleman adventurers in the previous century, maintains a quiet presence in the city just off Grosvenor Square. Its current president, Sir John Rhyburton, maintains many of the club's traditions, including locating financial support for promising expeditions of clear scientific value, but in addition, has taken the progressive stance of opening the club's doors to aspiring female members.

France

No less venerable a state than Britain, France has had less success with its overseas colonies, and its lengthy and costly campaigns against the former Ottoman Empire in North Africa at the turn of the century were not as profitable as the French had hoped. France suffered the most of any of the Allies during the Great War and remains a staunch opponent of German reconstruction.

When Germany recently announced that it would be forced to default on its war reparations, France and Belgium sent troops to occupy the Ruhr Valley, seizing the coal mines so vital to German industry. Poincaré vowed to keep troops in the region "for a thousand years" until Germany relented and found a way to pay its debt. The standoff was only averted with implementation of the Dawes Plan, though there are still French and Belgian troops occupying the area, continuing to exacerbate tensions. In addition, it is well known that the French government actively supports a separatist movement among the peoples of Germany's Rhineland, providing both financial support and protection from retaliation by hindering the efforts of the German police in the region.

Despite the titular protection of the League of Nations and the Geneva Protocols banning warfare, the French government recently sought additional protection from Germany in the form of a mutual

-from the clippings of the *Æon Society*

Mechanical Serpent Consumes Paris Opera Diva

The Paris Opera house has been closed for the past week while investigators pursue the enormous serpent, 50 feet long and made of some bulletproof metal, that burst out from under the stage during a production of *Don Giovanni*. The serpent blew gouts of steam out of its nostrils, scattering the actors and panicking the crowd. It opened up its enormous mouth and swallowed Vivian Coubertain, playing the part of Donna Anna. After consuming the diva, the snake retracted its head back into the ground. Police report that the snake traveled via the Paris sewers. The mechanical snake has not been seen since the incident.

A statement by the family of Mme. Coubertain says that the family is willing to pay any price to get its daughter back, though no ransom demands have been made as yet.

Step up investigations of the Undercity.

-Hephaestia? But why?

defense pact with Britain. Germany was naturally outraged upon learning of the French efforts, likening them to a return to the disastrous web of alliances that brought about the Great War. Surprisingly, support for the German position came from the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Winston Churchill, who argued that such an alliance could serve no purpose other than to make a war between Germany and France inevitable. Churchill's arguments were successful in sidelining the treaty, but the initiative could be revisited in the future, something that concerns both British and German diplomats.

France's economy suffered heavily after the war, and the country remains stricken. Favorable exchange rates with the United States brought in a veritable wave of expatriates from America, either on the run from a shady past or simply seeking to escape the oppressive fundamentalism back home. Paris is a sanctuary for American artists, writers and entertainers, from Ernest Hemingway to Isadora Duncan, and the City of Lights is a bohemian wonderland of avant-garde theater, risqu cabarets and poet-haunted cafes. On a darker note, the city famous for the Louvre is also a haven for art and jewel thieves, as economic woes sustain a thriving black market for stolen and smuggled goods. Private investigators and the French gendarmes play a lively cat-and-mouse game with the underworld.

Germany

After imposing a democratically elected government onto the former empire, the Allies left Germany to fend for itself. Several German states suffered violent attempts at secession and communist-inspired revolution. These uprisings were often brutally put down by groups of volunteer soldiers organized into freikorps, without official standing and acting as vigilante groups, performing summary executions of suspected dissidents. Wars of terror raged on the streets of Munich and Berlin. Amid this atmosphere of unrest, the average German citizen suffered through frequent famine and a crippling economic depression brought on by the burden of war reparations.

Now, however, things show signs of turning around, thanks in part to the Dawes Plan and sheer, dogged determination. With its war debt settled to a manageable level, Germans are experiencing some return to prosperity, and the dissident groups that have plagued German society have been either eliminated or driven underground. There's still potential for unrest: The National Socialist Party is still strong amid the streets of Munich, and its leader, Adolf Hitler, has recently been freed from a brief stay in prison following the abortive "Beer Hall Putsch" of 1923. Worse yet, the racist secret organization known as the Thule Society still lingers among the

remnants of German aristocracy, helping to foment the rabid anti-Semitism sweeping the country and harboring designs for a resurgent German Empire.

But there are many signs of hope. Germany has been welcomed as an equal voice in mediations brought forward in the League of Nations. Its image as "the Hun," the great enemy, has finally subsided, and Germany is once again seen as a respected member of the European community. Berlin has developed a vibrant and scandalous night life, as entertainers push the limits of expression in search of new and provocative experiences. Classical music and opera thrive as well, and the motion picture industry in Berlin is second only to Hollywood in its artistic talent and sophistication.

Germany truly shines in the field of science. Physicists such as the eminent Albert Einstein and Werner Heisenberg lead the field in the study of the fundamental nature of the universe. Hermann Oberth, author of last year's *The Rocket into Interplanetary Space*, is likewise developing principles of rocket science that may one day allow men to travel to other planets. These and other learned scientists attract the interests of industrialists from around the world, who hope to find practical applications for their revolutionary theories. If Germany's fledgling democracy can be safeguarded a few years longer, there is every possibility that it will become a widely esteemed force for progress and prosperity worldwide.

Italy

Italy was unified under the House of Savoy in 1870 and entered the 20th century as a constitutional monarchy with grand ambitions of becoming an imperial power. Efforts at empire building in Ethiopia in the 1880s and '90s ended in the slaughter and withdrawal of Italian troops, and industrialization at home brought the same mix of general prosperity and deepening misery among some classes that was already familiar to other European powers. Political reform proceeded erratically. The government spent the first year of the Great War conducting secret diplomacy with both sides, in search of the best deal. Once the Allies came through with an appealing offer, Italian troops marched to battle and into a series of crushing defeats. Successive administrations tried different strategies, but the army achieved no significant victories until the very last days of the war.

The Versailles negotiations granted Italy its desired claims along its northern border, territories that had belonged to Austria, but Italy did not get the lands it sought along the Adriatic coast of the Balkans. Private armies mounted illegal campaigns of their own to secure what they felt Italy "deserved," and the last of them fought on for two full years after the war officially ended. With a huge wartime debt and more than half a million dead soldiers to show for their effort, many Italians felt that their country's gains had scarcely been worth the price.

Frustrated on all sides, Italy was consumed by social unrest and economic depression. The political process broke down further, with the powerful Socialist Party at odds with a breakaway Communist faction and a bitter right-wing Christian Democratic Party. As the country teetered on the edge of anarchy, Benito Mussolini, a war veteran and the son of a blacksmith, saw his opportunity. Though ill-educated and politically inexperienced, Mussolini nevertheless understood one thing clearly: the application of violence.

Mussolini gathered bands of former veterans into paramilitary groups known as the Black Shirts, whose job was to disrupt the socialist political organization through threats, arson and murder. By 1921, Mussolini claimed 300,000 members in his Fascist Party and grew so bold as to send his Black Shirts marching on Rome itself. By intimidating or eliminating any opposition, his party won a majority in last year's elections, establishing Mussolini as the ruling power in

the country. Though the country is still ostensibly ruled by King Victor Emmanuel III of the House of Savoy, the monarch is nothing more than a puppet in the hands of Mussolini and his thugs.

Despite his reprehensible and barbaric tactics, Mussolini nevertheless enjoys a certain amount of popularity among upper- and middle-class Italians, many of whom regard him as a patriot and the answer to their nationalistic ambitions. The fact remains, however, that the fascists rule by terror and crush any attempt at democracy through the ruthless application of violence. If the fascists are allowed to continue their rampage unchecked, the future of the country looks bleak indeed.

Spain

Spain, like Italy, once entertained dreams of becoming an imperial power, but a combination of internal upheaval and military setbacks turned hope into misfortune.

At the turn of the century, Spain made an earnest attempt to modernize its government into a more democratic, constitutional monarchy. The landed aristocracy was still a powerful force to be reckoned with and supported the twin causes of Catholicism and monarchism. The middle and lower classes embraced socialism and republicanism and were gaining strength year by year as the country grew more industrialized. Unfortunately, the country's monarch, King Alfonso XIII, was too young and inexperienced to bridge the differences between the factions or build an effective coalition government.

Spain suffered a series of military defeats: first, the Spanish-American War of the late 19th century, then, a long and bloody occupation of Morocco that turned into a costly guerilla war. Though Spain had wisely chosen to remain neutral during the Great War, the constant losses of the Moroccan conflict left the king unpopular with both the army and the populace. Last September, Miguel Primo de Rivera, a popular general who served in Morocco and a prominent senator, orchestrated a military coup and placed a directorate of army and navy commanders in control of the government. Though King Alfonso remains on the throne, he is little more than a figurehead.

-from the correspondence of Sarah Gettel

Miss Gettel,

You have often asked me to keep my ears open for interesting and unusual information. I am en route to Portocelo, Spain to do a little digging of my own. A fisherman acquaintance of mine, after a few bottles of wine, told me stories of spotting mermaids off of the coast of Portocelo. Though I was drinking at the time as well, I do recall enough of the story to be intrigued. My friend, who wishes to remain anonymous, told me that, one calm spring day, while working on a fishing boat owned by the Distollo family, he actually saw a mermaid. He said she was inhumanly beautiful, like the sirens of old. Though her lips did not move, he heard in his head that he should jump overboard and join her in the fathoms below. As he climbed over the rail, another crewman saw him and pulled him back. A fight broke out, and my friend lost his job as a result. He spent weeks in a borrowed boat, searching for his aquatic love, but never found her.

I have chartered a small boat and will attempt to return with a photograph of this mermaid.

Dr. Phillip Snow

-addendum by Whitley Styles

Distollo fisherman found Doctor Snow's boat, anchored off the coast of Portocelo and empty as the Marie Celeste. One of the Distollo fisherman reported an odd smell on the boat, though he could not describe it exactly. Other men in Portocelo are reported as missing.

Primo de Rivera now attempts to play the part of the benevolent despot, forcing the divided political factions into some semblance of unity. All the while, resentment and unrest simmer among the aristocrats, who wish to see King Alfonso restored to his rightful authority. These wealthy Spaniards despair of appealing to the populace for support and now attempt to drum up aid among sympathetic souls in Europe and America, convincing them to take up arms and fight a romantic crusade against the usurper.

Bolshevik Russia and Eastern Europe

—dispatch by Sarah Gettel

We stood in the freezing darkness and listened for the approaching trucks. Once again, I wished I'd taken O'Malley up on his offer to try his prototype electro-thermal coveralls. Our breath hung like crystal in the moonlight. I checked my watch for the 10th time in as many minutes. The Bolshevik secret police were normally deathly punctual.

"They are not coming," Irina said darkly. Looking at her, I realized I had little reason to complain. She was dressed literally in rags but seemed not to notice the winter chill. Wallace had said she'd once been a baroness. Now, she seemed too old for her 18 years, a worn-down woman with nothing left but memories. Memories and a steely determination to live those days once more.

"Don't give up yet," I said, as much to reassure her as myself. "Anything might have happened. A tree might have fallen across the road. They'll be along. And then, we'll set your father free."

Irina smiled and moved off to stand at the curve of the road, looking for headlights.

Moriarty stepped out from the shadows. "Do you really think the old man knows where the Grand Duchess is hidden?"

I shrugged. "Who knows? Honestly, it doesn't matter. Look at her," I said, nodding to Irina. "Her father is all she has left. She never asked to be who she is and never did anything to the Bolsheviks. We can get her and her father out of the country. That's worth the price of admission all by itself."

Moriarty scowled. "Yeah, well, you better hope that O'Malley's sonic rifle works as advertised, or I guarantee, we're gonna get a much bigger show than either of us bargained for."

Just then, we heard the sound of the engines.

Russia

The Allies did their best to strangle the Soviet Union in its cradle. Britain, France, America and Japan all lent as much manpower and materiel as their war-weary nations would allow to pro-tsarist revolts from 1917 to late 1918. Russia had already lost Poland, the Ukraine, Finland and the Baltic provinces to the Germans in 1917; so-called "White Russian" armies drove toward Moscow from all directions, their supply lines protected by foreign militaries. Fortunately for the communist leaders, the end of the Great War left the battle-weary Allies with little choice but to pull back their forces and let the White Russian armies founder on their own. The leaders of each of the pro-tsarist armies had their own agendas, and with victory in sight, they turned upon one another in the struggle to see who would divide up the spoils. Lenin and the revolutionary leaders used the grace period to call up more troops and drive a wedge between their enemies, then defeat them one at a time. In 1920, the Polish attacked the Ukraine, then an independent White Russian republic, and gave the Red Army the excuse to counterattack, not only retaking the province but pushing some 300 miles into eastern Poland. Later that year, the last White Russian army was defeated in the Crimea, and the future of the Bolshevik government was assured.

The force behind the miraculous survival of the Bolsheviks rested in the genius and charisma of one man Lenin. After returning from exile in 1917, Lenin and his deputies Trotsky and Stalin stole power from the provisional government established upon the Tsar's overthrow. With mixed ruthlessness and zeal, they guided the backward nation through the chaos of socialist reorganization. In 1919, Lenin established the Comintern, a bureau dedicated to spreading the cause of revolution abroad. Soon, there were embryonic Communist Parties in every industrialized nation in the world, though their success was somewhat limited. At the same time, Lenin and his cronies were eliminating potential rivals at home; by 1921, their control of the country was absolute.

Tensions between Lenin and his lieutenants grew as soon as they had solidified their power. Trotsky and Stalin bickered and schemed against one another, positioning themselves as heirs-apparent to the Bolshevik regime. They did not have long to wait. In 1922, Lenin had the first of three strokes. As his health declined, Lenin began seriously considering choosing a successor to lead the party. It appears that the long-time schemer could not bring himself to trust either man with the position. Trotsky, he wrote, was "too clever" and Stalin "too self-centered" to properly lead the party. Lenin even went so far as to lay plans to have Stalin removed from his post as the party's General Secretary, but before they could be put into action, he suffered two more strokes and died in January of last year.

Trotsky and Stalin continue to fight for control of the Communist Party. Trotsky is clearly the more brilliant of the two men and an outspoken advocate of the "universal Communist revolution." As General Secretary, Stalin commands the support of countless party loyalists. Unlike Trotsky, Stalin believes that the world can survive with only one Communist regime and favors pulling back from the European scene. Stalin had enough political support to force Trotsky to resign his position as Commissar of War and did so just a few months ago. Though he still retains his post on the all-powerful Politburo, Trotsky is clearly being methodically stripped of his influence, and many suspect that it is just a matter of time before he is too weak to avoid arrest and execution at the hands of the Bolshevik secret police, the Cheka.

Stalin's public willingness to isolate the new Soviet Union from the rest of Europe was crucial in winning acknowledgement from Britain and France this year. Now no longer a rogue power, the Soviet Union is ruthlessly driven to modernize its economy and industry in search of world-class power.

Despite the Soviet Union's recent successes, its future remains unclear. The challenges involved with economic revitalization and winning foreign investment seem insurmountable without outrageously draconian measures. There is also the question of internal dissent; the country's long-suffering peasant farmers must do much of the work ahead. Additionally, despite the military failures of several years ago, there are still groups of White Russians operating in secret in the republics of Georgia and the Ukraine. Rumor also says that one or more of the Tsar's children, possibly even the heir Alexis, might have escaped their murderers, and it has even gained some credence among the aristocratic families of Europe. There are still idealistic adventurers in Europe and elsewhere who fought with the White Russians years ago and might be persuaded to again if a charismatic figure stepped forward to take up the cause.

Eastern Europe

Allied diplomats, under Woodrow Wilson's well-intentioned but naive direction, split Austria and Hungary into two nations and es-

tablished Poland as an independent country. The creation of the Polish state not only fulfilled long-cherished dreams of Polish independence, it also deprived Germany of vital mineral supplies along with its only major sea port, the city of Danzig. The loss outraged the Germans and left large numbers of former German citizens part of a country they wanted nothing to do with.

The situation in the Balkans was problematical from the start. For centuries the Slovak peoples of the peninsula were ruled by foreign conquerors: the Muslims, the Magyars of Hungary and, in recent times, the combined empire of Austria-Hungary. There was a groundswell of support for a unified Slovak nation after the war but no clear geographical divisions upon which to base such a state. The Versailles negotiators decided to integrate the former Austro-Hungarian provinces of Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia and, a year later, Ruthenia into a single state, known as Czechoslovakia. Additionally, a nation comprising the "south Slavs," the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, was formed from the former countries of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. While elegant on paper, these solutions did not address the individual cultures, religions and languages of the integrated peoples, many of whom had nothing more in common than shared history from centuries past. Almost immediately, tensions flared in the young nation, with Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro all seeking independence. The Allies had promised territory in the northern Kingdom to the Italian government during the war and were partially reneging on their agreement, adding one more dissatisfied nation to the turmoil.

The conflicting ethnic agendas of the integrated Slovak countries keep their governments in perpetual contention. Parliamentary meetings quickly devolve into shouting matches, and governments seem to change hands from month to month. Only fear of ambitious neighbors keeps either nation intact. Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland and Italy make no bones about their desire to carve up the Slovak countries like a Christmas goose, despite intense pressure from the League. Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and Romania entered into a mutual defensive pact in 1920, frequently referred to as the Little Entente, which has so far managed to maintain a tenuous balance of power in the region. But with the day-to-day uncertainties of the Balkan governments, there is no guarantee how long this umbrella of safety can last.

Eastern Europe and the Balkans remain concerns to the League and its constituents, as the region is so volatile that any individual with enough charisma and a sufficiently ruthless agenda can play upon the local politics to carve out a renegade state of his own. The territorial aims of Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria invite the very real possibility of war, requiring little more than a handful of dedicated agents provocateurs to touch off a terrible conflagration, one that could not help but draw the opportunistic eye of the Bolsheviks.

-from the clippings of the Æon Society

Minotaur Spotted on Crete

Alexander Rosenberg, a German tourist visiting Crete, claims he was attacked by the mythical minotaur of Greek mythology. While touring the ruins, Rosenberg became separated from his group. He claims to have fallen into a heretofore-undiscovered labyrinth. While lost in the underground maze, the mythical minotaur chased him. He claims then to have tripped over a golden thread, which led him out of the maze. He has proven unable to lead archeologists back to the maze entrance.

We have his photographs. Dixon says they haven't been doctored.

-WS

The Americas

—dispatch by Sarah Gettel

Heavy flakes of snow fell steadily through the holes in the old warehouse's roof, dusting the dirty wooden floors and eddying around the heels of the technicians as they hurried about their tasks. No one had bothered to light a fire in the building's cobwebbed furnace; Tesla maintained that the cold was beneficial to electrical conductivity, but I wondered if he was simply too poor to afford a bucket of coal.

The cavernous space was dominated by a tower of metal not dissimilar to Nikola Tesla's famous Tesla coil — a circle of vertical steel rods supported dozens of broad metal disks, its diameter as large as a sitting-parlor. A veritable snake's nest of thick, black cables festooned the outside of the tall coil, carefully attached to the wide disks by Tesla's assistants, who meticulously calibrated each and every connection under the master's watchful eye. The cables ran back to a large metal box, covered in switches and dials, that Tesla called his "telluric induction generator." Somehow, the device would draw power out the air itself and, when the time was right, pump two million volts into the tower standing before us. He'd tried to explain the process twice already, but it all sounded like Greek to me. I was much more curious about who the inventor's mysterious new financial backer was. The last time it had been the German government, in the years just before the war. They'd had great success with the turbines he'd designed for them, much to the Allies' regret.

"Yes, yes! Excellent!" the inventor enthused, looking up through the center of the coil and beaming with satisfaction. Tesla was lean and energetic, despite his age, dapper, despite his slightly disheveled appearance. "The connections must be made just so — *just so* — to focus the etheric flux." He clapped his hands together eagerly and dashed to his telluric generator. Tesla fished a pocket watch from his vest and scrutinized it carefully. "Timing is critical," he said, to no one in particular. The inventor looked my way. "Timing is *everything*, Miss Gettel. Why Einstein could not grasp this, I shall never know."

The technicians moved away from the coil. Three of them ducked out one of the open doorways, back in the direction of our parked automobiles. "Are we going to start without your patron, Mister Tesla?" I said with a frown. This wasn't what Special Agent Dawson led me to believe.

Tesla put away his watch and started flipping switches. A faint smile played across his face. "My patron prefers results, Miss Gettel. As yet, there is nothing here for him to see." He paused, checking the dials a final time, then with a flourish, his fingers threw a final switch at the end of the console, and the box began to emit an unearthly hum.

I was expecting a display of lightning and sharp cracks of artificial thunder, but Tesla's coil merely began to glow, filling the warehouse with an otherworldly blue light. Movement at the doorway caught my eye, and I saw the three technicians returning from outside, lugging a number of heavily laden packs. I glanced curiously at the inventor. "What are those for?"

Once again, Tesla smiled. "My patron desires direct evidence that there are other worlds parallel to our own, and I mean to give it to him." He pointed at the coil. "In a few moments, we will step through the resonator into a world both like and unlike our own and return with proof that my theories were correct!"

Gooseflesh raced along my arms. "We?" I asked, suddenly very uneasy.

Tesla's smile grew bemused. "Well, certainly," he replied. "I need *someone* to compose a journal of our experiences. Why else do you think I agreed to your visit?"

The glow grew brighter inside the coil. The air was shimmering, like the liquid haze that ripples over desert sands. Beyond the haze, I could see tall trees — and indistinct figures, staring back at me.



The United States

The Great War proved an ironic godsend for America, generating a booming economy and tremendous industrial growth. Mass production, long an American science, was perfected through the rigid demands of wartime quotas. Now, those well-learned lessons help businesses turn out cheap, quality products in great demand in Europe and elsewhere. The United States emerged from the war as the leading creditor to many of the Allied nations, having provided the staggering sum of 10 billion dollars in wartime loans to keep countries such as Britain, France and tsarist Russia in the fight. After the war, this translated into a windfall of political clout among the European giants. Almost literally overnight, the young nation vaulted into the role of a major power and a leader in international affairs.

Young, upstart America embodies the hope and enthusiasm fueling the modern era. The industrial sector is growing at a phenomenal rate, with newer and more efficient means of production introduced every month. Inventors thrive amid this change and innovation, flocking to giant corporations such as General Electric and Westinghouse, who have the manufacturing might to tackle even the most challenging projects. Anything seems possible with the right mixture of money, brains and grit.

Automobile companies such as Ford and rival General Motors turn out automobiles at a dizzying rate, giving modern Americans the ability to seek employment and entertainment far from their homes. Automobiles are becoming such a fixture of American life that entrepreneur John Hertz recently acquired an ambitious company allowing citizens of average means to lease motorcars for long trips across country.

For the wealthy, aviation provides a far better means to travel quickly between cities in moderate comfort and style. Meanwhile, scientists such as Robert Goddard pursue the science of rocketry, hinting that one day soon humankind may be flying higher, faster and farther than even Jules Verne thought possible.

Like their British cousins, who held up science and reason as the watchword of the last century, American inventors, from Vannevar Bush to the visionary and eccentric Nikola Tesla, are using physics and electricity to explore and manipulate the fundamental forces of life itself. In the Sargasso Sea, that infamous graveyard of lost ships, the New York Zoological Society's Beebe Expedition is dredging the primordial depths for buried treasure of the biological variety: fish, octopi and a multitude of other organisms indigenous to the sea floor. Superstition, especially the fascination in the occult so popular in the early part of the century, is being pushed back by the pure light of reason. Even Harry Houdini, the famous escape artist and former mystic, is busy touring the country and publicly debunking so-called "occult phenomena"!

The economic boom made America a millionaire's paradise. Established families such as the Morgans and the Vanderbilts and the nouveau riche alike flaunt their prosperity with lavish parties whose excesses would beggar the royalty of old. The influx of wealth has left many individuals and families with, quite frankly, more money than they know what to do with. Some squander their provenance; others, such as young millionaire Howard Hughes, use their fortunes to pursue whatever area of interest catches their fancy. Currently the 18-year-old Hughes is in Texas, running his late father's drilling company, but many speculate that he will soon grow bored and find something else to occupy his prodigious intellect, possibly racing or aviation.

Happily, many wealthy individuals in the United States realize that great wealth offers great opportunity, not just for individuals, but for all mankind. There are visionaries and philanthropists pleased to

finance worthy endeavors, from scientific explorations to medical research to revolutionary (and some say, crackpot) inventions. Certainly, some of these worthy efforts fail; sometimes a well-meaning tycoon finds himself fleeced by a smooth-talking confidence man. But here and there, real progress is made, at universities, private labs and converted basements all across the nation.

The rapid advance of technology has even found its way into the sphere of entertainment. Nearly every American household now boasts a radio in their parlor, where the family can gather to hear news and entertainment in the comfort of its own home.

For pure enjoyment, nothing beats the fun of a night at the cinema, and Hollywood, California, is now the world leader in film production, with giants such as Warner Brothers, Universal and MGM producing films for audiences across the globe. A new sort of celebrity, the movie star, captures the hearts of the working class, from romantic leads such as Rudolph Valentino and Lillian Gish to that loveable scamp Charlie Chaplin. As the popularity of the cinema increases, movie companies send talent scouts and producers far and wide in search of new talent and interesting subjects to entertain audiences. Additionally, it seems like any endeavor worth attempting is now worth the attentions of a movie crew: Cameramen and directors make their way into everything from mountain-climbing expeditions to dangerous treks into the heart of darkest Africa.

This is not to say that the cinema is the end-all of modern entertainment. Theatre and music thrive in New York. Broadway houses play everything from vaudeville and the Ziegfeld Follies to Arms and the Man. The biggest musical sensation sweeping the nation is steamy, scandalous jazz. Led by greats such as Al Jolson, "Bix" Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong and George Gershwin, jazz music has taken the world by storm with its exuberance and mischievous, some say immoral, earthiness. Nevertheless, art is a reflection of life, and what better sound for our changing times than jazz?

Not every aspect of growth and change is for the good. America faces a crisis of character and conscience. Reactionary fundamentalism drives religious leaders and politicians to rail against perceived threats to public morality, whether from old vices such as liquor or the disturbing assertions of science. The Volstead Act of 1919 made the sale and manufacture of alcohol illegal, but prohibition has created an entire criminal industry. Average citizens slip out each night to speak-easies, where knowing the right password or passing over the right amount of money allows admittance to a smoky basement in which bathtub gin is served. Gangsters rule by terror and violence in cities such as Chicago and New York, corrupting politicians and policemen in the pursuit of their bootlegging, and strangely, they have become celebrities of a sort for defying the government's moralistic stand.

Meanwhile, in the state of Tennessee, Governor Austin Peay signed a bill into law that made it illegal for any state-financed school or university to teach any theory that denies the divine order of creation as expressed in the Bible. Already, this has led to the arrest of one man, John T. Scopes, who is now on trial for teaching the theory of evolution to his students. The trial quickly became a media sensation; at the heart of it lies America's unease with the headlong process of progress and change that is shaking up every aspect of its society.

For all the wealth flowing into the country, the disparity between rich and poor in the United States has never been greater, with immigrant families living in conditions more reminiscent of the Middle Ages than the modern age. The resurgence of isolationism in the wake of the Great War has added fuel to the rampant discrimination of Asian immigrants on the West Coast. Just this year, Congress passed the Immigration Act to bar all Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Indian

immigrants, deny them citizenship and naturalization and forbid them from marrying Caucasians or owning land.

Racism continues to bedevil American society. Negroes still do not share even the basic civil rights enjoyed by white citizens, and the crusade for equality and respect meets with resistance at every turn. The Ku Klux Klan has redoubled its efforts, particularly in the Midwest and Pacific Northwest states, to pursue its racist agenda through outright terrorism and murder. For all its achievements, the United States still has demons of its own to face and needs brave souls to steer its course through the turbulent times ahead. Fortunately, there is no lack of worthy individuals ready to take up the banner of progress and lead the way to a brighter future for all Americans, regardless of age, station or color.

—from the journals of Sarah Gettel

My trip to San Jose left me both sad and horrified. My dear old friend, Sarah Winchester, had passed on recently. In 1919, I attended a quite chilling seance there. I hoped that, with her passing, the spirits who tormented her in life would leave her be. Having no heirs, the city assumed the property, though they have not yet found a use for it. I took it upon myself to visit the house one last time and drink a toast to my departed friend. The locks were enough to keep out the riff raff, but I easily slipped them.

I should never have gone in. Not alone, and not after dark. The old Victorian mansion chilled the summer air to the point where I could see my breath. I should have known better than to go into a haunted house after dark. On the other hand, it was a story.

The house did not appreciate my appearance. The cold air was its first warning. Doors that locked themselves was the second. Soon, I found myself running for my life down a corridor that stretched on forever. I could hear Sarah crying out in pain. The thousands of men killed by her father-in-law's rifle had not let her death be an end to her torments. A set of stairs that should have taken me back down to the first floor led me to the third. Hallways twisted like non-Euclidean knots. In every mirror, I saw the face of an angry dead man.

Discretion being the better part of valor, I jumped out of the first window I saw. On a twisted ankle, I limped away from that hangry house.

Maxwell, please. Set my friend free. I'm a reporter, not Houdini.

Canada

In the turmoil following the Great War, the Dominion of Canada chose to pull away from the dynamically changing international scene, limiting the power of its federal government in favor of the provinces. The nation turned inward, struggling with public anger over wartime conscription policies and widespread fears about economic and social stability in the face of communist agitation in Europe and elsewhere. The mandate from the people, particularly the rural farmers, is for a "New National Policy" geared toward social welfare and economic recovery in the wake of the depression of 1920.

The provinces have reclaimed most of the powers ceded to the federal government before and during the hostilities and are taking steps to improve their economies and push deeper into wilderness areas. Ever-improving aircraft allow explorers and prospectors to stage far-flung expeditions into the Northwest Territory in search of gold and other metals, while the federal government is buying up privately owned railroads as part of an overall plan to create a public system of transport that can stimulate expansion and trade. In addition, the opening of the Panama Canal has made Vancouver a major shipping port for international trade, providing the dominion with access to markets previously out of reach. In a few short years, Canada has transformed itself from a moribund subject of the British Empire into a bustling land of opportunity, luring adventurers and opportunists from the United States to seek their fortunes in the far north.

With prohibition in full swing in the States, there is also a brisk business smuggling liquor across the border, and border towns are the scenes of raucous parties hosted by gangsters on the lam.

Canada's famed Mounted Police are thinly spread over a vast territory, and their professional pride forbids them from turning to the American authorities for assistance. There have been recent calls for upstanding citizens to lend a hand in apprehending these lawless individuals, and like the vigilante bands that have recently taken to the streets of Chicago, some rough-and-ready Canucks will rise to the challenge of bringing these crooks to justice.

Mexico

Spain's War of Independence in the early 1800's earned Mexico its freedom from Spanish rule but left the country's economy in shambles and its population decimated. The country still contained a powerful and wealthy Hispanic elite, who owned most of the country's arable land and controlled access to Mexico's vast mineral wealth. Liberal reformers struggled to redistribute the country's wealth so as to benefit the entire population. The bitter feud culminated in a 20-year civil war when the aristocrats tried to establish an outright monarchy. The idea of a Hispanic empire galvanized nationalist sentiment and gave the liberals the support needed to defeat the conservatives, but their victory was a hollow one. When liberal president Benito Ju rez died in 1872, the government fell into chaos. The instability created a vacuum that an ambitious man could exploit, and in 1876, a military man named Porfirio D az seized control of the government, becoming a dictator in everything but name.

D az ruled the country for 35 years, continually amending the country's constitution to allow him to remain in power as President. He maintained control through his army and the feared guardias rurales, or rural police forces, and dictated the ownership of property to individuals and corporations alike. Foreign investment was secured by granting vast gifts of land and other concessions to other countries, specifically the United States, England and France, and D az turned a blind eye to the ruthless exploitation of local peasants by the invited outsiders. The abuses continued until 1911, when a popular uprising led by Francisco Madero drove D az from power. But what should have been a triumph for the poor and the destitute citizens of Mexico turned into a bitter cycle of uprisings and bloodshed as a series of rebel factions vied for control of the country, all claiming to have the best interests of the Mexican peasant at heart.

Now, almost 15 years later, former general lvaro Obreg n has brought a degree of stability in the war-torn country and is reaching out to foreign investors to bring much-needed currency into the country. Unlike his predecessors, however, Obreg n is also progressive with respect to social reform and ownership of property for the working class. He is appealing to noted men and women around the world to help in his efforts to rebuild his country, while keeping other would-be revolutionaries at bay. If history is any indicator, President Obreg n needs all the help he can get.

Central America

The small, agrarian countries of Central America Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica found themselves in circumstances similar to Mexico after the War of Independence, their ruling classes split between conservative aristocrats and liberal progressives. But unlike their northern neighbor, the Central American "banana republics" managed to peacefully separate themselves from Spain in 1821. Liberal dictators consolidated their power by courting foreign investment and using the profits to shore up their militaries. American corporations, who by 1920 purchased more than 90 percent of the region's exports, found their prosperity increasingly dependent on the continued stability of these regimes. Politics and business are now inextricably intertwined, and political influence in the United States has forced the Marines to intervene on several occasions to prop up

shaky dictatorships, most recently in Nicaragua. American businessmen rig elections, bribe local officials and reportedly arrange the assassinations of popular dissidents who protest against the dictators. Corporations such as the United Fruit Company literally have the power of life and death over local banana farmers, controlling access to the markets that support the peasants' way of life.

Panama is another shameful example of the United States' opportunism in Central America. A province of Colombia in the 1800s, Panama was ideal for a strategic canal offering faster passage between the Pacific and the Atlantic. When Colombia suffered its own internal struggles during the War of a Thousand Days, the United States sent troops into Panama to "restore order" and would not relinquish control of the region until a treaty was signed that allowed the US to build a canal through the country. The 1903 treaty allowed for the creation of a Canal Zone running through the region that was essentially the sovereign territory of the United States. Today, the Panamanian government is supported by revenues obtained by ships passing through the canal, and the Zone is a region of legal privilege and country-club prosperity, guarded by well-armed US Marines.

South America

The countries of South America fared better than Mexico and the banana republics for the simple reason that they were considered backwaters of the Spanish Empire and left to go their own way with little fanfare during the War of Independence. The latter half of the 19th century was a time of growth and great prosperity for Argentina, Chile and the former Portuguese colony of Brazil, where waves of immigration from Europe stimulated economic growth and expansion into the vast countryside. Unlike their northern neighbors, whose militaries became an instrument of oppression for the disadvantaged, the countries of South America were spared the potential of violent overthrow and created stable, largely liberal governments. This is not to say that South America is free of problems. The burgeoning growth experienced in the years prior to the Great War created a stark disparity of wealth between the city-bred upper class and the rural lower class. Recently, attempts to organize labor unions in Argentina and Brazil have run afoul of harsh government crackdowns and rioting. Banditry is common in the hinterlands, and travelers are warned not to enter rural areas without a knowledgeable guide.

Nearly all of the continent's heartland is still unexplored. Every day, new rumors filter from the wilderness, of lost tribes, ancient cities and fabulous riches hidden in the Amazon. European-influenced universities in Brazil and Argentina continuously finance expeditions to push deeper into the wilderness, while companies from the United States send intrepid teams in search of mineral wealth such as gold and diamonds. Nearly every foray brings Westerners into contact with native tribes who look on the pale explorers as gods or monsters. There are many ancient sites in the rainforest that the tribes regard as sacred, some so old that the natives no longer even know for sure who built them and why, and they defend such places tooth and nail. In addition, natural hazards such as poisonous snakes, jaguars and the infamous river piranha promise a grisly end for those who fail to respect the rainforest's untamed natural order. Certain wild tales even speak of terrible, perhaps prehistoric creatures that still linger in the deepest, least accessible parts of the continent.

While some Westerners believe that there are things in the Amazon best left undisturbed, the potential for new medicines, new resources and new knowledge remains a lure that no intrepid soul can easily resist. As famed explorer Henry Jones, Jr. asserts, "The Amazon and its archaeological treasures presents Western civilization with a historical record that not only shows us who we are as a society, but what we might one day become. There is a complete cycle of human history there, overgrown and untapped, waiting to be brought to light."

Africa and the Middle East

—dispatch by Sarah Gettel

"*Mokolé-Mémbe*," Kusavu whispered, his eyes wide with terror. We stared at one another in the confines of the tent, scarcely able to breathe. There was a splintering crash out in the darkness, deafening in the preternatural silence. Something heavy was moving through the jungle. Something huge. And it was coming closer.

It was close to midnight. The campfire had gone cold an hour ago. No one was willing to go out beyond the firelight to look for more wood, not after what had happened to Tshombe. I sat in a camp chair with a lantern at my feet, my journal propped in my lap. I looked down at the words and tried to focus my thoughts, but nothing would come. *A dinosaur. It's got to be a dinosaur.* Nothing else could be so big.

Suddenly, the tent flap jerked open, and Kusavu let out a strangled cry. Van Gelder darted into the tent, silent as a leopard. He pointed at the lantern. "Put that out *quick*, Missy," the white hunter hissed. His square jaw was set, his gaze as steely as ever, but there was an undercurrent of tension running through him that I hadn't seen before, even when the hippo tried to sink our boat out on the river.

My eyes were drawn to the double-barreled elephant gun in the hunter's hands. "What do you plan on doing with that?" I said, trying to sound forbidding. "We had an agreement Van Gelder. The beast isn't going to be harmed. This is a scientific expedition—"

"That was before Tshombe died," Van Gelder snarled. He and the Congolese river guide had been friends for a long time.

"Professor Dalton said he'd been killed by a rhino," I replied.

"There aren't any rhinos in the Congo, Missy," Van Gelder growled. "Dalton is a fool, and I'm a fool for letting the two of you talk me into this. No one's ever seen this beast and lived to tell the tale. *No one.*"

I wanted to tell him he was being foolish. Then I heard the scream, echoing through the darkness. A liquid shriek of inhuman terror.

"Professor Dalton!" Kusavu said in horror. Then, the air shook with a bone-chilling roar.

North Africa

The rugged land and trackless deserts of Morocco and Algeria offer little to the world's empires, but their coastal ports are invaluable gateways to the Mediterranean and beyond. France and Spain took the region from the Ottoman Empire in the early 1900s and partitioned it as a joint possession. Unfortunately, neither government reckoned on the fiercely independent spirit of the Berber people. Only moderately passive under Ottoman rule, the Berbers vehemently refused to accept the European infidels and rose up in revolt. The tribes of the Rif, led by the charismatic and ruthless Sheik Abd al-Karim, embarked on a guerilla war for independence that continues today. Spain and France responded with brutal reprisals. Spain, in particular, was especially cruel, earning international disdain for its treatment of the Moroccan natives. But the Rif rebellion continue, and losses among the Spanish Foreign Legion commanded by Francisco Franco continue to mount.

Abd el-Karim and his guerillas struggle amid the unforgiving sands against the hard-bitten souls of the Legion, the famous French Foreign Legion. Despite its hardships, the Legion is popular both with Frenchmen and adventurous souls worldwide, for it will accept recruits no matter their nationality or previous record. The tradition in the Legion is that every recruit begins a new life in the ranks, all past sins forgotten. In return, the Legionnaires man lonely forts isolated by unforgiving sands and march countless patrols through enemy-infested territory, and the Berbers have no pretensions about fighting a "civilized" war. No quarter is asked,

and none is given. Many are the tales of lonely Legionnaire outposts surrounded and overwhelmed by the enemy, their defenders slain to the last man. Yet, the Legion never lacks recruits, and its motley collection of criminals, idealists and would-be heroes keep the roads open and the frontier forts manned against the best that al-Karim can muster. At this stage, the struggle seems at a stalemate, but a bold stroke from either side, such as an all-out attack on the capital of Fez or the severing of one of the strategic trade roads could change the situation overnight.

South Africa

Britain's interests in the region began commercially, with mining of the region's vast mineral deposits. This action brought the British into conflict with the Dutch and German Afrikaners, and that brought British troops into the region to secure imperial interests. Since then, the administration of South Africa has placed an increasing burden on British resources, as the expense of controlling such vast territory currently exceeds the amount of profit to be had from its exploitation. The League of Nations gave German South West Africa to Britain as a League mandate, straining taxed resources still further.

In addition, a recent uprising by the Ashanti underscored the need for a transition to local government and some form of autonomy for native Africans. But many regions contain sizeable numbers of white settlers who have no intention of turning over their authority to the majority Africans, not to mention the areas owned by mining corporations whose activities would suffer from a change in the current government. The British and their agents face a daunting challenge of diplomacy and statesmanship amid a sea of conflicting agendas, and there is no supportable resolution in sight.

Towns, Farms and Outposts

European, Indian and Middle Eastern immigrants live in significant numbers in eastern and southern Africa. While the natives continue to vastly outnumber the settlers, there are whole towns and surrounding rural districts that look very much like their counterparts "back home," whether that's central England or the shores of the Indian Ocean. At least, many settlers think of them as just like home, choosing to ignore the native servants and wildlife as unimportant to the overall effect.

It's very different in western Africa. The dense jungle resists almost all efforts at clearing or cultivation. Exotic diseases flourish. The area's tribes fight back against would-be conquerors more effectively. The European presence consists almost entirely of small forts and outposts, widely scattered and depending on river routes to keep in touch. Nothing in the Congo compares to the great estates of Kenya or South Africa. They have their "untamed" lands many of which are perfectly civilized in their own way, whether or not the imperial powers acknowledge it but they continue to make much better targets for empire builders.

The Darkest Africa of popular story exists mostly in the jungles of West Africa.

West Africa

The Belgian government has no interest whatsoever in relinquishing its sole overseas colony. The Congo River Valley is enormously profitable, and the local administrators brutally exploit the native population in the quest for more. Belgian corporations practice outright slavery: They purchase fit young men from tribal chiefs under the guise of "taxes," then work them to death in the mines or in the fields of the rubber plantations. There are reports that no less than 20,000 laborers died during repair work on the Leopoldville

railroad alone. If the laborers attempt to desert in large numbers, the Belgians take their wives and children hostage. Paramilitary gangs hired by the corporations hunt the laborers who do escape; the corporations pay the hunters with money or liquor in exchange for the severed hand of every deserter they kill. Sometimes, if the deserter eludes the gangs, hunters go into a village and take the hand of the first person they see, so they can still claim their reward.

Corruption and petty tyranny are the order of the day at the trading outposts along the great river, and woe unto the traveler who fails to pay the necessary bribes to the chain of administrators one encounters along the way. Unfortunately, bribery is a loathsome, but necessary, evil for those intrepid spirits who seek the great Congolese jungle, considered by many to be the true heart of Africa.

Rumors abound of the treasures and mysteries that wait in the jungle's nighted depths. The trackless expanse is said to contain everything from King Solomon's Mines and the lost tribes of Israel to an ancient, advanced civilization said to have existed at the same time as fabled Atlantis. Even if these wild legends are false, there is no doubt that the region contains many rare and unique species of flora and fauna, enough to occupy a legion of researchers for many years. The jungle is also home to tribes of savages who have never acknowledged the march of civilization and regard even their fellow Africans with murderous ire. Additionally, the jungle itself is dense and haunted with every manner of predator to be found on the continent, none of them holding any fear of man. No less than six European expeditions and two rescue parties have vanished into the jungle without a trace in the last year alone. Whatever secrets the vast wilderness hides, it keeps them still, despite humanity's best efforts to unravel them.

Wealthy philanthropists and idealistic politicians in Europe and America are keen to see Belgium relinquish its hold on the Congolese people or, at the very least, loosen its iron grip enough to allow them some amount of self-rule. Mostly, the initiatives involve diplomatic inquiries made to the League of Nations, but some prefer more direct means, such as fomenting a general revolt against the Belgians in the Congo. This action would all but force League intervention and require some form of mediation that would no doubt have advantageous results for the Congolese. There are rumors of men making discreet offers to experienced mercenaries in Paris, Casablanca and Tangiers. If so, then armed conflict cannot be far behind, and it remains to be seen what sort of response the Belgian government is likely to make regarding its one overseas prize.

The Middle East

At the turn of the century, the Egyptian economy had effectively collapsed due to mismanagement by its Ottoman potentate. Seizing the initiative, Britain stepped in and took control of the country's financial sector, ostensibly to protect British trade interests, and moved troops into the country from the Suez Canal Zone to maintain order. Since then, Egypt has formed its own nationalist party and elected a native king, but in every significant way, the country remains under British control.

This situation allows European archaeologists and scholars broad access to ancient Egyptian sites, such as the Valley of the Kings, where Carter and Carnarvon discovered Tut-ankh-amen. However, many Egyptians fail to appreciate the scientific and cultural scholarship these efforts represent, seeing them as nothing more than European grave-robbing expeditions. There is growing dissent among the poor and the working class, and there are stories of cults in Cairo and Alexandria devoted to driving out foreign interlopers by any means necessary.

Since the end of the Great War Britain has lobbied the League quite forcefully for the authority to manage the regions of Palestine Transjordan and Iraq, all formerly Ottoman possessions. By establishing governments friendly to Britain, the empire could count on an undisturbed flow of fuel. The League accepted Britain's overtures, on the condition that the empire must also address the issue of creating an independent state for the Jews in Palestine, an issue of considerable concern to the governments of Europe. The British agreed, not realizing the magnitude of the task.

The British government did not count on a surge of Arab nationalism after the Ottoman Empire's collapse. This is ironic because the British helped to start it in the first place. During the Great War, the British Foreign Office hit upon a strategy of harassing the Ottomans by creating Arab uprisings in the Middle East. The legendary T. E. Lawrence, otherwise known today as "Lawrence of Arabia," stirred the Arabs to action with the promise of Arab self-rule at the end of the war, and the sheiks held him to his promise. One sheik in particular, Ibn Saud, has taken it upon himself to reunite the land his ancestors once ruled and has, thus far, enjoyed remarkable success, conquering much of the Arabian Peninsula.

The British have created monarchies in Transjordan and Iraq, but Palestine remains a thorn in the imperial lion's paw. The Arabs there have nationalistic aims of their own and bitterly resent the steady flow of Jewish refugees onto their ancestral land. Already, there have been riots in Lebanon, and the British are at their wits' end trying to find a diplomatic solution to the dilemma. They cannot go back on their promises to the Jews and to the League, and yet, they cannot expect anything other than violent resistance from the Palestinians, who only see their land being stolen from them and given to someone else. Both sides of the conflict have garnered sympathetic attention from humanitarian groups in Europe and the United States, but it remains to be seen how the matter may be resolved.

-from the correspondence of the Æon Society for Gentlemen

Greetings Maxwell Anderson Mercer,

I am Enkidu. I have heard of your search for the strange and unusual. I wish to join your Society. I believe my insights and scientific knowledge (specifically in regards to botany) would be invaluable to your organization.

Before making arrangements, I should tell you this. I will need certain visas and documents to safely make the trip. I am a gorilla.

-Enkidu

PS: Do NOT send Safari Jack Tallon. We have a history. Do not let his prejudices cloud your judgment, nor listen to his fear that we are just like the evil tribe of our kind he fought in Africa. We are the descendants of exiles from that realm and wish the world well.

Asia and the Pacific Rim

—dispatch by Sarah Gettel

The two men carried me easily between them, dragging me across the moonlit courtyard. They wore the traditional attire of samurai, complete with long, curved swords thrust through their belts. Their grip was like iron. Even without the aftereffects of the ether and the ropes that bound me hand and foot, I knew that there wasn't much point in resisting.

A man waited for us in the center of the courtyard, beside a large copper cauldron. Unlike his men, Sakamura wore an impeccably tailored European suit and held a Dunhill between his humorless lips. The samurai stopped before him and forced me to my knees. I fought to clear my head. "You've got a hell of a way with the ladies, Ito," I said. "If you'd wanted to show me your estate, all you had to do was ask."

Sakamura's smile didn't quite reach his eyes. "Charming as ever, Miss Gettel," he replied, his unaccented English betraying his Ivy League education. "I wish that this was a social matter. Truly I do. But you and I both know otherwise. And I haven't much time for pleasantries." He gestured with a sharp nod, and the samurai picked me up like a rag doll, carrying me to the cauldron.

"For what it's worth, I congratulate you on your persistence," Sakamura said, following in our wake. "Your deductions in Kyoto were impressive. I didn't think my associates left any clues behind."

"Your associates? You mean the Black Dragons," I said. The samurai swung my legs over the lip of the cauldron. It was full of a thick fluid that quickly soaked through my clothes. I fought the urge to gasp.

"I'm afraid that name is unfamiliar to me," he replied smoothly.

"Malarkey," I snapped. "Spare me the song-and-dance, Sakamura. My friends—"

"Are dead, Miss Gettel." Sakamura stepped closer. "They may have destroyed our earthquake projector, but the lab was completely incinerated. No one could have survived that explosion." He took a long drag from his cigarette. "All is not lost, however. I know that you were able to rescue Doctor Akagi. Tell me where he is, and I might be able to forgive your crimes against my people."

It felt good to be able to laugh in the man's face. "You're going to have to do better than that, Sakamura."

He nodded slowly. "I thought I might." With a flick of his wrist he let the cigarette fall onto the wood piled beneath the cauldron. The oil-soaked kindling caught at once. "It's not a pleasant thing to be boiled alive, Miss Gettel. My honorable ancestors reserved such punishment for traitors and spies. You die by inches as the heat sinks down to your bones." Firelight gleamed along the harsh outline of Sakamura's face. "You could last for days, Miss Gettel — but I don't think it will take that long. Do you?"



China

The relationship between China and the West is a long, sordid tale of greed and reckless self-interest going back as far as the 16th century. England, France, Portugal and Spain were the first European nations to seek trade with the vast Chinese Empire, and at first, the Manchu emperors could dictate severe restrictions on where and what could be traded to the foreigners. China exported large amounts of silk, porcelain and spices but imported nothing; items were purchased with silver alone, and Western merchants were often at the mercy of authoritarian Chinese officials.

The balance of power shifted last century when the British and Americans discovered an item for trade that the Chinese couldn't resist: opium. In 1839, the Chinese moved to restrict the opium trade, and the emboldened British declared war. The war ended with the Treaty of Nanking, which allowed the British free access to five Chinese ports and gained them the island of Hong Kong. The opium trade continued, and in 1844, France and the United States secured similar treaties, opening up Chinese ports to unrestricted trade. It was an enormous loss of face for the Chinese emperor, and as the emperor's authority waned, more and more countries moved in to secure their own territorial concessions. At the same time, regional governors saw a chance to take advantage of the current decline, and the countryside fell prey to ambitious warlords who cruelly mistreated their subjects. Britain and the United States tried to prop up the Manchus but, at the same time, moved to protect their own lucrative trading rights. The entire country was opened up to foreign merchants, who were no longer subject to Chinese law and could go and do whatever they pleased. In the late 1800s, Britain took control of Burma, while France took Tongking and Japan conquered Korea in a lightning military campaign. Even Russia entered the fray, casting hungry eyes toward Manchuria and Port Arthur.

Chinese resentment reached the boiling point in 1899, culminating in the brief but savage Boxer Rebellion. Secret societies of Chinese nationalists demanded the removal of all foreign influence from their sacred land. Foreign missions were burned, and rioting claimed the lives of European men, women and children. Troops from the Western powers arrived to restore order in 1900, and the rebellion was crushed, but the proverbial genie had been let out of the bottle. From that point onward, the spirit of revolution was loose among the Chinese people.

The last imperial dynasty didn't fall all at once. General Yuan Shih-Kai, strongest of the imperial commanders, spent years negotiating deals with allies and enemies, only to then rush to break them before he could be betrayed in turn. The Kuomintang, or Nationalist Party, claims to lead a Chinese republic with Yuan as president, but depending on his mood, Yuan is just as likely to call himself supreme warlord or even emperor. Democratic and socialist groups fight for attention at court and in the provinces with Soviet advisors, stalwarts hoping to return a Qing emperor to the throne, idealists and opportunists of all flavors. The Nationalist Party is too weak and torn by internal dispute to offer unified leadership. Anarchy and lawlessness remain the norm outside Peking and the coastal cities. Matters got particularly bad during the Great War, when European troops were busy elsewhere, but didn't improve much once peace returned to Europe. Nationalist leaders accept Bolshevik support out of the desperate sense that they must have someone's aid, and the Western powers don't respond to pleas for help.

At present, China is still in chaos, imperiled from within by savage rural warlords and from without by ambitious foreign powers, especially Japan. The Kuomintang is restructuring itself along the model of the Bolsheviks, giving the party much-needed organization,

but there are already signs of dissatisfaction between the new Communists, led by Sun Yat-Sen, and the more traditional Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-Shek. The foreign legations, especially Britain and the United States, are increasingly embroiled in the intrigues at Peking, seeking to hedge Bolshevik influence and create a bastion against the threat of Japanese imperialism.

—from the journals of Sarah Gettel

While traveling through China to the Temple of the Hungry Ghosts, I met an old acquaintance of mine, "Wild" Bill Codero. He was a soldier of fortune, selling his gun to the highest bidder following the Great War. When last I saw him, it was Borneo, and his eyes spoke of cordite and bloodshed. What I saw now was a different man wearing Bill's face. The pain, the anger, the fear — they were gone.

Codero politely greeted me, something completely out of character for the man. He was courteous and respectful, not just to me, but to the Chinese around him. With a little conversation, I discovered he had recently returned from Tibet.

"You must go, Miss Gettel. You must go to see them! They changed my life. I am at peace now."

"Who?" I asked.

"The Yeti," he said. He proceeded to tell me of a hidden city, high in the mountains of Tibet. There, hairy, blue-faced apemen teach enlightenment. They believe that all mankind (and I presume Yeti-kind) will contribute their souls to an enlightened group mind, which will use its mental power to travel to the stars and beyond time itself.

"You do not believe me," he said at the end of his story. "You feel I am playing an elaborate joke on you. You are thinking this is not even worth a note to the Aeon Society." I looked at him in shock. No one, not even my closest comrades, knew I was taking my walkabout for the Society. My mind raced. Codero continued, "I see them in your mind, Sarah. I see them as easily as you see me before you." He stood up. "You should see the Yeti, Sarah. They will teach you peace." At that, he got up and left.

I was half-determined to follow him and half-determined to abandon my plans and head straight for Tibet. But I was carrying the Chan Document and couldn't spare a day.

French Indochina

While Britain and the United States remain focused on China proper, the French devote considerable energy to exploiting the southeastern portion of the Asian peninsula, the region now referred to as French Indochina. The countries in this region — Laos, Cambodia, Annam, Tonkin and Cochin China — are organized into an administrative zone called the Union Indochinoise, an arrangement that cares far more for harvests of rubber and manganese than the welfare of the native peoples. French rule in Indochina closely resembles the current Belgian administration in the Congo, providing security for French corporations and plantation owners who keep their workers in conditions akin to outright slavery. There is no justice for the peoples of Indochina, and unrest is brutally repressed. Unlike the Congo, where the excesses of the Belgians attracted international scrutiny, Indochina is an obscure backwater where the French can continue their colonial practices largely unobserved. French colonial administrators are notoriously corrupt, and many rule over their regions like petty emperors.

Nevertheless, the ancient ruins of Cambodia hold an uncounted hoard of knowledge waiting to be tapped, not to mention the promise of mineral and botanical riches hidden deep in Indochina's jungles. Currently, however, there is a serious problem with piracy in the South China Sea, likely abetted through bribes to French officials, a situation that cries out for stalwart souls to see justice done.

Massacre Survivor Urges Commissioner to Resign

— exclusive interview by Sarah Gettel

The streets of Wanchai in Hong Kong ran with blood following a savage street battle between police, gangsters known as the “Dragon’s Coil” and a group of violent insurgents called the “Black Mandarin Tong.” It is not a situation where you’d expect to find a nun, but luckily, there was one on hand. Sister Chloe Markham, an American attached to the Jesuit mission in Hong Kong, is credited with saving the lives of her fellow missionaries by negotiating their release from the Black Mandarin himself, a mysterious figure who seized their church as a stronghold during the riot.

Surprisingly, she has as many bitter words for Police Commissioner Dudley Maddington as for her captor. Maddington, a retired commodore of the Royal Navy, has only been in Hong Kong for five months, but already, Sister Markham is urging him to retire. I caught up with her while she was recovering in the Sacred Heart Clinic.

Sarah Gettel: Can you tell me what happened when the tong seized the church?

Chloe Markham: We were in the middle of Mass when we heard the disturbance outside. Father Greenfield briefly halted the ceremony to see what was happening. The next thing we knew, members of the Black Mandarin Tong were surging through the front and side doors. They seized me, the priests and the other nuns and began barricading themselves inside. We could hear gunshots outside as the police fought with the Dragon’s Coil. Father Murdoch was incensed, demanding that the tong leave at once. The Black Mandarin killed him with a single blow.

SG: Then what happened?

CM: The police began shouting for the Black Mandarin to surrender. He told them he’d kill us all if they didn’t back off and let his men escape. He carried Father Murdoch’s body to the bell tower and flung it at them.

SG: How did you ever persuade him to let you go?

CM: It wasn’t me. Not entirely, anyhow. This was not my first... encounter with the Black Mandarin. I know how he thinks, and I knew he would never listen to us. But the congregation — the Chinese poor we were helping — they could convince him. The Jesuits say I saved them, but those peasants were the ones who saved us all.

SG: Again, I have to ask... how? I mean, isn’t the Black Mandarin the man who said “Christianity is opium for the soul?”

CM: Yes, he said that. But when they told him about the clinic, about the medicine and the food, he released me as a favor to them. Then, I convinced the police that he could be trusted to let the other clergy go if they retreated and let him escape.

SG: How did you know he wouldn’t simply slaughter them?

CM: He is a cruel man, and utterly merciless, but he prides himself on being just. He would never dishonor a vow.

SG: Would you say the same about the leader of the Dragon’s Coil?

CM: I have never met the Ubiquitous Dragon, and I hope I never will. Every word I hear told of him adds to a litany of infamy, greed and self-interest. Both he and the Black Mandarin are criminals, but they are as different as night and day. Commissioner Maddington was a fool to treat them as if they were the same.

SG: What do you mean?

CM: Maddington thought the Black Mandarin Tong was fighting the Dragon’s Coil over who would control the illegal opium trade to the United States. Nothing could be farther from the truth, and if the British had been smart enough to send a policeman who spoke Chinese, they’d know that. The tong wants to eradicate the opium trade in Hong Kong, as a prelude to running the British out. The Black Mandarin has more in common with Paul Revere than Al Capone.

SG: It almost sounds like you admire him.

CM: Admire? Never. But I respect him. He would never have endangered hundreds of innocents, the way Maddington’s rash “police action” did. The Ubiquitous Dragon is a cynic and an opportunist. He simply wants free rein to traffic in vice. The Black Mandarin is an idealist and a fanatic, and he will not rest until every Westerner is gone from China.

It is folly to underestimate this man. He knows us far better than we know him. In fact, the last thing he said to me was from the Bible. “If you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind.”

Japan

When Commodore Perry and his fleet arrived in Japan in 1853 and ended almost two centuries of government-enforced isolation, the American initiative discovered a country tired of the repressive hand of the military-ruled shogunate and eager for reform. Unlike the Chinese, who fought Western ideas tooth and nail, the Japanese took a more pragmatic view, realizing that unless they instituted immediate changes to their industry and society they would be no match for the more modern European powers. In less than 50 years, they did just that, transforming their essentially feudal system of government into a parliamentary system and deposing the shogun in favor of a restored imperial family. The Meiji emperor is a figurehead of sorts, similar to the Western monarchies, but his position still holds enormous influence with the Japanese people. Real governmental power lies in a small oligarchy of ancient families who were the driving force behind modernization, supported by the powerful Mitsubishi, Mitsui and Sumitomo families, who together controlled much of the country's industry and finances. By 1900, Japan introduced a convertible currency and compulsory education and instituted a practice of sending its brightest students overseas to study Western industrial techniques.

Not everyone supported the idea of a Westernized Japan. The country's warrior class, which had dominated the country for the 200 years prior to the Meiji restoration, was resentful at the erosion of its power base and the threats to Japan's cultural identity. Consequently, it pressed relentlessly for Japan to adopt an aggressive foreign policy that would make the country equivalent to the great powers of Europe and broaden Japan's control over the Pacific Rim. Their efforts led to conflict with Russia over the Chinese province of Manchuria, and the successful conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 rewarded the militants with a wave of popular support. This led to the conquest of Korea in 1910, turning that country into a Japanese colony and a source of cheap labor to support the growing Japanese industrial base.

Since the reforms of the last century, Japan has become a victim of its own success. Increased prosperity led to a much larger population, which, in turn, makes increasing demands on Japanese industry. Japan has the manpower and skill to become a powerful force in the Pacific but lacks many of the natural resources to make that dream a reality. Such resources can be found in abundance in China and the islands of the Pacific, and there is mounting pressure from the military to take advantage of the current instability in Asia. Extreme nationalist organizations such as the secretive Black Dragon Society actively recruit members of the military and parliament to subvert the authority of the embattled liberal government, and already, one prime minister who opposed the nationalists has been assassinated. The United States has recently expressed concern over the growing threat Japan poses to the Pacific, but with the unrest in China occupying much of America and Europe's attention, it is unclear who will rise to the challenge of saving Japan from a descent into imperialism.

India

For many decades, India has been the jewel in the British Empire's colonial crown, a distant, exotic land crying out for justice, equality and civilization. Since gaining control of the country in the 1850s, the British colonial government has labored hard to bring India into the modern age, instituting legal, social and educational reforms amid a tangled maze of conflicting religious laws and ancient customs. In the process, the British have ridden roughshod over a society that has existed for thousands of years, redefining political borders and social roles with righteous self-confidence and brutally suppressing any attempts at protest. Nowhere else in the Empire has

the "white man's burden" been so dutifully addressed, and nowhere else are its fallacies so painfully clear.

Though the British have made significant progress in certain areas, particularly the expansion of railroads and the construction of hospitals, schools and other public works, Indian society, in general, remains largely unchanged. The rigid Hindu caste system remains in place, relegating the majority of the population to abject poverty and deplorable living conditions, and despite numerous attempts, there has still been no success in establishing a unified legal system to protect everyone, regardless of caste, religion or race. Tensions between Christians, Hindus and Muslims remain high, and after several bloody uprisings, the British now respond to large-scale protest with merciless force. This only adds fuel to the growing Indian nationalist movement led by the Indian National Congress. The Congress' leader, Mohandas K. Gandhi, was surprisingly successful at winning concessions from the colonial government by a method of peaceful protest he terms satyagraha, or "devotion to truth." He hoped to show Great Britain that its violent methods of maintaining order were inherently flawed, and by extension, its position in India was untenable. Tragically, Gandhi's movement was severely undermined in 1922 when extremist members of the Indian National Congress instigated armed attacks on British citizens. Since being released from prison in February of this year, Gandhi has declared his crusade of satyagraha to be a failure and has withdrawn from political life despite countless entreaties to take up the cause once more.

Despite widespread political and social woes and the increasing threat of violence from terrorist groups and Indian secret societies, idealists of all stripes are still drawn to the country, bringing great dreams of discovery, enlightenment and progress. Scientists and scholars study the jungle-shrouded ruins of the ancient Mogul Empire, while explorers and engineers push back the wilderness with roads, dams and railways. Only time will tell if the British and Indians can face the daunting challenges of self-rule and social reform that the country desperately needs, but as Gandhi has shown, one person with a vision can make all the difference.

Australia

Since its emergence as a unified commonwealth in 1901, Australia has struggled to reshape itself from a collection of dependent colonies to a self-sufficient, prosperous member of the British Empire. The Great War was a grim coming of age for the Commonwealth, which provided a quarter of a million men to the Allied cause and suffered terrible losses on the fields of Europe and the Middle East. The long years of bloodshed severely tested Australian loyalty to Great Britain and sparked an ardent nationalist movement dedicated to increasing the Commonwealth's autonomy and broadening its power base in the Pacific Rim. Politicians and visionaries have turned their eyes to the nation's vast and empty interior, where they believe that, with guts, determination and a steady influx of capital, the outback can be tamed into productive farmland and sites for heavy industry.

"Men, money and markets" are the watchwords of Australia's Nationalist government, devoting considerable funds to lure settlers to the Commonwealth and drive deeper into the frontier. A million people inhabit Sydney, with immigrants arriving from all over the Empire and other parts of Europe. Raw exports to Great Britain and elsewhere in the form of wool, wheat and other natural resources provide the cash to pay for settlement and growth. The government goes to great lengths to entice foreign investment and promote trade.

Not everyone in the Commonwealth is happy with the arrival of so many state-supported settlers. Rural farmers and landholders resent having their spreads appropriated by the state and handed out to

foreigners, not to mention the increased competition for their goods. Racial tensions are on the rise as well. From the earliest days of Australia's settlement, the struggle to claim the land from the aborigines was characterized as asserting the superiority of white civilization, and the ideal of building a "white Australia" is still strong. Non-white immigrants face open hostility, even violence, and what remains of the land's native peoples are relegated to isolated reservations.

The League of Nations reapportioned Germany's Pacific colonies, giving New Guinea to Australia and awarding the Marshall and Caroline Islands to Japan. Though Japan is currently one of Australia's biggest customers, both countries see one another as competitors in the bid for the resources of the Pacific Rim. At this point, the two nations seem evenly matched, racing neck-and-neck to see who will build enough industrial might to assure dominance in the region.

Lost Worlds and Hidden Realms

dispatch by Sarah Gettel

My dearest colleagues, while I have written about many of the amazing things this world has to offer, I have saved the best for last. For now I must speak of the realms not of this Earth. In my travels around this great planet, I have seen sights that make my dear flying man seem normal by comparison.

Though I lack hard evidence, I must assure you of this: Dinosaurs walk the Earth. There are strange worlds out there, alien to our experience, that touch our own. I have parachuted into the Sky Citadel of Doctor Zorbo and narrowly escaped being sacrificed to no less than seven cults of dark gods that walked the Earth before mankind's reign. The clamorous night music of the Carpathian mountains and the screams emanating from the Forgotten Temple of the Hungry Ghosts haunt my nightmares. During my travels, I have interviewed many of the world's greatest minds, I have asked them all what they think of these lost worlds. What are they? Where did they come from? And why have they been found now, when they must have been hidden for centuries?

No one has given me the same answer. A mystic in Greenwich Village believes that Hammersmith's experiment opened a doorway from a realm of magic to our world. The otherworldly inhabitants of these obscure realms are merely travelers, lost between worlds. Professor Dixon tells me that there is no magic, only science we have not yet quantified. He claims there is a rational, scientific explanation for all that I have seen. (This answer depressed me for a good week. There should be magic.) An archeologist I shared a cigarette with in Cairo claims that it is simply a coincidence of fortune that these realms have been discovered in this time. He told me of mysteries beyond what I had seen, mysteries he encountered years ago, as a boy. We just happen to be on a "hot streak." Still another theory is that these realms are not from other dimensions, but other times. There is some merit to that theory, though the scientist who shared it with me was stymied by my follow-up question; if these places to another time, why are all of them rifts to the past? Shouldn't we see some glimpse of the future?

My dear friend, Maxwell, please have Dr. Primoris reply to my letters. I would like to learn his opinion on this. He does claim to be the smartest man in the world, after all. (Perhaps we should find the smartest woman.)

Dinosaur Swamp

—dispatch by Sarah Gettel

"Madame Gettel," said Paul Robichaux. "We gots to go. You pay me to take you here. You didn't pay me enough to stay dis long."

"Fiddlesticks," I replied, snapping another picture with Professor Dixon's Handy-Camera. "All I have are pictures of odd ferns and a smashed crawfish trap. I need to see something a little more... convincing. We've seen no signs of your 'Mokolé-Mèmebe.'" I put the camera down on a tree limb and wiped my sweaty brow. I had not thought it possible, but it was even hotter here than back in Lafayette. I heard a pounding sound, as if a tree had fallen over. I whipped my head about to see what the source of the sound was. I froze, stunned at seeing a creature that should have died 65 million years ago.

When I was a little girl, my father would read to me of the dinosaurs, the terrible thunder lizards that once ruled this world. (No matter what unscientific twits like William Jennings Bryan may say.) I recognized the beast immediately. The wide skull. The armored back. The fierce club-like tail. An ankylosaurus! And it was looking at me! Without taking my eyes off the dinosaur, I reached for my camera. My shaking fingers knocked Professor Dixon's lightweight camera to the ground. I heard a yelp from back at the boat.

"Dat's not de one we saw, Madame Gettel. But it look 'ongry," he whispered.

In the depths of the Atchafalaya Basin between Baton Rouge and Lafayette, dinosaurs live again. The specific corner is one the Robichaux family fished for "mudbugs" for generations, going back to before the Civil War. In the spring of 1922, a storm prevented a pair of Robichaux fishermen from going on their normal excursion the weekend before Mardi Gras. For them, it was a time to smoke foul cigars, drink bootleg whiskey and, of course, fish. That weekend, they learned how bait must feel! In the pre-dawn light, they saw something. An enormous neck, 20 feet long, erupted out of the water. Sharp teeth filled the creature's mouth, and it roared at the rapidly departing fishermen. Uncle Jean Robichaux told his nephew Paul that the beast was Mokol -M mbe, a great beast out of African mythology.

Armed with a new shotgun (and a hefty bribe), Paul and I returned to the scene of the crime. As we traveled deeper into the heart of the swamp, I recognized the changes in flora. There was no clear demarcation between the familiar sights of the swamp and the subtly different plant life farther in. But even my untrained naturalist's eye could see a difference. The trees themselves were the same, but the vegetation surrounding them seemed different. As we progressed, Paul grew nervous. I promised we would not dally too long, and as soon as we got to their fishing spot, we could turn around. Naturally, I wished to stay as long as possible, in hopes of seeing this swamp-monster.

After assuring M'sieur Robichaux that the ankylosaurus we'd discovered ate plants, not fishermen, we heard the terrible bellow of a creature born millions of years ago. The ankylosaurus started at the noise and trampled off, down the edge of the island.

I must say, my reporter's instincts were quivering at the opportunity to see what startled the ankylosaurus, but the good sense of my father reminded me that when the herbivores flee, it's generally because of a predator. I had no desire to be an appetizer. I looked for the camera. It was sinking in the mud, over on the other side of a downed tree. I considered reaching for it, but I heard the creature roar again. Discretion being the better part of valor (and lacking a lightning pistol), I fled for the safety of the pirogue, and the two of us paddled away from that island in the swamps as fast as possible.

Towering over the dense cypress trees, I saw the source of the clamor. The king of the dinosaurs: tyrannosaurus rex. I thanked God that the creature could not swim and then hoped that the paleontologists were correct about that detail.

Our escape from the dinosaur swamp was blessedly uneventful. Under the pretext of a nature story, I spoke with a paleontologist at Tulane University. Based on my secondhand description, he identified the dinosaur seen by the Robichaux as an elasmosaurus. All three dinosaurs were native to the late Cretaceous period. And now, 1924.

The Beast-Men of the Chiquibul Caves

—dispatch by Sarah Gettel

I awoke to the sounds of primitive chanting under red crystal skies. My captors had tied me to a post near the fire, as if I was a witch or something. "Not again," I grumbled under my breath. I stretched for my pocketknife but could not reach it. I was tied too tightly. I looked about. More cavemen surrounded me, looking at me curiously and gibbering in their primitive language. With the added light of the bonfire, I could see them more clearly. They were Neanderthals! As I looked about, I counted close to 20 savages. They had tools, mostly made of rock. I saw a female (*I think* it was a female) scraping the hide of some indeterminate beast with a sharpened rock. Others were using stone knives to sharpen sticks into spears. Then, all analytical thought fled from my head. Off to the other side, where the Neanderthals were chanting, I saw the focus of their rite. The hunters danced around a neatly stacked pile of human skulls. The leader raised a human skull into the air and shouted, "EEETAH!"

At that moment, the dancing warriors stopped and turned to me. I soon realized that I was not just a guest for dinner, but the main course!

Following the Adventure of the Smoking Mirror, my next assignment was to investigate stories of "ape men" from the jungles of Belize.

With a broken-down car that had seen better days, I drove into the Maya mountain range, stopping at small towns and trying, with my broken Spanish, to determine the veracity of the story.

After a few weeks, I was able to piece together enough information to narrow down the sightings to the area near the Chiquibul caves. They are one of the largest underground cave complexes known and the Mayans were rumored to have buried their dead there. I attempted to hire a local guide, but no one was willing to go with me there. "What is there that is so frightening?" I asked.

"Muert ," they said. "No one goes into the caves and returns."

Well, with a challenge like that, how could I refuse? The locals were more than willing to take my money in return for maps and directions. By now, I had learned the value of carrying sufficient firearms, and while I am far from Miss Newfield's level of expertise, I do tend to hit what I am aiming at.

The directions I had did not do justice to the enormity of the cave mouth. At the base of an enormous sinkhole, it stretched a good 100 feet tall. As yet, I had seen nothing out of the ordinary (for a tropical rain forest, that is deadly snakes and the like proved commonplace). Due to the lateness of the hour, I set up camp and decided to begin my explorations the next day.

After a somewhat restless sleep, I awoke and began my explorations. I had been spelunking before and thought I knew what I was doing. The enormity of the caverns overwhelmed me. I took numerous pictures, which I have included. Wondrous formations of rock and crystal stretched from floor to ceiling. In one place, stalactites taller

than I but no thicker than a pencil draped down from the ceiling. It looked as if the ceiling had long, white hair.

In the deepest regions of the caves, I started to see signs that others had been here before me: a gnawed-on cave bat here, droppings of a large animal there. I thought I was alert and ready, but the beast-men took me unawares. When I awoke, I was in an entirely different part of the caves. To my amazement, red illumination spilled throughout the cavern. The distant ceiling glowed from an enormous ruby-red crystal formation. The light of the crystal sun provided as much light as a harvest moon. I was in the center of a large encampment of primitive men, resembling the Neanderthals I had read of in Father's books. They were large and brutal but starting to show signs that they had not been eating well recently. Looking about, I saw some dying shrubbery and the gnawed-on remains of small game. Whatever life eked out an existence down here was dying off. I presume the vegetation is dying from a lack of sunlight, and with nothing to eat, the game is dying as well. This, of course, begs the question: How did the cavemen, the plants and the animals get down there? Even more, what powers the ruby-red sun that gives light to this underground world?

Fortunately, a brave soul delivered me from becoming dinner. I had never seen such a man before. He was over seven feet tall and looked like he was carved from marble. He was pale as the moon itself. He wore a sliver of the crystal sky on a thong around his neck. Even more amazing was that, when he was angry, the crystal glowed with the red light of the setting sun. Though he was clearly not a weakling normally, under the crystal's light he fought with the power of a mountain gorilla, handily defeating the leader of the cavemen in single combat. With an enormous dire wolf at his side, he led me out of the cave, the remaining Neanderthals scattering into the shadows as we passed. My rescuer could speak, calling himself "Gar," though



he knew no language I recognized. Gar led me out of the light of the crystal sun and into darkness. My torch was long gone, and neither he nor his wolf needed light to see. I only occasionally saw flashes of light coming from the crystal around Gar's neck when he exerted himself. At one point, he lifted me up over a fast-moving stream. It felt as if I were weightless. Led about like a blind woman for days, eventually we came to the cave entrance. He would not leave the cave, the light appeared to pain his eyes, and he retreated into the caves from whence he came.

The Thunder God of Machu Pichu

--dispatch by Sarah Gettel

By the time I arrived in Lima, I was once again looking forward to the adventure that surely awaited me. I am told by other women that the pain of childbirth is one of the most excruciating experiences known to womankind, and yet, the joy of holding one's child in one's arms erases whatever pains may have accompanied its arrival. The thrill of adventure alleviates my pains similarly. I wonder if our very world is giving birth to a new era. Was the Great War simply the agonized pains of delivery to this new and wondrous on?

The city was abuzz with excitement. The APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana, or American Popular Revolutionary Alliance), a revolutionary political party, was on the rise and denouncing the corrupt regime. My assignment had taken me back into the political realm but in a decidedly unusual fashion.

This very modern reform party had an ancient power for an ally. The Peruvian military was at this very moment engaged with followers of Hu scar, high priest of the Incan thunder-god Illapu. While the people of the cities rallied for equal rights for all Peruvian citizens, the Indians in the highlands of the Andes Mountains took to the old faith, rejecting Catholicism as the religion of Pizarro.

Following my interview with a leader of the splinter faction of APRA allied with Hu scar, I attempted to find some way up to Machu Pichu. Official channels proved unavailable, for obvious reasons. Less official channels seemed equally unhelpful. No pilot, for love or money, wanted to get close to that ridge of the Andes. So, I purchased a powerful telescope and trekked on my own to a nearby peak. From my vantage point, I could make out some details of the city.

I had seen pictures of Machu Pichu when I was at university. It was the ruins of an old city, one whose masters had lived their lives out centuries ago. The new owners had renovated. Walls were whole. Temples had been rebuilt and covered with fresh flowers. Natives dressed in primitive outfits walked to and fro, carrying machine guns. Though their cause was ancient, their weaponry looked decidedly modern.

A battle raged at the outskirts of the ancient city. Government troops were shooting it out with the rebel forces. The rebels had the advantage of the terrain, but even I could tell they were outgunned.

Then, the magic happened. The cloudy sky erupted with thunderbolts, as if Zeus himself had been angered. The government troops scattered. I panned the telescope about and saw in a three-sided temple a glowing figure. I can only assume it was Hu scar. A vortex of energy surrounded him, one that flashed in time with the lightning.

Suddenly, I felt the hairs on my arm stand on end. I looked up and saw the thunderheads roiling across the sky in my direction. I dove away from the telescope seconds ahead of the lightning. The thunder that followed nearly deafened me. The telescope was left a melted mass of metal and glass.

I quickly retreated down the mountain slope, hoping that Hu scar would not decide to send an avalanche down on me.

Mister Mercer, I hope that whoever you send to follow up on this investigation has some method of dealing with this mad god.

--interview by Sarah Gettel with leader of the APRA splinter faction allied with Huáscar, granted on the condition of anonymity.

Sarah Gettel: Thank you for allowing this interview.

APRA: It is my pleasure, Miss Gettel. I only hope that you will be able to relay our words to the rest of the world, so that they may know the struggles of our peoples.

Gettel: I would be pleased to relay whatever you wish, but first, I wish to discuss Huáscar.

APRA: Yes, he is a valued ally to our cause. He is our king once again made flesh.

Gettel: He's reincarnated?

APRA: That is your word for it. Long ago, the two brothers Huáscar and Atahualpa made war to determine who would rule the Inca empire. Huáscar was the rightful heir, but his brother Atahualpa controlled a large army. The two brothers fought to become the Inca — the king. Though Atahualpa was the victor, the war weakened the country so much that, when Pizarro came, our people were too weak to fight. Thus began a cycle of foreign domination that has led us to today's corrupt power structure.

Gettel: And this new Huáscar is the reincarnation of the dead brother.

APRA: He has not made known how or when he realized who he once was, but his powers demonstrate his divine heritage. Acting on the directions of his past life, he fashioned the Spear of Illapu, our thunder god. With its magic, he controls the very forces of nature. The thunder and lightning are his to command.

Gettel: And why did Huáscar and his followers take over Machu Pichu?

APRA: Was it not once ours, as this land was once ours? It is a symbol to our people to rise up and take back our country!

Gettel: So, when did your organization contact his cult?

APRA: I do not like the word "cult." Does your Pope lead a cult as well? It was with the help of APRA that Machu Pichu was retaken. We have people all over this great land who sympathize with our cause. They told us of his power and his desires to return this land to the true, Incan people and send the heirs of Pizarro back to their homeland, with lightning chasing them every step of the way. We realized that we could work together.

Gettel: Thank you for that clarification. Please, tell me more about Huáscar.

APRA: He is not just royalty, but a divine being. His power radiates from him, like the electricity in the air before a storm. One cannot help but look at him and *know* that he carries the blood of gods and kings in his veins. His voice commands an army. His strength is that of the hurricane. With his aid, Peru will be free.

Gettel: What does he want to do with Peru once it's free?

APRA: Do?

Gettel: I mean, what are his goals? Is Huáscar going to set up a democracy?

APRA: That is so Western of you. He is not interested in democracy or communism. He wishes a return to the old ways, with him ruling as a wise and just king.

The Hidden Pyramid

--dispatch by Sarah Gettel

With only a slight course change (thanks to the good Doctor Zorbo's zeppelin armada), I arrived in Cairo none the worse for wear. The timing was somewhat fortunate, as it gave me extra time to refresh my memories of Egypt. Though I had always been fascinated by tales of pharaohs and pyramids as a girl, most of my recollections were of fact, not legend, and legend was the order of the day.

The stories say that the Pharaoh Akhenaton and his wife Nefertiti were heretics. During Akhenaton's reign, he elevated the worship of Aton, his personal sun-god, to a much higher role in the Egyptian pantheon. This religious turmoil enveloped the whole country. The tale goes on to say that the Pharaoh's sins had offended the gods to such a degree that, following his burial, his entire tomb vanished in a sandstorm, "taken into the heavens to face the gods' displeasure in

person." So powerful was the curse that the priests destroyed all records of the Pharaoh, so as not to be taken as well. Only secondhand tales from merchants and Roman travelers survived, and their accounts were sketchy at best.

It appears, my friend, that we are once again confronted by a legend come to life. A contact forwarded me this story, told to him by a desert nomad.

"The winds howled that night, as if the damned had escaped Hell itself. The wind had teeth, biting through our tents. Two men drowned miles away from water, the sand choking the life out of them as surely as a hand around the throat. With the dawn, the storm returned to the hell from whence it came. But as I rubbed the grit from my eyes, I fell to my knees in shock. Where there had been only open sand and desert, there now stood a pyramid, one the likes of which I had never seen before.

"I had traveled much of the land. I was there when the white men opened up the tomb of Pharaoh Tut-ankh-amen two years ago. This pyramid was new. It stood out in the middle of the desert, gleaming as if the pyramid itself were made of solid gold. The stones had not been worn down by the winds of time. The corners were sharp, as if they had been quarried yesterday. My tribe spent the morning walking about the pyramid, watching with wonder and awe. None of us dared venture inside, even if we could have found an unsealed entrance. I alone would even touch the stones.

"I am no fool. I decided we should ride to the next town and tell the people there of our discovery. I had hoped we would even be rewarded.

"While telling our tale in the town, an old man made the sign of protection and then told us how the young Pharaoh Akhenaton had been accursed by the gods. Of my tribe, only my son and I were brave enough to lead an American archeologist back to the pyramid. I confess I was afraid as well, but Westerners paid many of my people large amounts of money to take them to places such as this. The sand-storm had destroyed most of our possessions, and we needed the money to survive the year.

"By the time we returned to the hidden pyramid, something even more wondrous had happened! People were there. As the sun rose, we saw the people, dressed as I had seen them in the museum as our people did thousands of years ago. They chanted a name. 'Nefertiti,' they cried, as if in prayer. At the tip of the pyramid, a man knelt before a young girl, barely old enough to marry. The sun crested above the horizon, and the man crowned the woman. She stood up and spoke. Though we were almost a mile away, we could hear her voice as plainly as you hear my own.

"She spoke in the language of our ancestors, which I am fortunate enough to understand. 'Behold, with the arrival of Aton's gaze, I am become Nefertiti. I am your pharaoh. As we have reclaimed this pyramid, which our ancestors built to honor false gods, so shall we reclaim all of Egypt, past and future, into the eternal Now. Kneel before me!' The man at her feet bowed, as did the men surrounding the pyramid. 'Who are these interlopers at my coronation?' she demanded.

"The American wanted to stay and talk with them. My people did not survive this long in the desert by staying where we were unwelcome. We fled. As we rode away, I turned back to see the archeologist. He had run toward the pyramid, the fool. Though we were miles away, we could still hear his screams, carried on the warm desert winds. Offer me all the money you wish. No money can purchase a life."

Once in Cairo, I looked up my father's old friend at the Cairo Museum of Antiquities. He gave me a map, which I am including with my package of notes and documents. The desert tribesman would not return to the Hidden Pyramid, but he was decent enough to describe its

location. Doctor Aazhang corroborated the description with an ancient map, lacking only the context in which to place the location of the pyramid.

Dr. Aazhang informed me that the Cult of the Sun-Disk has grown in the months since then. The cult holds certain rather heretical beliefs, but it has taken hold of the people, emboldened by England's grant of their independence. Dr. Aazhang fears that the cultists will seize power in the uncertainty of these times. While as an Egyptologist, he is certainly interested in examining the ancient relics wielded by the cult's forces, he has no desire to turn the clock back to centuries before Christ's birth.

While researching the cult, I kept my ear to the ground and learned another point of interest to the Society. The Cult of the Sun-Disk is searching for certain artifacts. Its agents broke into the Cairo Museum of Antiquities just last week and stole the Scepter of Ra, while leaving behind untold riches, not to mention older pieces. My contacts tell me that the cult is not just active in Egypt, but that its minions are abroad, searching for other ancient artifacts. What the cultists' purpose is or even which artifacts they seek to find is, as of this moment, beyond me. But if Akhenaton has such powers presently, what dark powers will she unlock from the ancient relics of Khem?

The Beasts of Devil's Pass

--dispatch by Sarah Gettel

Following my misadventures against the Ubiquitous Dragon in the Forgotten Temple of the Hungry Ghosts, I was more than ready to leave China. I traveled west and eventually boarded the famed Orient Express. With only a brief stopover in London, I was heading home. The miles of the journey caught up with me, and I paused to enjoy the European luxury of this most wonderful train.

Soon after we stopped in Budapest to add a few more passengers, I saw a familiar face. Doctor Woodrow Roman of London. He is one of the world's foremost experts on folklore. However, when I saw the good doctor, I almost didn't recognize him. His once dark hair was whiter than the teeth of Doctor Shark.

"What happened, Woody?" I asked.

Dr. Roman started when I called his name, and I thought for a moment the good doctor would faint. He whipped around, reaching into his coat pocket. He paused when he saw me and quickly hustled me into his stateroom. "Dear God, Sarah, he was right." He smiled and shook my hand. I felt something cold in his palm and looked down. Before I could blink, he held my palm up to his scrutiny. In his hand, I saw the small crucifix he'd palmed. "Thank God," he breathed.

"What is going on?"

"Just a moment," he said. "I will tell you everything soon." As I watched, Dr. Roman hung a crucifix on the doorknob and draped a wreath of garlic cloves from his satchel across the crack at the base of the door. He slumped into his seat. "Safe, for now." He pulled his pocket-watch from his waistcoat and tapped it. "We must be off," he whispered as if in prayer. With a lurch, the train lumbered forward. "Thank you, God."

"Very funny, Woodrow," I said. "Who told you I was coming? This is a grand joke."

"Oh, Sarah, I wish to God it were a joke."

"Budapest. Crosses. Garlic. Hair turned white. Let me guess. You've met a Walachian prince named Vlad who wants to purchase some land in London."

"It is no joke!" he hissed. "It is only by that devil's leave that I am still alive."

"Very well. Tell me your story. I have seen many amazing things in my journeys of the past year. I am ready to believe you."

"That is the devil's greatest trick," he said. "Nobody will believe me. They think I am mad, having read too much Stoker as a youth. They say that I've come to believe the legends I study." He turned to look at me, and with the conviction of the certain or the mad, he said, "Vampires walk the earth."

"I was preparing a book comparing the historical Vlad Tepes to the fictional Dracula. With my research complete, I was ready for fieldwork. I had been to Transylvania during the War and knew enough of the local polyglot of languages to get by. My first stop was, naturally, Castle Dracula, in the Borgo Pass. Night was falling, so I made to the nearby town of Bistrita for the evening. The town was locked up tight, and the local inn would not open, no matter how hard I rapped on the door. Dejected, I returned to my car and resigned myself to another evening of sleeping in the back seat."

"Day broke, and I realized why no one had answered the door. The town was deserted. I wondered what economic hardships had caused this little hamlet to fold up. I also confess I wondered how I would find people to interview with nobody home. I decided to travel to the castle to at least get some photographs. As I walked the streets, something in the air raised the hairs on the back of my neck. I felt as if I was walking among ghosts. I whistled a tune to distract myself and continued my walk. But I felt hidden eyes watching me."

"When I reached the castle, my first thought was that someone must have repaired the damage done to the castle by the earthquake of 1913, because the tower that reportedly fell into the River Arges was in fine repair. This caused me to wonder, for why would the town be empty but the castle repaired?"

"As I reached the front gate, I heard a distant sound carried on the frosty winds. It was the howl of a wolf. By this time, my imagination was getting the better of me, and I wondered if it was one of Dracula's 'children of the night.'"

"I looked out at the magnificent view from the foot of the wall and wondered if Tepes himself had stood there, hundreds of years ago. As I turned back, I saw another figure up on the castle wall. He screamed in Romanian, 'Flee,' and leaped from the battlements. I rushed to his side. The poor soul was in dire straits."

"I will get a doctor," I assured him, though I had no idea where to find one."

"Leave this place," he gasped. "The devil walks the land. The devil flies by night." With that, the wretch died. I reached for his neck to check his pulse and felt something there that caused my own skin to crawl. I gently turned the poor man's head and saw it. Two puncture wounds. Thoughts of science fled from my mind, and I was once again a caveman, scared by thunder in the night."

"I ran to my car as fast as my legs would carry me. In the distance, I heard the wolves howl again, this time closer than before. Thankfully, my car started on the first try and I tore down the twisting roads of the Borgo Pass as if the devil himself were chasing me."

"Just as my heart began to resume its normal patterns, the mists parted, and a man appeared in the road. He was tall, with a bushy mustache, just as I had seen in countless paintings. I swerved, and my car smashed into a tree. I lost consciousness for a moment and came to hearing the sounds of twisting metal. The man with the mustache tore the door off my car as if it were tissue paper. I halfheartedly struggled, but he yanked me from my car like a child with a rag doll."

"In heavily accented English, he told me, 'Do not come here. This is not a place for man to go. This is a place of darkness.' He smiled, and I could see the razor sharp fangs in his mouth. 'It is my home.' The man tossed me to the ground and said, 'Go now. I see that

you will soon meet an old friend. She is collecting stories. Tell her. Tell her that she and her masters are not welcome here. They should stay away. Tell her your story. Tell her of this night and the things you will see. Run now, as fast as you can. You will not die this night, though I cannot promise further mercy.' The man gestured for me to rise. On shaky limbs, I did as ordered.

"That night, I ran because the devil himself was chasing me. That night, I saw things in the woods. They chased me but never attacked. I fear, had I slowed for even an instant, I would have been killed. The things I saw. Horrific creatures that were half man and half something else. Naked beast-women covered with bushy black hair. Hungry tree roots reached for my feet, tripping me and slicing my legs. I could only think that the smell of blood would drive the beasts beyond their dark master's control. Thank God that the dark prince's will was strong.

"Every creature that ever shambled through my nightmares. They were there, Sarah. Every single one of them!

"As dawn broke, I found a small church. As I entered, I heard the man's voice again. It told me: 'Don't believe everything you read, Doctor Roman.' I slammed the door shut and fell to the floor. In the morning, the priests coming in for morning Mass found me. My hair was white and my story mad, but I was alive. And now that I have seen my old friend collecting stories, I know my usefulness may be at an end. I can only hope that the devil has forgotten about me."

I escorted Dr. Roman to the club car. He refused to tell any other stories of that horrific night but watched the countryside, illuminated by pale moonlight.

Later that night, Woodrow left for the head. I did not see him again, though I had the train stopped and searched from engine to caboose. To this day, I do not know if I believe a bloodsucking beast that walks like a man rules the Borgo Pass. But with all of the other wild adventures I have had, is a realm of monsters less incredible?



Looking Ahead

A Vision for the Future

Maxwell,

I cannot help but look at today's circumstances and think of them as harbingers of things to come. The modest array of talents we've gathered is but a trifle when compared to the future that lies before us. Imagine the possibilities inherent in the technology and gifts we've developed in the few short years since Hammersmith's experiment. Telluric energy is the answer to everything we could possibly imagine, if only we are willing to grasp it. (1)

The horrors of last decade's Great War are behind us. Now it is time to look at how we can use our talents to shape the future. I do not simply refer to the next few years, but perhaps the next century. Can you imagine what the world could be in a matter of 20 years? If we could understand the specifics of Dr. Hammersmith's experiment and duplicate it, we could activate the telluric potential in any human fortunate enough to have it. (2)

As matters exist today, with the Eon Society's secretive existence, I cannot help but think that you and your companions ignore the potential inherent in your various gifts. You have at your disposal scientific competence never before seen on Earth, as well as some of the most influential people in society. With the former's knowledge and the latter's resources, we could bring about a golden age (3) a future where disease and famine are simply fading nightmares and war is something that exists only in children's games. (4)

Without our guidance, humanity is certainly still destined for greatness but with more strife and stumbling along the way. I foresee the potential for at least one more war. That war may lead to global peace but at great cost. Humanity, without the benefit of our leadership, will come to the truths necessary for its prosperity, but there is no guarantee that they will understand what they've found. Few have the moral sophistication — even among the truly civilized European nations and the United States — to grasp their full potential without perverting it in some way. (5) (6)

My gravest concern in this matter is the simple fact that leaving the power to make important decisions in the hands of hoi polloi will dilute those decisions, to the point that society will simply be a morass of conflicting agendas with no sense of direction or purpose. If the power to make these decisions clearly lies in the hands of those few qualified to make them, this will not happen, and we can direct society's growth in a positive and meaningful fashion. (7)

I would stand beside you, whichever path you choose. If you and your Society cannot grasp the brass ring that I can plainly see — and I am certain you see it as well — I cannot stand openly with you. I will not oppose you, but I cannot be a part of Eon. I know that you also wish to see a finer world, just as I know that you prefer to use subtler means to achieve that goal. I believe that your way will offer too little, too late — that it will lead to a ruinous future with little hope for us all. I ask that you consider taking the path I offer you here and accept the destiny that was thrust upon us all in 1922. (8)

Sincerely,

Michael Donighal

Considerations for Moderation

Michael,

I can't agree that the simple possession of power grants any of us touched by the telluric rays the right to interfere in humanity's destiny. At least, not beyond minimizing the interference from others similarly gifted. How many times in history has a man believed himself to be destined for great things, only to bring needless sorrow and bloodshed? Were Caesar's last thoughts as he saw Brutus' betrayal those of the empire he carved or the life he wasted in its pursuit? I don't want history to look back on us and name us conquerors, and conquerors is what we'll be if we do as you suggest.

I've included a copy of your letter to better reference my rebuttals to your points. Please, don't take offense at this. I value your counsel, and I respect your wishes to remain separate from the Aeon Society.

One: I shouldn't have to remind you that none of us yet fully understand the telluric energy or the lasting effects it's had on the world. While we can see its immediate effects, we don't know what will happen in the next 10, 50 or 100 years. We've already seen a few Inspired who are not exactly responsible examples of humanity - what will they be like in 10 years?

Two: Don't get too carried away with your enthusiasm, Michael. Telluric rays don't grant ethical or moral thinking. For every person so empowered with good moral fiber, at least two more will have selfish or criminal designs. Few, I think, will subscribe to your expressed utopian ideals. Of those who do, most will do so in hopes of personal gain at your expense.

Three: With at least some anonymity, we can afford to act without interference from others who won't understand our goals or wish to control us. If we reveal the Aeon Society's true nature, expect to see governments and businessmen seeking to sway us to their ends. This alone will sabotage your ideals.

Four: You ask to stunt society's growth. The future will bring what the future brings. Humanity must remain free to develop in its own way. The times ahead will be hard, but humanity will recover. The near future may be grim, but the far future brings wonders neither of us have yet imagined. If we seize history's reins, we will cripple humanity. What of human ambition when gods walk among men?

Five: If we see another war, it will beggar the Great War in death toll and sheer destruction. The weapons developed for the conflict will be unlike any seen before. If the Great War does not serve to show the futility of such terrible violence, the next war very well may do so. A second Great War may teach the world's people and leaders just how far is too far. Without the lessons of a second war, I fear for mankind's social development.

Six: Your point here applies just as surely to us as it does to any normal humans. How often have you and I witnessed a human being granted the power to look into another's heart and soul, only to use that gift for personal gain and at great harm to others?

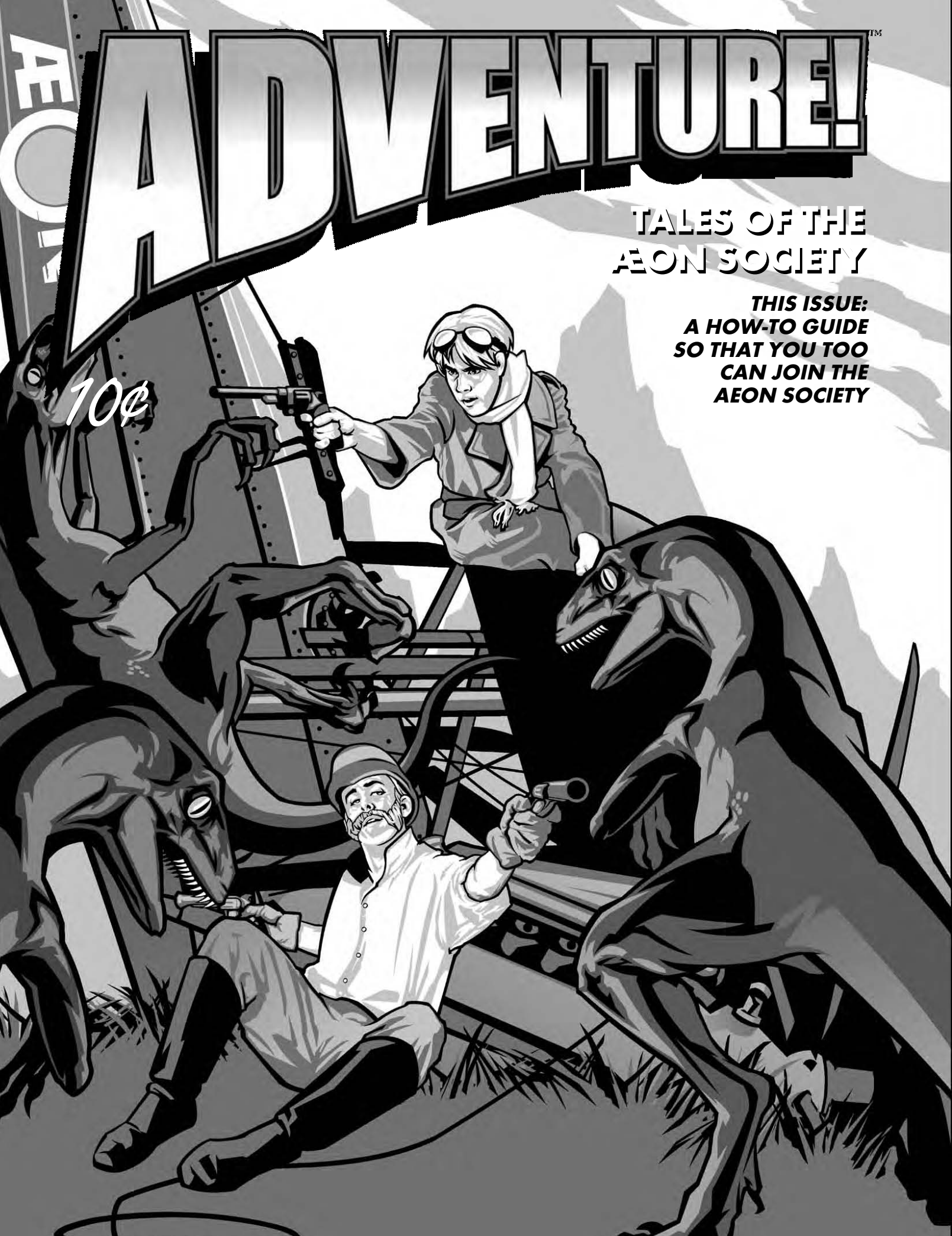
Seven: Direct society's growth? Perhaps in the same manner as the Japanese grow bonsai - stunted and deformed. The result may be pleasing to the eye, but the tree itself is forever prevented from its grandiose potential. Michael, you must realize that the best way for society to grow is to allow *hoi polloi*, as you call them, to make their own decisions and *learn from them*, right or wrong.

Eight: I cannot believe that a ruinous future will bring an end to hope. Wherever life continues, hope springs eternal. Even the greatest possible catastrophe can't lead to eternal ruin for all humanity. Men of vision are always present to help guide mankind out of whatever terrible state it finds itself in. History has shown this repeatedly - think on how much the world has improved in the years since the war, let alone in times past.

Michael, my friend, the mixture of drive and intelligence within you will lead you to great things. At some point in the future, you may find humanity's fate in your hands. If that time ever comes - and I pray, for your sake, that it never does - I can only ask that you make the right decision and let humanity prosper on its own terms.

With my warmest regards,

Maxwell Anderson Mercer



ADVENTURE!

TALES OF THE
AEON SOCIETY

**THIS ISSUE:
A HOW-TO GUIDE
SO THAT YOU TOO
CAN JOIN THE
AEON SOCIETY**

10¢

CHAPTER

CHARACTER

FIVE

Adventure! is a game of pulp heroism set in the 1920s. It's a game about men and women who take action. They're visionaries, inventors, explorers, sages, scientists, mystics and more. They come from every continent and from every stratum of society: princes and paupers, shopkeepers and mechanics made good, businessmen and heiresses turned to more exciting pursuits. **Adventure!**'s settings range from lofty skyscraper penthouses to squalid slums and sewers, from arctic wastelands to deep oceans to sweltering jungles. **Adventure!** goes everywhere interesting — not always nice or safe, but *never* dull!

The following chapters take you through the steps of making an **Adventure!** character, and provide you with the game-mechanical details necessary to run or play in an **Adventure!** series.

Note that you do need the *Player's Handbook* to utilize the game content in this book. That core rulebook has the framework of character generation and level advancement, skills and feats, combat and other ground rules that **Adventure!** builds upon.

The World of **Adventure!**

The world of **Adventure!** is much like our own early 20th century. Assume that any facts you read in history books or on the Internet are the same in **Adventure!**, unless explicitly noted otherwise in this book (or the Game Master [GM] tells you she's changed them). Strange things happen, but they make little impression on history. The reasons for this are many — most incidents are hidden from or distorted for the public, dismissed as hoaxes or misunderstandings or never even recorded for posterity. Even many people in the Inspiration Age shrug off the more bizarre tales, while other challenges and solutions play out in secret. In many cases, this is because Earth isn't yet the global village we're used to today. Your character's encounter with hyper-intelligent albino apes deep in the Congo may never be revealed to the world at large simply because CNN isn't around to record it. The tale may spread, but details are lost or warped, and the whole thing soon takes on the shape of myth. At



by [signature]

other times, your character (or other agencies) may decide the world doesn't need to know just how close it came to apocalypse this time around. Some perils are just so outright strange and mysterious that it might be best to keep the specifics quiet until proper research can be done.

Adventure! begins "officially" in the spring of 1924. Maxwell Anderson Mercer established the *Æon Society for Gentlemen* six months previously. This date is roughly 18 months after Hammersmith's experiment with collecting and containing telluric radiation ended in disaster. That seminal event is the dawn of the Inspiration Age, for the very energy Hammersmith hoped to capture radiates around — even through — the Earth. For the most part, the pseudoaetheric waves pass with no effect. Some small portions of the globe are affected: Hidden pockets transformed into places lost to the mists of time, or locales only ever experienced in the imagination. Rare individuals are also affected, forever changed by their exposure to Z-rays — though many never realize what force has touched them. These people often become heroes and villains on a global scale. They are the Inspired.

The aftershocks of the Hammersmith event ripple subtly across the globe for some time to come. Most people who know about the changes inspired by it struggle to understand the full scope, not to mention just what impact the Z-waves have on Earth and its denizens. *Æon* and other groups detailed earlier have operated, publicly or privately, for a little while now, pursuing a variety of agendas.

As a daredevil, a mesmerist or a stalwart, your character was ex-

posed to some portion of the strangeness flowing around the edges of the known world. Whether driven by curiosity to discover the origin of his new talents, lured by the thirst for knowledge or drawn into events by forces beyond his understanding, your character delves into the new world hiding behind the known. Mysteries beckon, and you alone have the wit and talent to reveal the truth.

The Trinity Universe

Adventure! is the first of three Trinity Universe games, speaking chronologically. They occupy different eras of the same history, as well as different portions of a thematic trilogy.

Aberrant is a superpowers game set in the present time, focusing on powerful individuals called *novas* — a new incarnation of **Adventure!**'s stalwarts. **Trinity** is a science-fiction game, a far-future setting featuring evolved humans known as *psions* — the genetic descendants of **Adventure!**'s own mesmerists. Daredevils exist in every era, but it is here in **Adventure!** that they enjoy the spotlight.

According to the two subsequent games' timelines, most of the events from the Inspiration Age fade into obscurity or legend by the end of the 20th century. Certain characters introduced in this book — most notably Max Mercer and Doctor Primoris — continue to influence events in the Trinity Universe throughout the next two centuries. Players and GMs familiar with either **Aberrant** or **Trinity** are free to include as much — or as little — of the "official" Trinity Universe metaplot as they like, but it isn't necessary to enjoy **Adventure!** It's all up to you how you want to play it.

Character Genesis

Adventure! is a game of epic... well, *adventure*, on a grand scale. The characters who engage in these exciting exploits are all human, but they belong to one of three templates: daring (daredevil), psychic (mesmerist), and superhuman (stalwart). As a group, they're called the Inspired. (If you want to play a non-human Inspired, check with your GM.) "Inspired Templates," below, has details on each. For now, let's cover character concept.

It takes a little thought to make sure your character fits the feel of the era and the mood of the pulp genre. The genesis of your **Adventure!** character involves two things: his Origin and his Inspiration.

Origin

Your character's origin describes him in a word or a short phrase, a vague shorthand that gives you an idea of where he came from. What sort of life did he lead before becoming Inspired? Was it dominated by mundane chores, leaving him no time to look to the horizon? Did he live on the edge, spending each day as if it might be his last?

Consider your character not as a ready-made hero, but as someone who has the seeds of greatness within him. Your character gains exceptional abilities later on. Right now, focus on making a *person* first, and let the hero grow naturally from that.

The concept could center on a skill ("I'm the world's greatest doctor!"). It could come from the character's back story ("He was raised by wolves until the age of six."). Or you might focus on a personality trait ("He's obsessed with fathoming the criminal mind."). If you're more visual than verbal, you might develop a mental picture and go

d20 Design Principles

GMs who wish to use material from **Adventure!** in other d20 games should be aware of some core design ideas that went into its construction.

There is no magic in the **Adventure!** setting; mesmerists and stalwarts gain their powers from the pseudo-scientific premise of telluric energy (daredevils are just naturally good at what they do). This absence influences characters' talents across the board, but the main impact is this: A character's Armor Class, abilities, saving throws and the average damage they inflict may not always be what you're used to in other d20 games.

To maintain consistency, the save DCs for some knacks are also lower. GMs who wish to use material from **Adventure!** in other games may wish to increase save DCs, or make them level-dependent following the standard d20 formula (10 + 1/2 character level + relevant ability bonus).

The bonuses granted by class features and background feats have been left uncategorized to allow them to stack with the bonuses granted by other feats and knacks. If class feature bonuses should not stack, that information is included in the description of the features.

from there (“He’s tall and impeccably dressed, but gaunt, with disturbingly long teeth and fingernails.”).

After that, you can work out in all directions — personality (Why did he *want* to become the world’s greatest doctor?), history (Where did the gaunt gent get the money for that suit if he apparently can’t afford decent meals?), skills (What has he studied in order to understand criminals?), appearance (How does Mister Feral dress?) and so forth.

You do not need to flesh out the character’s life history nor choose his favorite book. Keep your concept in mind throughout, though. If a skill or background feat fits, take it. If there’s a clash (“Why is the wolf fellow an excellent navigator?”), stick to the concept. Trying to make a character who’s good at everything and has no flaws is counterproductive: Not only will you fail, you’ll produce a boring hero.

Inspiration

In general terms, an Inspired character is an individual who has awakened to her full potential — though realizing this potential may still require years of adventuring (and experience points!).

In game terms, an Inspired character is an individual who has tapped into her inherent potential (thereby gaining the daring template) or who has triggered latent Z-wave energy within himself (thereby gaining the psychic or superhuman template).

No one is born Inspired. For many characters, Inspiration occurs in a single, defining moment, or as part of a life-changing event. Something happens that awakens their full potentials, granting them abilities beyond those of ordinary men and women. Such characters describe their Inspirations with the phrase “...and then, *all of a sudden...*”

Other characters grow Inspired in more subtle, extended fashion. A young man decides after a mugging that he must train himself rigorously so it never happens again. A devoted scholar throws herself into her studies, only to realize after months of research that she has surpassed ordinary human potential. And there’s always room for the classic pulp shtick: an acolyte who goes through years of semi-mystical training in a remote monastery. For such characters, Inspiration occurs over a span of time. They might lack the shock and giddiness of those who experience sudden Inspiration, but that doesn’t make roleplaying them any less enjoyable.

The event that causes the character’s Inspiration shapes the type of transformation that occurs — and the resulting template the character gains. The superhuman template is gained most commonly in the face of physical challenges. The psychic template is often gained through mental challenges or emotional shocks. The daring template, as its label suggests, is typically gained through some act of tremendous heroism. The “Sources of Inspiration” sidebar lists possible Inspirations, along with the template most appropriate to each.

Starting Characters

In general, the pulp genre features experienced characters whose capabilities don’t grow a significant amount over the course of their adventuring careers. In contrast, the standard d20 game features characters who start out with little experience but who can rise in power to shake the girders of the world.

Sources of Inspiration

These examples of Inspiration sources can act as springboards for your own ideas. “Inspired Templates” has details on the three human templates, while Chapter Seven has specific rules on Inspiration.

- **Dawning Awareness:** In studying esoteric philosophies or branches of science, the character unlocks the true potential of her mind. This is likely to take a lot of study, although certain chemicals might aid the character in throwing off any mental shackles.

- **Exposure to Z-waves:** Perhaps the character was at Hammersmith’s original presentation. Maybe he has an associate (or mentor?) who created a Z-wave device, and exposure to it unleashed his own latent abilities. He might be an explorer who happened upon a natural phenomenon that stored telluric energy (anything from ancient ruins made from *just* the right material to the venom of a particular Amazonian spider).

- **Fantastic Success:** This rare transformation occurs when the character finally accomplishes a deed in which she has invested a lot of work and emotion. She might be the first in her family to receive a college diploma; perhaps she climbs a high mountain; maybe she is elected to city council.

- **Life-Threatening Accident:** The accident would have killed the character, had his Inspiration not saved him at just that moment! This may be anything — a train smashed into his motorcar; he fell from a great height; he was in a house fire. Alternately, the character might be Inspired with the need to rescue a close friend or loved one.

- **Personal Stupidity:** The character brought her problems upon herself. Perhaps it seemed like a good idea to go kayaking in a thunderstorm; maybe she chose to rob the bank next door to the police station at lunchtime; perhaps she decided to go spelunking into an uncharted cave alone. Regardless of the reason, only Inspiration saved her from certain disaster.

- **Social Challenge:** The character faced down mortal embarrassment or the risk thereof, or finally stood up for himself and threw off an oppressor.

- **Training:** The character completed a long training period. She may have spent her life pursuing physical or mental perfection in a distant monastery, or traveled to learn from the finest teacher in the world. Perhaps she is the product of a secret government training program.

- **Violence:** Directly or indirectly, the character suffered an attack. He could have been a green soldier in the Foreign Legion, got caught in a running gunfight between police and gangsters, was a victim of domestic violence, or any other violent circumstance.

An **Adventure!** series assumes the typical d20 approach. Players choose templates and core classes for their player characters (PCs), who start at 1st level. Don't expect your character to be as powerful as the Shadow or Indiana Jones out of the gate; he must earn that kind of power and experience. Still, **Adventure!** assumes that even a starting PC is superior to those everyday folks known as nonplayer characters (NPCs).

If the GM and players want a series where the PCs are more seasoned, we recommend starting the PCs at 3rd level. This gives characters the opportunity for some background, but doesn't make them so experienced at the start of play that there isn't any challenge to the encounters they face.

Characteristics

The default character race in **Adventure!** is human; specific qualities are noted below. None of the other races listed in Chapter 2 of the *Player's Handbook* apply. (There are instances of non-human PCs, but this is rare indeed. The Appendix has one example, and the GM can allow others at her discretion.)

The PCs in **Adventure!** aren't ordinary people, however — they are Inspired. This means that they've been transformed physically by exposure to the Z-waves unleashed in the Hammersmith incident, or that they've simply awakened to their own inner potentials. To reflect this, each Inspired character takes an acquired template that adds to his standard human racial characteristics (see below).

Human

Description: The average everyday person. By far the vast majority of the world's sentient population in the Trinity Universe is human. Some scientists theorize that any human exposed to the right collection of Z-rays and stresses is capable of becoming Inspired; others believe that only those with particular mental or physical traits can become Inspired. Regardless, the typical human has no Inspired abilities.

Appearance: Humans come in all shapes, sizes, colors, noises and smells. They are found in every corner of the world.

Human Racial Traits

- **Medium:** As Medium creatures, humans have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- **Speed:** Human base land speed is 30 feet.
- **Bonus Feats:** Humans receive 1 bonus feat in addition to the single feat that all starting characters receive.
- **Skills:** Humans receive 4 extra skill points at 1st level and 1 extra skill point at each additional level.
- **Automatic Languages:** Humans gain full proficiency in their native languages and are considered literate unless their backgrounds dictate otherwise. Starting characters receive one bonus language per point of Intelligence bonus. Characters whose backgrounds indicate that they are illiterate or that they would not be proficient in multiple languages may gain literacy or choose bonus languages during play at the GM's discretion. (For a sample list of available languages, see "Skills" later in this chapter).
- **Inspiration:** Humans lack Inspiration scores and Inspiration pools; they cannot manipulate telluric energy consciously or unconsciously.

Roleplaying Inspiration

It can be fun to start a game before the PCs become Inspired, and roleplay through the experience of Inspiration. An un-Inspired character is a normal human who picks a class as normal but does not choose a template (see below).

The GM is encouraged to begin a series like this with the PCs' Inspiration stories — so, through whatever means, the characters are exposed to Z-waves and become Inspired within the first few game sessions. Once each character is Inspired, the player chooses the appropriate template — daring, psychic, superhuman — and adds the relevant template abilities.

Inspired Templates

The Trinity Universe games have the same three templates — daring, psychic, superhuman. These terms remain consistent throughout the rules material in **Adventure!**, **Aberrant** and **Trinity**. However, the individual games also have their own labels for each template that are used to evoke the mood of the genre.

- **Daring:** A human with this acquired template is known as a "daredevil" in the Inspiration Age. He uses natural wits and will to overcome all odds.
- **Psychic:** A human with this acquired template is called a "mesmerist" in the Inspiration Age. She is a master of the subtle and mysterious powers of the mind.
- **Superhuman:** A human with this acquired template is labeled a "stalwart" in the Inspiration Age. He has tremendous physical abilities far beyond that of normal men and women.

A character may have only one of these three templates.

If a GM wants a game based around "regular folks" rather than characters with "superhuman abilities," have the PCs take the daring template. In the context of the setting, daredevils are exactly that — otherwise ordinary people with extraordinary luck and style.

No particular physical traits differentiate the Inspired from one another or from average humans. Also, the respective labels given to each template are primarily for convenience. A "daredevil" does not necessarily go skydiving and bullfighting on the weekends. A "mesmerist" does not necessarily dress in a cloak and turban and use hypnosis to entrance her foes. And a "stalwart" is not necessarily a stocky fireplug of justice.

Daring Template

Description: Otherwise called daredevils, individuals with this template are ostensibly regular humans. A daredevil can't lift up a car; he can't cloud foes' minds. Instead, he enjoys amazing luck and good fortune. This is represented by a new ability: Inspiration. This bestows no supernormal abilities or powers; instead, the daredevil draws upon inner courage and willpower to excel at almost any challenge. Most daredevils carry themselves with the style and panache that others only dream of.

Appearance: The daring Inspired look like anyone else; they have no predilection for muscleman shirts or mystic artifacts. They do have a certain something that many other characters lack: a quirk of style, a sense of confidence bordering on cockiness. Daredevils are not superhuman, but they are the sort of people that others have in mind when they say the word "hero."

Magic and the Trinity Universe

Every extraordinary individual and incident in the Trinity Universe derives its power from a pseudo-scientific premise — telluric energy — rather than through magic. Strictly speaking, there is no actual “magic” in **Adventure!**. There are no ancient places of mystic power, no hoary old tomes filled with spells scrawled by a madman, no high-immortal supernatural beings lurking within centuries-sealed tombs.

Still, there is no conclusive evidence in the Inspiration Age to prove this one way or the other. This is due in large part to the inadequate means of measurement — even the brightest Inspired minds of the time lack the know-how to document Z-rays with sufficient accuracy.

You can suggest the influence of telluric radiation as a plausible excuse for ancient mysteries. Although Z-waves are a scientific phenomenon (within the setting), that doesn’t mean some people of the period don’t view it as magic — just look at Mister Saturday or Nefertiti! You could even work out several known points in history that had noteworthy “spikes” of Z-wave energy, when “gods” and heroes emerged or when illuminated conspiracy groups gained vast and unspeakable power.

As such, players should feel free to have characters who champion the cause of the supernatural, and whose point of view is not undermined by incontrovertible evidence to the contrary. Just be careful of overdoing it.

Advanced Super-Science: The base character can create super-science advancements (see Chapter Eight: Knacks and Super-Science).

Abilities: The style and flair of a daredevil inspires others. The base character receives *either* +2 Charisma or +2 Wisdom, as the player chooses (applied prior to determining his Inspiration score).

Skills: Same as base character, modified for new ability scores.

Daring Feats: The base character receives one free daring feat, and gains one additional daring feat every third level thereafter. (So a character who becomes Inspired at 3rd level gains one free daring feat immediately, and will get another one at 6th level, 9th level, and so on.) The base character may ignore character-level minimum requirements for daring feats, but must qualify in other regards (minimum ability scores or ranks in a skill).

Daring Level: The base character can take one additional level in “daring” as a class to further realize his inherent potential (see below).

Level Adjustment: 0.

Daring Level

A character with the daring template can take one additional level in “daring” at any time after gaining at least one class level. This extra level indicates that the character has awakened to more of his inherent potential. A daring level stacks with the character’s class levels for the purposes of character level advancement and bestows the following abilities.

Hit Die: d8.

Skill Points: 8 + Int bonus.

Class Skills: Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Drive (Dex), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Tumble (Dex).

Daring Feats: The character now gains daring feats every other level, calculated from the last daring feat gained. (So if the character gained a daring feat two levels previously, he gets one immediately upon taking the daring level.)

Background Feat: The character gains one additional background feat. He must meet all prerequisites for the chosen feat.

Psychic Template

Description: Otherwise called mesmerists, individuals with this template have mastered the world of the mind. This is represented by a new ability — Inspiration — with which a mesmerist may hold sway over the thoughts of others or move remote objects through will alone. The mesmerist manipulates a heretofore unknown sort of energy — called variously telluric energy, zero-point energy, pseudoaetheric waves, or Z-waves — to utilize her incredible powers. These subtle yet potent abilities are nigh impossible for early 20th-century science to document; indeed, many mesmerists be-

Creating a Daring Character

“Daring,” also called “daredevil,” is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid character (hereafter referred to as the “base character”). The base character retains all its statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: Same as base character. Do not recalculate Hit Dice, base attack bonus or saves.

Special Qualities: A daredevil retains all the special qualities of the base character and also gains the following.

Inspiration: Although they do not manipulate Z-waves in the fashion of mesmerists and stalwarts, daredevils are considered Inspired — they have Inspiration scores, power points, Inspiration facets and can use dramatic editing. The base character gains an Inspiration score equal to his Charisma bonus. This score increases by +1 every three character levels thereafter.

Table 5–1: Daring Level

Daring Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fortitude Save	Reflex Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+1	+0	+2	+2	1 background feat, 1 daring feat/2 levels

Table 5–2: Psychic Levels

Psychic Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fortitude Save	Reflex Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	+2	1 background feat, access to 2nd-level psi knacks
2nd	+1	+1	+3	+0	+3	Access to 3rd-level psi knacks

lieve themselves to be magicians or mystics rather than advanced physiological specimens.

Appearance: The psychic Inspired appear much like ordinary humans, though many have a piercing gaze that others find unnerving. Some mesmerists decorate themselves with the trappings of stage illusionists or carnival psychics, while others seem quite mundane to anyone who doesn't know them well.

Creating a Psychic Character

"Psychic," also called "mesmerist," is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid character (hereafter referred to as the "base character"). The base character retains all its statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: Same as base character. Do not recalculate Hit Dice, base attack bonus or saves.

Special Qualities: A mesmerist retains all the special qualities of the base character and also gains the following.

Inspiration: Mesmerists are considered Inspired, since they manipulate Z-waves to power their mental abilities. They have Inspiration scores, power points, Inspiration facets and can use dramatic editing. The base character gains an Inspiration score equal to her Intelligence bonus. This score increases by +1 every three character levels thereafter.

Advanced and Innovative Super-Science (Su): The base character can create super-science advancements and innovations (see Chapter Eight).

Abilities: Mesmerists are masters of obscure knowledge and think quickly on their feet. The base character receives +2 Intelligence (applied prior to determining her Inspiration score).

Skills: Same as base character, modified for new ability scores.

Psi Knacks: The base character gains access to 1st-level psi knacks. She receives one free 1st-level psi knack, and gains one additional psi knack every other level thereafter. (So a character who becomes Inspired at 2nd level gains one free 1st-level psi knack immediately and can pick a new psi knack at 4th level, 6th level, and so on.)

The character may choose a psi knack of any level available to her, but must have fewer psi knacks of higher level than she has of lower level. So, a character with access to 1st- through 3rd-level psi knacks who has two 1st-level psi knacks can have only one 2nd-level psi knack. If she takes another 1st-level psi knack, she may later select another 2nd-level psi knack. Only then may she take her first 3rd-level psi knack.

Psychic Levels: The base character can take one or two additional levels in "psychic" as a class to further realize her inherent potential (see below).

Level Adjustment: 0.

Psychic Levels

A character with the psychic template can take up to two additional levels in "psychic" at any time after gaining at least one class level. These extra levels indicate that the character has unlocked more of her mental powers. A psychic level stacks with the character's class levels for the purposes of character level advancement and bestows the following abilities.

Hit Die: d6.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int bonus.

Class Skills: Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (any) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Cha), Research (Int), Search (Int), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Speak Language.

Background Feat: The character gains one additional background feat. She must meet all prerequisites for the chosen feat.

Superhuman Template

Description: Otherwise called stalwarts, individuals with this template gain fantastic physiological benefits upon becoming Inspired. A stalwart may be stronger, faster, or more resistant to harm than an ordinary human — or all three! Such stupendous capabilities are channeled via a new ability: Inspiration. In time, a stalwart can even become stronger than a train engine, as fast as lightning, and able to propel himself through the air without harm.

Appearance: The superhuman Inspired appear to be human in all respects, though in most cases they are impressive physical specimens. Whether large and strong or nimble and quick, stalwarts tend to catch the eye — they aren't easily forgotten about or ignored.

Creating a Superhuman Character

"Superhuman," also called "stalwart," is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid character (hereafter referred to as the "base character"). The base character retains all its statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: Same as base character. Do not recalculate Hit Dice, base attack bonus, or saves.

Special Qualities: A stalwart retains all the special qualities of the base character and also gains the following.

Inspiration: Stalwarts are considered Inspired, since they manipulate Z-waves to power their enhanced physical abilities. They have Inspiration scores, power points, Inspiration facets and can use dramatic editing. The base character gains an Inspiration score equal to his Constitution bonus. This score increases by +1 every three character levels thereafter.

Advanced and Innovative Super-Science: The base character can create super-science advancements and innovations (see Chapter Eight).

Table 5–3: Superhuman Levels

Superhuman Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fortitude Save	Reflex Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+0	+2	+2	+0	1 background feat, access to 2nd-level quantum knacks
2nd	+2	+1	+3	+3	+0	Access to 3rd-level quantum knacks

Abilities: Stalwarts are steadfast, unalterable and unyielding. The base character receives +2 Constitution (applied prior to determining his Inspiration score).

Skills: Same as base character, modified for new ability scores.

Superhuman Knacks: The base character gains access to 1st-level quantum knacks. He receives one free 1st-level quantum knack, and gains one additional quantum knack every other level thereafter. (So a character who becomes Inspired at 1st level gains one free 1st-level quantum knack immediately and can pick a new quantum knack at 3rd level, 5th level, and so on.)

The character may choose a quantum knack of any level available to him, but must have fewer quantum knacks of higher level than he has of lower level. So, a character with access to 1st- through 3rd-level quantum knacks who has two 1st-level quantum knacks can have only one 2nd-level quantum knack. If he takes another 1st-level quantum knack, he may later select another 2nd-level quantum knack. Only then may he take his first 3rd-level quantum knack.

Superhuman Levels: The base character can take one or two additional levels in “superhuman” as a class to further realize his inherent potential (see below).

Level Adjustment: 0.

Superhuman Levels

A character with the superhuman template can take up to two additional levels in “superhuman” at any time after gaining at least one class level. This extra level indicates that the character has increased his incredible physiological abilities even further. A superhuman level stacks with the character’s class levels for the purposes of character level advancement and bestows the following abilities.

Hit Die: d10.

Skill Points: 2 + Int bonus.

Class Skills: Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Drive (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Move Silently (Dex), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str).

Background Feat: The character gains one additional background feat. He must meet all prerequisites for the chosen feat.

Class Descriptions

Adventure! does not use the core classes or prestige classes from other material. Most such classes are geared toward a fantasy milieu, which doesn’t mesh easily with this game’s pulp genre. For in-

stance, magic does not exist in the Trinity Universe, at least in a technical sense. Characters may pretend or truly believe that their abilities are arcane or divine in origin, but all Inspired powers derive from telluric energy.

The commoner and expert NPC classes from the *DMG* are suitable for **Adventure!**. They are recommended for NPCs only, though, since their benefits are weak in comparison to the classes listed below.

Class Entry Alterations

The *Player’s Handbook* lists the possible entries for each class (see Chapter 3: Classes, “Class Descriptions,” *Game Rule Information*). Some categories don’t apply in **Adventure!** (such as alignment and races); also, some skills are handled differently, and there are some new ones (see “Skills,” later in this chapter).

In addition, classes in the Trinity Universe are listed with allegiances and a Wealth bonus. Allegiances are suggested social groups or organizations for a given class. The Wealth bonus is a method of dealing with money that avoids keeping constant track of different coins (see Appendix Two: Odds and Ends for specifics).

New Core Classes

Adventure!’s six core classes are intended to be flexible, allowing many different character concepts to fit into each class role. Consider each as a general descriptor, providing opportunities rather than restrictions. An aristocrat doesn’t have to come from a haughty family of great wealth any more than a scoundrel must be a practicing cat burglar.

Although these classes are designed to fill archetypal roles, they are also meant to transition into more specialized avenues of character growth. As such, the core classes in **Adventure!** go from 1st to 10th level. A character going through all 10 levels of a class simply moves on to a prestige class at 11th level (or a different core class, depending on where you want to take your character).

Multiclassing

No race in **Adventure!** has a favored class; characters may multiclass freely, without experience point penalty. The only requirement regarding multiclassing is that players must receive GM approval before taking a level in a new class. Although some GMs may allow characters to take levels freely, others might prefer to maintain a closer eye on level progression — forbidding a lifelong, semi-literate mercenary to take levels in scholar, for instance.

Aristocrat

Description: The aristocrat is a scion of a wealthy household, a self-made millionaire, or some other beneficiary of affluence. He travels in high society and hobnobs with wielders of power throughout the world. Heroic aristocrats use their power and wealth to further causes like democracy and fighting hunger; villainous ones use their millions to increase their personal power.

Young (low-level) aristocrats are often dilettantes, enjoying enormous wealth but lacking direction; they may be rakes, society types or aimless travelers. Older (high-level) aristocrats are captains of industry, diplomats, philanthropists or greedy madmen.

Allegiance: Many aristocrats associated with the Æon Society help to fund the Society's efforts across the globe. Others form their own organizations to further their own causes. Many villains in the **Adventure!** setting are aristocrats, including the Ubiquitous Dragon, the Czar and Manifest Destiny.

Abilities: Charisma allows an aristocrat to gain and wield his influence more easily; Intelligence gives him the knowledge and foresight to make the right financial decisions.

Hit Die: d8.

Class Skills: The aristocrat's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (art, business, civics, current events, popular culture) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language, Swim (Str), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (6 + Int bonus) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int bonus.

Wealth Bonus: +6.

Class Features

Bonus Feat: An aristocrat begins play with either Archaic Weapon Proficiency or Personal Firearms Proficiency.

Cool Customer (Ex): The aristocrat can take even the most bizarre circumstances in stride. Choose three skills; when making a check with any of them, the aristocrat can take 10 even when distracted or under duress. The character can add one additional skill every three aristocrat levels, to a total of six skills at 10th level.

Residence: The aristocrat begins play with a well-appointed residence — a skyscraper apartment in New York, a small estate just outside of London, etc. This home doesn't qualify as a Sanctum, but rather an additional ordinary living place. The character gains an additional residence at 6th level (an investment, an inheritance, etc). This can be just about anywhere reasonable — the aristocrat is unlikely to acquire a home in the depths of the Amazon, but inheriting a manor in the mountains of Hungary is not just likely but downright intriguing.

Background Feats: The aristocrat gains a free background feat at 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th levels. He must meet all the usual criteria for the feat, and must choose from one of the following trees: Backing, Followers, Influence, Reputation, Resources or Sanctum.

Social Graces (Ex): By 3rd level, the aristocrat enjoys enough clout that he can gain entry to even the most exclusive venues. When he makes a Diplomacy or Bluff check to smooth-talk or trick his way



Table 5-4: The Aristocrat (Ari)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+1	+0	+0	+2	Bonus feat, cool customer (3 skills), residence
2nd	+1	+1	+0	+0	+3	Background feat
3rd	+2	+2	+1	+1	+3	Social graces
4th	+3	+2	+1	+1	+4	Background feat, cool customer (+1 skill)
5th	+3	+3	+1	+1	+4	Signature vehicle, residence, cool customer (+1 skill)
6th	+4	+3	+2	+2	+5	Background feat
7th	+5	+4	+2	+2	+5	Commanding aura, cool customer (+1 skill)
8th	+6/+1	+4	+2	+2	+6	Background feat
9th	+6/+1	+5	+3	+3	+6	Political influence
10th	+7/+2	+5	+3	+3	+7	Background feat, cool customer (+1 skill)

into a private party or invitation-only event, the aristocrat adds a bonus equal to his aristocrat level.

Also, when an aristocrat buys a ticket to a show or for transportation, he can make a Diplomacy check to get that ticket upgraded.

Upgrade	DC
Speakeasy main bar to back room	10
Hotel room to suite	15
Concert or theater ticket to backstage pass	20
Economy transportation to first-class	25

Signature Vehicle: At 5th level, the aristocrat gains a truly custom-built vehicle. He may already own plenty of ordinary vehicles — cars, planes, sailboats, motorbikes — but this qualifies as a super-science advancement (see Chapter Eight: Knacks and Super-Science). It can be nearly anything — a balsa-wood seaplane, a tricked-out limousine, a stealthy automobile with built-in gadgetry, and so on.

Commanding Aura (Ex): At 7th level, the aristocrat projects such an aura of authority that he can make a single target do his bidding. (This ability doesn't work if the aristocrat or his allies are threatening or attacking the target.)

The target makes a Will saving throw (DC 10 + aristocrat's class level + aristocrat's Charisma bonus) to avoid being subject to the aristocrat's words and actions. The exact form of influence the aristocrat applies may vary, from cajoling to conspiring to downright intimidating.

The aristocrat cannot control the target, but the target perceives his words and actions in whatever manner is most favorable to the aristocrat. The aristocrat can give direct orders, with a +2 bonus on an opposed Charisma check for orders that the target wouldn't undertake normally. The target never obeys suicidal or obviously harmful orders, and any act by the aristocrat or his allies that threatens the target breaks the mood and clears the target's head. Otherwise, a target remains won over for 1 minute per aristocrat level.

After the duration expires, the GM determines the target's reaction and attitude based on what the aristocrat compelled the target to do.

Political Influence (Ex): Upon reaching 9th level, the aristocrat may ignore minor and inconvenient laws — in general, he will never be arrested for a misdemeanor. If he is stopped for such a crime, he can be assured of going free after informing the authorities of his identity (some delay may be involved, but no more than a few hours). This ability may not work in a region that is under the active control of a villain, in a fascist state or in a region that has recently had a revolution of the sort that gets the wealthy or titled put up against a wall.

Entertainer

Description: The entertainer's life is the stage. This may not be in a conventional sense — an entertainer may be a streetside busker, a Shakespearean dramatist, a torch singer or a professional athlete. The entertainer must have the charisma to win the crowd over, and the talent to keep them coming back.

Entertainers find themselves adventuring more often than might be thought. This comes about in no small part because an entertainer travels often, going where there are shows to be held. This creates plenty of opportunities for adventure — both in the journey itself and in the destination, whether exotic or conventional. Even so, an entertainer who stays in one place — whether New York, London or Hong Kong — often rubs elbows with intrigue and excitement in the course of her regular activities.

Young (low-level) entertainers are known on street corners and in boroughs of major cities, or are the stars of their home towns. Older (high-level) entertainers hold command performances in the greatest cities in the world.

Allegiance: Many of the aerial acers of the Air Circus have some skill as entertainers, and many of the more personable members of groups such as the Æon Society or a detective organization find that some training as an entertainer serves them well.

Abilities: An entertainer's primary asset is her Charisma, but beyond that things vary. An athlete may need a decent amount of Strength and Constitution, while a torch singer may need a good Wisdom score to keep in tune with the audience's reactions.

Hit Die: d8.

Class Skills: The entertainer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Knowledge (art, current events, occult, popular culture, streetwise) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Speak Language.

Skill Points at 1st Level: $(6 + \text{Int bonus}) \times 4$.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: $6 + \text{Int bonus}$.

Wealth Bonus: +3.

Class Features

Bonus Feat: An entertainer begins play with one of the following feats: Acrobatic, Agile, Deceitful, Deft Hands, Negotiator, Nimble Fingers or Persuasive.

Stories from the Road: The entertainer can pick up useful tidbits of information while on the club circuit or otherwise traveling the land. She may make a special check with a bonus equal to her entertainer level + Intelligence modifier to know an ordinary fact that an itinerant traveling entertainer might have learned. This may involve knowing that the police in a particular small town can be paid off with a special local brew, or that the crowd at a particular club is exceedingly violent. The DC depends on the type of knowledge involved.



Table 5-5: The Entertainer (Ent)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	+2	Bonus feat, stories from the road, inspire competence
2nd	+1	+1	+0	+3	+3	Background feat
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+3	+3	Inspire courage +2
4th	+3	+1	+1	+4	+4	Background feat
5th	+3	+2	+1	+4	+4	Sway crowd
6th	+4	+2	+2	+5	+5	Background feat, inspire courage +3
7th	+5	+2	+2	+5	+5	Fascinate
8th	+6/+1	+3	+2	+6	+6	Background feat
9th	+6/+1	+3	+3	+6	+6	Worldwide renown, inspire courage +4
10th	+7/+2	+3	+3	+7	+7	Background feat

DC	Type of Knowledge
10	Common, known by at least a substantial minority of an audience.
20	Uncommon but available, details known by a few.
25	Obscure, known by few, hard to come by.

DC	Crowd Size
15	Small (10–20 people)
20	Medium (21–50 people)
25	Large (51–200 people)
30	Huge (200+ people)

Inspire Competence (Ex): At 1st level, the entertainer can inspire her allies to excel at a task at hand. The entertainer must make a successful DC 10 Charisma check and spend one full round using encouraging words, snappy patter, quoting Shakespeare, or another means of entertainment. All allies within sight and/or earshot (as appropriate to the entertainment) gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls and skill checks for a number of rounds equal to the entertainer's Charisma modifier.

The entertainer can inspire a number of allies equal to one-half her entertainer level, rounded down (to a minimum of one ally). The entertainer can't inspire herself.

Background Feats: The entertainer gains a free background feat at 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th levels. She must meet all the usual criteria for the feat, and must choose from one of the following trees: Allies, Contacts, Mentor, Nemesis, Reputation or Resources.

Inspire Courage (Ex): At 3rd level, an entertainer can inspire allies to feats of great courage. By making a successful DC 10 Charisma check and performing, telling stories or showing off for a full round for those allies who listen to and observe her, the entertainer grants each a +2 bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls and saving throws against fear. The bonus increases to +3 at 6th level and to +4 at 9th level, and lasts a number of rounds equal to her Charisma modifier.

The entertainer can inspire a number of allies equal to one-half her entertainer level, rounded down. The entertainer can't inspire herself.

Sway Crowd (Ex): At 5th level, an entertainer with 8 or more ranks in Perform can sway an entire crowd to follow her urging — encourage people to disperse, stick together, remain calm, defend themselves, run for their lives, behave in an orderly fashion, and so on. The entertainer must spend at least one full round performing or otherwise showing off before the crowd and must make a successful Perform check. The DC depends on the crowd size, as indicated below.

Fascinate (Ex): At 7th level, an entertainer with 8 or more ranks in Perform can use her talent to fascinate a number of targets equal to one-half her entertainer level, rounded down. Each creature must be within 90 feet, able to see and hear the entertainer, and able to pay attention to her. Likewise, the entertainer must be aware of each creature. This ability cannot be used with the distraction of nearby combat or other dangers.

The entertainer makes a Perform check; the result serves as the DC for a Will save that each target creature must make to avoid becoming fascinated. On a successful save, the entertainer cannot attempt to fascinate that creature again for 24 hours. On a failed save, the creature is enthralled with the performance, taking no other actions, for as long as the entertainer continues to concentrate and perform (for a maximum number of rounds equal to the entertainer's class level + Charisma modifier). Any attack breaks the effect automatically.

While fascinated, a target takes a –4 penalty on skill checks made as reactions, such as Listen and Spot checks. Any potential threat requires the entertainer to make another Perform check and allows the creature a new saving throw against the new result.

Worldwide Renown: By 9th level, the character achieves an accomplishment that thrusts her into the international limelight — a gold record, a box-office-topping movie, a title fight, a World Series championship or similar success. From this point onward, the GM should assume that almost anyone the entertainer meets anywhere in the civilized world has at least heard her name, and will respond to her tremendous fame accordingly (including being influenced by any feats or dramatic editing the entertainer may have).

This also bestows a free feat from the Reputation feat tree. The entertainer may take a different feat if she has all the Reputation feats already, although she must justify the new feat with her reputation or entertainment prowess.

Investigator

Description: The investigator works to suss out the root causes of crimes and conflicts between individuals. He may be a private eye, a consulting detective, a police investigator, an intrepid reporter or even an attorney with an itch for sleuthing. The investigator has a keen eye for details that others miss and a flair for describing events (even better than those who were involved with the occurrence).

Young (low-level) investigators may be cub reporters or freelance photographers. Older (high-level) ones might be hard-bitten private eyes, cynical police detectives or cigar-smoking journalists.

Allegiance: The International Detective Agency is known for having many investigators in its employ, but nearly all of the shadowy operations in the world — both good and evil — have some use for individuals with a strong grasp of critical details and practiced perception of nuance.

Abilities: Wisdom — particularly because of its impact on perception — is critical to an investigator.

Hit Die: d8.

Class Skills: The investigator's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Bluff (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Drive (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Investigate (Int), Knowledge (behavioral sciences, civics, current events, popular culture, streetwise, theology and philosophy) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Research (Int), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language, Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (8 + Int bonus) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 8 + Int bonus.

Wealth Bonus: +1.

Class Features

Bonus Feats: An investigator begins play with Personal Firearms Proficiency and Persuasive.

Sweep the Scene (Ex): An investigator can size up an area at a glance, noting likely clues and getting a read on possible suspects. This sweep covers a 30-foot area around the investigator (except directly behind him). The character states at the beginning of an encounter if he's making a sweep, thereby gaining a +2 bonus on Spot checks and Sense Motive checks for the rest of the encounter in that area.

Background Feats: The investigator gains a free background feat at 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th levels. He must meet all the usual criteria for the feat, and must choose from one of the following trees: Backing, Contacts, Influence, Mentor, Nemesis or Reputation.

Cluehound (Ex): At 3rd level, the investigator can determine with certainty a particular clue's importance to an investigation. The character designates which potential clue he's considering and makes an Investigate check. The DC depends on how obvious the clue is in the context of the investigation (crime scene modifiers listed under the Investigate skill are halved for this check).

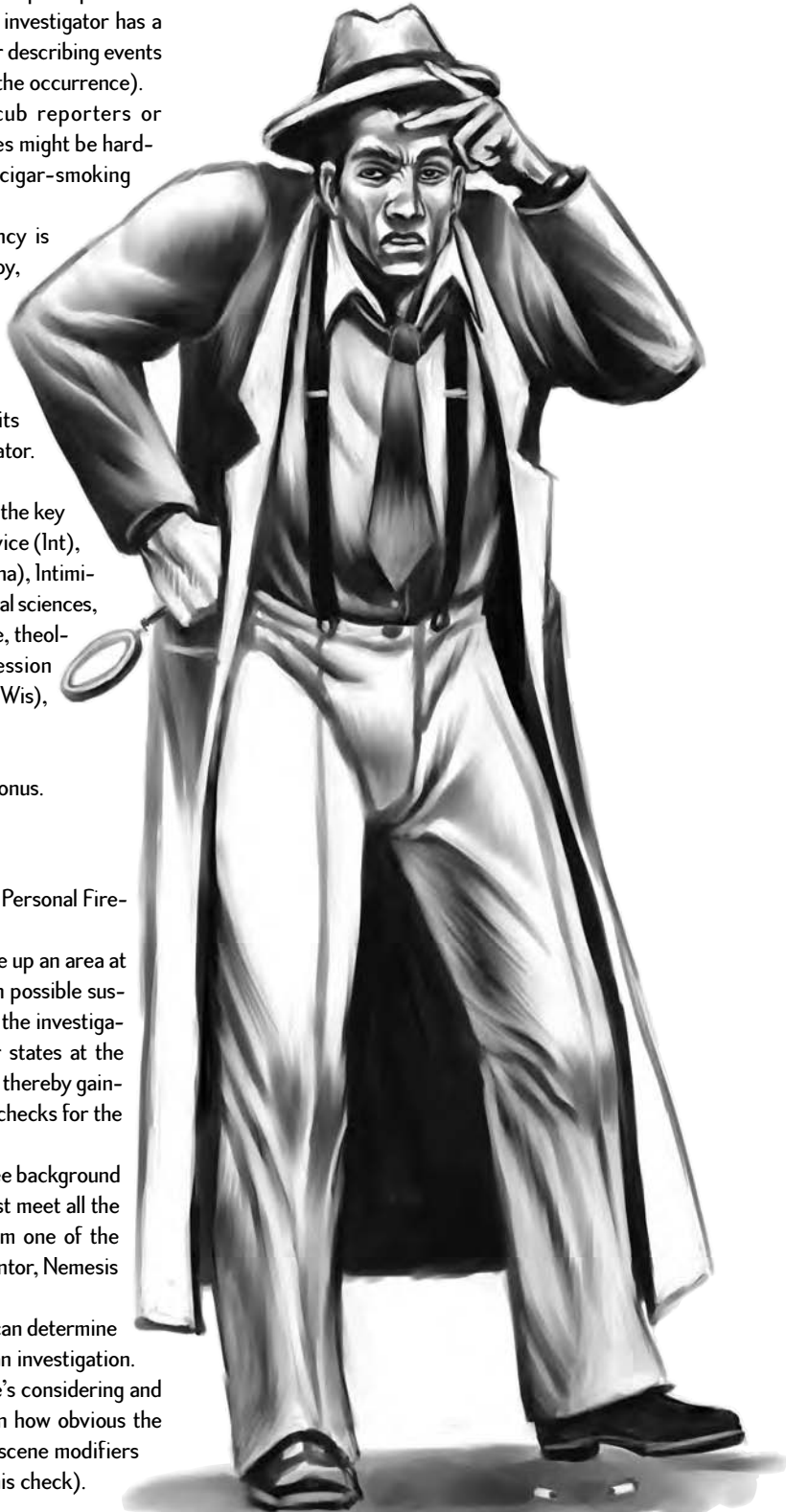


Table 5–6: The Investigator (Inv)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+1	+2	+0	+2	Bonus feats, sweep the scene
2nd	+1	+1	+3	+0	+3	Background feat
3rd	+2	+2	+3	+1	+3	Cluehound
4th	+3	+2	+4	+1	+4	Background feat
5th	+3	+3	+4	+1	+4	Clever plan
6th	+4	+3	+5	+2	+5	Background feat
7th	+5	+4	+5	+2	+5	Discern secrets
8th	+6/+1	+4	+6	+2	+6	Background feat
9th	+6/+1	+5	+6	+3	+6	Tarnish reputation
10th	+7/+2	+5	+7	+3	+7	Background feat

DC	Clue Context	Example
10	Obvious	Murder weapon dropped at scene; confession in diary
15	Unclear	Phone number on desk blotter; wet overcoat in closet
20	Obscure	Name in address book with no identifiable alias; coat of arms to an adventurer's club
25	Cryptic	Lines of poetry; non sequitur uttered with dying breath

On a successful check, the investigator confirms that clue's relative level of importance to the current investigation, categorized as follows.

Relevance	Description	Modifier
None	Not relevant to investigation	—
Minor	Little investigative value, but might help discover a moderate clue	+1
Moderate	Indicative of means, motive, or opportunity, but not conclusive on its own	+2
Critical	Clear indication of means, motive, and/ or opportunity	+3

A relevant clue provides a modifier that the investigator may apply to subsequent Gather Information, Knowledge, Research, Search and Sense Motive checks he makes in the course of the investigation. The character can use this ability to look at multiple clues at the same scene, but multiple cluehound modifiers do not stack.

Clever Plan (Ex): As of 5th level, prior to either a combat- or skill-related dramatic situation, the investigator can develop a plan of action. This requires preparation; an investigator can't hatch a clever plan when surprised or otherwise unprepared for a particular situation.

The investigator makes an Intelligence check (DC 10) with a bonus equal to his investigator levels (he cannot take 10 or 20). The result of the check provides the investigator and his allies with a bonus as indicated below.

Check Result	Bonus
9 or lower	+0 (check failed)
10–14	+1
15–24	+2
25 or higher	+3

The investigator and his allies can apply the resulting bonus to all skill checks and attack rolls for a number of rounds equal to the investigator's Intelligence modifier. The bonus is then reduced by 1 point (to a minimum of +0) for every additional round the situation continues.

Discern Secrets (Ex): Once each day a 7th-level investigator can deduce a suspect's possible motive for committing a crime or being involved in some form of conspiracy. The investigator must spend at least 15 consecutive minutes in the target's presence before making a Sense Motive check (DC = 10 + the target's Will save). If successful, the investigator discerns any viable motive the suspect has relating to the crime or conspiracy. This gives the character a bonus equal to one-half his investigator level (round down) on any subsequent Gather Information, Knowledge, Research, Search and Sense Motive checks for investigating that subject's ties to the current investigation. Note that this does not divulge the subject's *actual* involvement; rather, it provides a solid working theory that may be used to gain a confession or to line up related evidence to make an airtight case. This ability can stack with modifiers gained from cluehound.

Tarnish Reputation (Ex): By 9th level, the investigator has earned enough respect from his exploits that he can tarnish another's reputation simply by suggesting that that individual is under investigation. Once per (game) month, the investigator may suggest to a reporter or other public figure that he is investigating a particular person. That person suffers an immediate reputation loss until the investigator makes a formal accusation or exonerates the subject, or a full month passes with no further news. The reputation loss incurs a –4 penalty on all of the subject's Charisma-based checks, and the loss of access to the target's highest level in the Reputation background feat tree (if the target's reputation is based on anything other than being a rogue and a criminal).

Scholar

Description: Bookish, insular and perhaps even unschooled in social graces, the scholar may not seem the adventuring type. In fact, scholars are responsible for more trips to faraway lands than nearly any other character class. While some may seem too focused on book-learning and a proper education, they all know the value of field work. Real scientists get their hands dirty — they explore, they discover, they talk to locals and natives about important mysteries that lie outside the everyday realm.

Scholars may be university professors, librarians, intrepid archaeologists, inventors, mechanics — anyone with a flair for advanced learning or high technology. In fact, given their natural brilliance and the interconnection of things scientific in the modern world, many scholars are polymaths — familiar with multiple proper fields of study.

Young (low-level) scholars are often intrepid and curious, trekking into the wilderness to test a theory or discover a hitherto unknown fact about a lost race. Older (high-level) scholars tend to be less adventurous. Though they never lose the desire to learn, more seasoned scholars tend to keep to their libraries and studies until a *truly* important discovery pulls them back into the world.

Allegiance: Some of the world's finest heroes, like the redoubtable Dr. Benjamin Franklin Dixon of the Æon Society, follow the path of the scholar — and some of the most fiendish villains in the world are scholars as well. Every mad scientist, every maniac cackling about how her invention will save humanity from itself, has some experience devoted to the scholar class.



Table 5–7: The Scholar (Sch)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+0	+2	Bonus feat, Knowledge specialty
2nd	+1	+1	+0	+0	+3	Background feat
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+1	+3	Bonus language
4th	+2	+1	+1	+1	+4	Background feat, Knowledge specialty
5th	+2	+2	+1	+1	+4	Improvise implements, bonus language
6th	+3	+2	+2	+2	+5	Background feat
7th	+3	+2	+2	+2	+5	Improvise invention, bonus language, Knowledge specialty
8th	+4	+3	+2	+2	+6	Background feat
9th	+4	+3	+3	+3	+6	Scholarly insight, bonus language
10th	+5	+3	+3	+3	+7	Background feat, Knowledge specialty

Abilities: Intelligence is primary. An adventurous scholar is well advised to keep a decent Constitution and Dexterity, but more bookish scholars lack those traits.

Hit Die: d6.

Class Skills: The scholar's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Demolitions (Int), Disable Device (Int), Heal (Wis), Investigate (Int), Knowledge (any) (Int), Profession (Wis), Repair (Int), Research (Int), Search (Int), Speak Language.

Skill Points at 1st Level: $(6 + \text{Int}) \times 4$.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: $(6 + \text{Int})$.

Wealth Bonus: +2.

Class Features

Bonus Feat: A scholar begins play with one of the following feats: Diligent, Investigator or Negotiator.

Knowledge Specialty: A starting scholar selects a Knowledge category (art, behavioral sciences, business, civics, current events, Earth and life sciences, history, occult, physical sciences, popular culture, streetwise, tactics, technology, theology and philosophy) in which she has at least one rank. This is considered her specialty, bestowing a +2 bonus with that skill.

The scholar may take an additional +2 bonus at 4th, 7th and 10th level, either on the same Knowledge skill or on a new one in which she has skill ranks. If the scholar's specialty bonus exceeds +4, she gets the benefits of the Recognized feat within that field of study.

Background Feats: The scholar gains a free background feat at 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th levels. She must meet all the usual criteria for the feat, and must choose from one of the following trees: Backing, Cipher, Contacts, Followers, Gadget, Menagerie, Mentor, Reputation or Sanctum.

Bonus Language: The scholar learns a bonus language at 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th level. These can be any languages the character has been exposed to, whether spoken or in writing (though the

scholar's pronunciation may be a bit off if she has not heard the language spoken).

Improvise Implements (Ex): At 5th level, a scholar can make do without proper equipment in certain circumstances. By substituting found objects for tools, she suffers no penalty when making Climb, Disable Device, Heal or Repair checks that require tool use.

Improvise Invention (Ex): Upon reaching 7th level, the scholar can improvise solutions using common objects and scientific know-how to create inventions in a dramatic situation quickly and cheaply, but with a limited duration.

By combining common objects with a Craft check that corresponds to the function desired, the scholar can build a tool or device to deal with any mundane situation. The DC for the Craft check equals 5 + the purchase DC of the object that most closely matches the desired function. Electronic devices, special tools, weapons, mechanical devices and more can be built with scientific improvisation. It takes a full-round action for every full 5 points of the object's purchase DC to improvise an invention (so, an object with purchase DC 13 takes 2 rounds to make).

Once used, the improvised item lasts a number of rounds equal to the scholar's class level (or until the end of the current encounter, at the GM's discretion). It then breaks down and cannot be repaired. Only objects that can normally be used more than once can be improvised, and they must be existing technology. This ability cannot be used to create actual inventions (see Chapter Eight: Knacks and Super-Science).

Scholarly Insight (Ex): By 9th level, the scholar has gleaned an impressive knowledge of the world. She may overcome a lack of hard facts by making comparisons in seemingly disparate areas to arrive at a sound conclusion for the matter at hand. A scholar can always try again once if she fails a Knowledge check for any of the following categories: art, behavioral sciences, business, civics, Earth and life sciences, history, physical sciences, technology, or theology and philosophy.

Scoundrel

Description: A scoundrel's abilities are well-suited to a hard life on the street; in all likelihood a character with levels in scoundrel got them the hard way. A scoundrel excels at making her way around the law — she may not burgle and thief actively, but she knows how to sneak, break and enter, and cover her tracks. Police investigators and private detectives often pick up the skills of a scoundrel through exposure and experience, and more than one military scout has learned the same abilities (though perhaps in different proportions than a sneak-thief who grew up on the streets).

Young (low-level) scoundrels are typically thugs, con men or simple vandals. Older (high-level) scoundrels are diamond-theft-caliber cat burglars, or criminal masterminds who oversee whole empires of crime.

Allegiance: Though few members of heroic organizations such as the Air Circus would refer to themselves as “scoundrels,” those on the run from their pasts do make up the membership of many such groups. The Air Circus has a few scoundrels, and many of the International Detective Agency's Irregulars have some interesting gaps in their official histories. Many villains have levels in the scoundrel class, representing either their days of youthful crime or their status as master criminals even today. The King of the World, the Czar, Mister Saturday and the Turk are all examples of the scoundrel class in action.

Abilities: Scoundrels rely on their Dexterity, Intelligence and Charisma to keep them out of scrapes.

Hit Die: d8.

Class Skills: The scoundrel's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Drive (Dex), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (civics, current events, streetwise) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Rope Use (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at 1st Level: $(8 + \text{Int bonus}) \times 4$.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: $8 + \text{Int bonus}$.

Wealth Bonus: +1.



Table 5–8: The Scoundrel (Sco)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	+0	Bonus feat, cool customer
2nd	+1	+2	+0	+3	+0	Background feat
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	+1	Evasion
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	+1	Background feat, cool customer (+1)
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	+1	Sneak attack +1d6
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	+2	Background feat
7th	+5	+6	+2	+5	+2	Uncanny dodge, sneak attack +2d6, cool customer (+1)
8th	+6/+1	+6	+2	+6	+2	Background feat
9th	+6/+1	+7	+3	+6	+3	Intuition, sneak attack +3d6
10th	+7/+2	+8	+3	+7	+3	Background feat, cool customer (+1)

Class Features

Bonus Feat: A scoundrel begins play with either Brawl or Personal Firearms Proficiency.

Cool Customer (Ex): The scoundrel works well even under pressure. Choose three skills; when making a check with any of them, the scoundrel can take 10 even when distracted or under duress. The character can add one additional skill every three scoundrel levels, to a total of six skills at 10th level.

Trapfinding: The scoundrel can use the Search skill to find traps when the task DC is greater than 20. This also applies to traps created through super-science or other Inspired technology.

Background Feats: The scoundrel gains a free background feat at 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th levels. She must meet all the usual criteria for the feat, and must choose from one of the following trees: Backing (in a criminal organization), Cipher, Contacts, Mentor, Reputation or Sanctum.

Evasion (Ex): By 3rd level, the scoundrel has well-developed self-preservation instincts. If she makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that deals half damage on a successful save, she instead takes no damage. Evasion can be used only if the scoundrel is wearing light armor or no armor. A helpless scoundrel does not gain the benefit of evasion.

Sneak Attack: At 5th level, the scoundrel can deal an extra 1d6 points of damage with her attack when she catches an opponent who is unable to defend himself effectively — in other words, whenever the target is denied his Dexterity bonus to AC or is flanked. The

extra damage increases by 1d6 every two scoundrel levels thereafter, to a maximum of +3d6 at 9th level.

Should the scoundrel score a critical hit with a sneak attack, the extra damage is not multiplied. Ranged attacks can count as sneak attacks only if the target is within 30 feet. A scoundrel can make a sneak attack that deals nonlethal damage instead of lethal damage using a sap (blackjack) or an unarmed strike. She cannot use a weapon that deals lethal damage to deal nonlethal damage in a sneak attack, not even with the usual –4 penalty.

A scoundrel can sneak attack only living creatures with discernible anatomies. Any creature that is immune to critical hits is not vulnerable to sneak attacks. The scoundrel must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach such a spot. A scoundrel cannot sneak attack while striking a creature with concealment or striking the limbs of a creature whose vitals are beyond reach.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Upon reaching 7th level, a scoundrel can react to danger before her senses would normally allow her to do so. She retains her Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) even if she is caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible or otherwise unseen attacker. However, she still loses her Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.

Intuition (Ex): By 9th level, the scoundrel has an innate ability to sense trouble in the air. With a successful DC 15 Will saving throw, she gets a hunch whether everything is all right or not in a specific situation, based on the GM's best guess relating to the circumstances. The character can use her intuition a number of times per day equal to her scoundrel level.

Warrior

Description: The warrior is at the forefront of battle — whether on the side of justice and heroism or in the service of selfishness, wickedness or mad schemes to rule the world. Warriors are skilled in the use of most modern weaponry, as well as basic hand-to-hand fighting techniques; over time they gain expertise in a wide variety of weapons and become truly terrifying on the battlefield.

Warriors range from primitive backwater pit fighters to Army sharpshooters, and nearly everything in between. Most warriors specialize in particular styles of fighting, though it is not uncommon for them to branch out as they gain experience.

Young (low-level) warriors are often thugs or grunt soldiers, while older (high-level) warriors bear out the saying “there are old soldiers, and bold soldiers, but there are no old, bold soldiers.” The more experienced a warrior gets, the greater sense he gains of the battlefield, and the better idea he has of how to direct others to accomplish his overall goals.

Allegiance: Heroic warriors defend the weak from outside threats, while villainous warriors are skilled individual combatants, primitive warlords or cunning masters of armies. Warriors can be found in nearly every major group of the day. Notable among modern heroic warriors are Annabelle “Crackshot” Lee and Jake Stefokowski. Other modern warriors include Manifest Destiny (in more of a “general” role) and the Mighty Gar.

Abilities: Strength and Dexterity are foremost, depending on the warrior’s choice of activity — is he a brawler, or a gunfighter? Constitution is useful no matter what sort of battle the warrior prefers.

Hit Die: d10.

Class Skills: The warrior’s class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Demolitions (Int), Drive (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (current events, history, popular culture, tactics) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str).

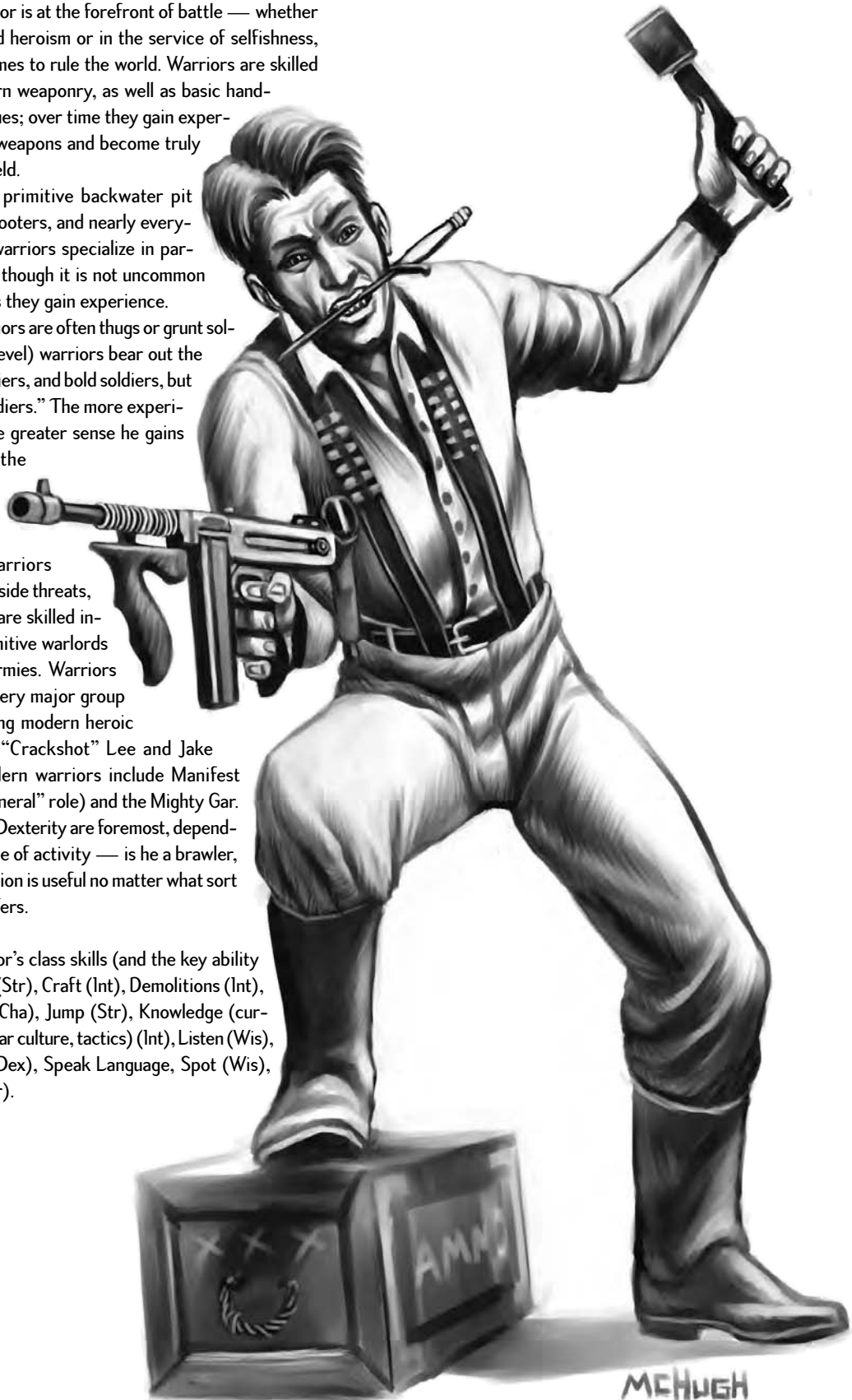


Table 5–9: The Warrior (War)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Bonus feats, warrior bonus feat
2nd	+2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Warrior bonus feat
3rd	+3	+2	+3	+1	+1	Background feat
4th	+4	+3	+4	+1	+1	Warrior bonus feat
5th	+5	+3	+4	+1	+1	Background feat
6th	+6/+1	+4	+5	+2	+2	Warrior bonus feat
7th	+7/+2	+4	+5	+2	+2	Background feat
8th	+8/+3	+5	+6	+2	+2	Warrior bonus feat
9th	+9/+4	+5	+6	+3	+3	Background feat
10th	+10/+5	+6	+7	+3	+3	Warrior bonus feat

Skill Points at 1st Level: $(4 + \text{Int bonus}) \times 4$.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: $4 + \text{Int bonus}$.

Wealth bonus: +2.

Class Features

Bonus Feats: A warrior begins play with Brawl, Personal Firearms Proficiency and one warrior bonus feat; he then gains an additional

warrior bonus feat at 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th levels. He must meet all the usual criteria for the feat selected. See Chapter Six of this book for a listing of feats available as warrior bonus feats.

Background Feats: The warrior gains a free background feat at 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th levels. He must meet all the usual criteria for the feat, and must choose from one of the following trees: Backing, Cipher, Contacts, Mentor, Reputation or Sanctum.

Class Level Extension

Standard level progression in d20 runs from 1st to 20th level. The core classes in **Adventure!** stop at 10th level. At that point — or whenever your character meets the necessary prerequisites — you normally choose a prestige class or select a second core class. If your character's level progression tops out before reaching 20th level and you don't want to take on a different class, refer to Table 5–10: Class Level Extension and follow the guidelines below. Note: you cannot extend the Inspired template class levels (daring, psychic or superhuman). If your character's last level was a template class level, you must choose a core class (10 levels) or prestige class (5 levels) which he has topped out to extend.

Ability Increases: The character continues to gain ability score increases every fourth character level as normal.

Attack and Save Bonus: The character's base attack bonus and base save bonus increase as consistent with his extended class (see Table 5–10).

Hit Dice and Skill Points: The character calculates subsequent Hit Die and skill points based on the extended class.

Feats: The character continues to gain feats every third character level as normal.

Background Feats: The character gains a free background feat at every third level, selected from the background feat categories listed for the extended class.

- For multiclass characters, feats and ability increases are gained according to overall character level, not class level.
- A class feature for the topped-out class that uses the character's class level as part of a mathematical formula continues to increase using the appropriate extended character level in the formula.
- Any class features that increase or accumulate as part of a repeated pattern also continue to increase or accumulate at the same rate. An exception to this rule is any bonus feat progression granted as a class feature.
- A character gains no new class features after topping out.

Prestige Classes

Adventure! assumes that all characters begin a more specialized field of study at some point in their adventuring careers. This is represented by prestige classes — although the player can instead choose a different core class if he wishes. The prestige classes from the *DMG* are not used in **Adventure!**; instead, select from the listings that follow.

Table 5–10: Class Level Extension

Level Ext.	Bab (good)	Bab (average)	Bab (poor)	ACb (good)	ACb (average)	ACb (poor)	Bsb (good)	Bsb (poor)
+1 lvl	+1	+1	+0	+1	+1	+1	+2	+0
+2 lvl	+2	+2	+1	+2	+1	+1	+3	+0
+3 lvl	+3	+2	+1	+2	+2	+1	+3	+1
+4 lvl	+4	+3	+2	+3	+2	+2	+4	+1
+5 lvl	+5	+4	+2	+4	+3	+2	+4	+1
+6 lvl	+6/ +1	+5	+3	+4	+3	+2	+5	+2
+7 lvl	+7/ +2	+5	+3	+5	+4	+3	+5	+2
+8 lvl	+8/ +3	+6/ +1	+4	+6	+4	+3	+6	+2
+9 lvl	+9/ +4	+7/ +2	+4	+6	+5	+3	+6	+3
+10 lvl	+10/ +5	+8/ +3	+5	+7	+5	+4	+7	+3

Level Ext.: The level extension is based on overall character level at the time of the character's level top-out. Characters who top out at different overall character level — for instance, 10th level (*aristocrat 10*), 12th level (*superhuman 2/warrior 10*), 15th level (*scoundrel 10/ace 5*), 17th level (*psychic 2/investigator 10/occultist 5*) — all start at +1 level extension.

Bab: The base attack bonus is calculated from the character's class upon topping out.

Good: barbarian lord, disciple, mercenary, warrior

Average: ace, aristocrat, entertainer, explorer, investigator, scoundrel, spy

Poor: inventor, occultist, scholar

ACb: The Armor Class bonus is calculated from the character's class upon topping out.

Good: ace, disciple, mercenary, scoundrel

Average: aristocrat, barbarian lord, explorer, investigator, spy, warrior

Poor: entertainer, inventor, occultist, scholar

Bsb: The base save bonus for each saving throw category is calculated from the character's class upon topping out.

Fortitude (good): barbarian lord, explorer, mercenary, warrior

Fortitude (poor): ace, aristocrat, disciple, entertainer, inventor, investigator, occultist, scholar, scoundrel, spy

Reflex (good): ace, disciple, entertainer, scoundrel, spy

Reflex (poor): barbarian lord, aristocrat, explorer, inventor, investigator, mercenary, occultist, scholar, warrior

Will (good): aristocrat, entertainer, inventor, investigator, occultist, scholar

Will (poor): ace, barbarian lord, disciple, explorer, mercenary, scoundrel, spy, warrior

Ace

Description: The ace is a hotshot pilot, driver, rider or seaman. His identity is wrapped up in his ability to make his vehicle or mount do impossible things — tricks that no sane pilot would even attempt, much less succeed at. The ace almost always has rare experience that few others can match — perhaps he was a literal ace in the Great War, races cars on the moonshine circuit, has spent a dozen years in the Navy, or the like.

Allegiance: The Air Circus has plenty of aces in its employ, as do military organizations the world over — whether navies or armies with budding air corps. It is not surprising that the mastermind Baron Zorbo employs many aerial aces as well.

Prerequisites: Drive, Pilot or Ride 10 ranks; Barnstormer, Sea Dog, Trick Rider or Wheelman (as appropriate to the skill used); character must own his own vehicle or mount.

Hit Die: d8.

Class Skills: The ace's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Balance (Dex), Craft (Int), Drive (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int bonus.

Class Features

Safe Escape (Ex): When a vehicle that the character is in (whether as the driver or as a passenger) is reduced to 0 hit points or otherwise becomes impossible to control, the ace can escape from it as a free action. The ace does not need to make skill checks or worry about any barriers to exit (which may not be the case for anyone else in the situation). The escape may be safe, but there's no guarantee on the landing — say, if leap-

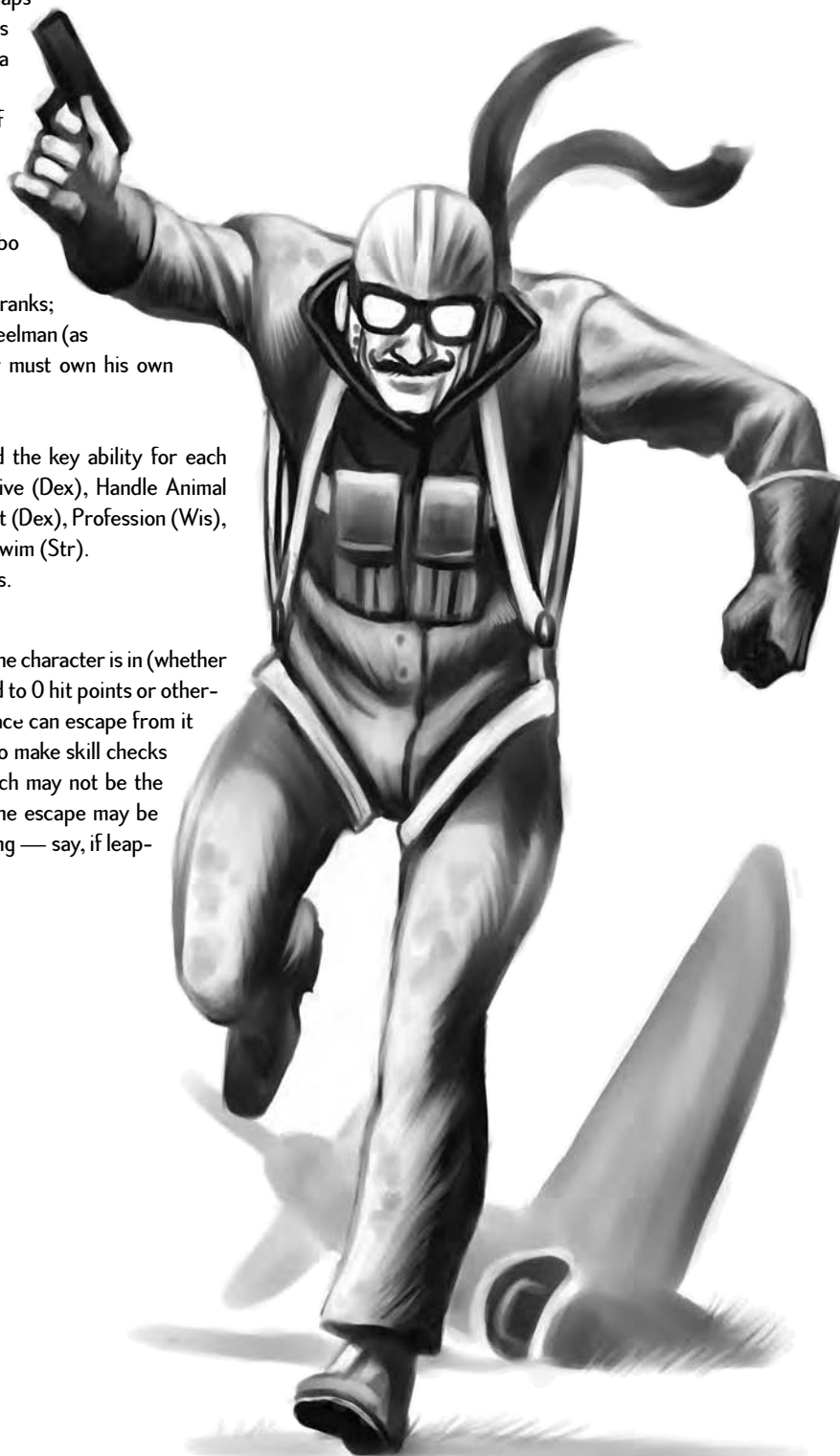


Table 5–11: The Ace (Ace)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+1	+0	+2	+0	Safe escape
2nd	+1	+2	+0	+3	+0	Enhanced vehicle
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	+1	Ridiculous stunt
4th	+2	+4	+1	+4	+1	Enhanced vehicle
5th	+3	+5	+1	+4	+1	Background feat

ing from a burning zeppelin, jumping from a speeding car or emerg- ing from a sinking submarine, for instance.

Enhanced Vehicle: At 2nd level, the ace gains a “signature ve- hicle.” This is a stock vehicle with one free advancement. If the ace has a vehicle from the Gadget feat already, he may instead add one free advancement to that Gadget.

At 4th level, the signature vehicle gains another bonus advancement.

Ridiculous Stunt (Ex): Starting at 3rd level, once per session the ace can choose to re-roll any single die roll made while controlling a vehicle. This can be anything, even personal saving throws or weapon damage rolls, so long as it is made while the ace is controlling the vehicle.

Background Feat: At 5th level, the ace receives a bonus back- ground feat from one of the following background feat trees: Allies, Backing, Contacts, Gadget, Reputation or Resources.

Barbarian Lord

Description: The barbarian lord rules over a tribe in wild, distant lands. He is the undisputed master of his tribe's domain, and is as comfortable in that environment as a Nebraska ranch hand is on the farm. A barbarian lord might have been raised as the heir to the rulership of his tribe; he might be an orphan of civilization raised by barbarians; or he might be a relative newcomer to the wilderness who has made a home in these untamed lands.

Allegiance: Barbarian lords rarely join organizations more sophisticated than their home tribes, but they may align themselves with powerful or charismatic individuals from nearly any group — a barbarian lord might join the Aeon Society out of personal loyalty to Max Mercer, or a more villainous barbarian lord might pledge his service to the Czar.

Prerequisites: Strength 13; Survival 6 ranks; character must spend at least 1 year in a harsh climate as part of tribal or wilderness society.

Hit Die: d12.

Class Skills: The barbarian lord's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Ride (Dex), Rope Use (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int.

Class Features

Favored Terrain (Ex): At 1st level, the barbarian lord selects a type of environment — aquatic, jungle, desert, forest, hills, marsh, mountains, plains or underground — as a favored terrain. The barbarian lord gains a +2 bonus on Hide, Knowledge (Earth and life sciences), Listen, Move Silently, Spot and Survival checks relating to this type of environment.

Sway Natives (Ex): At 1st level, a barbarian lord who addresses a crowd (12 or more people) at least half composed of "uncivilized" people — in other words, those from a technologically backward culture who live according to tribal laws — gains +4 bonus on all Charisma-related checks.



Table 5–12: The Barbarian Lord (Bal)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Favored terrain, sway natives
2nd	+2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Combat style feat
3rd	+3	+2	+3	+1	+1	Improvised weapon, improved favored terrain
4th	+4	+3	+4	+1	+1	Combat style feat
5th	+5	+3	+4	+1	+1	Wild companion

Combat Style (Ex): At 2nd level, the barbarian lord chooses one of three combat styles: Archer, Brawler or Brute. Each is described below.

Archer: This style grants the Rapid Shot feat at 2nd level and the Manyshot feat at 4th level.

Brawler: This style grants the Brawl feat at 2nd level and the Knockout Punch feat at 4th level.

Brute: This style grants the Power Attack feat at 2nd level and the Improved Sunder feat at 4th level.

Improvised Weapon (Ex): By 3rd level, a barbarian lord can make a melee weapon with a successful DC 15 Craft (weaponsmith) roll. The weapon can be any primitive simple or martial weapon that could be fashioned with the materials at hand — the barbarian lord cannot craft a complex metal head for a pole arm, but he could make a functional wooden sword in a pinch. The improvised weapon requires 10 minutes to create and functions as a standard weapon at no penalty. The weapon is not very durable, however, and works for only a single combat encounter.

Improved Favored Terrain (Ex): At 3rd level, the barbarian lord suffers no penalties to movement through his favored terrain when

on foot. The effect is appropriate to the environment, whether swinging on vines through the jungle, riding the swiftest river currents, finding secret oases in the desert, and so on.

Wild Companion (Ex): When a barbarian lord reaches 5th level, he may befriend an animal companion. The animal should be appropriate to the barbarian lord's favored terrain, and should be chosen from the following list: ape, black bear, bison, boar, cheetah, constrictor snake, crocodile, eagle, leopard, monitor lizard, owl, porpoise or wolf. (The companion may be chosen from other appropriate creatures with the GM's permission.)

This ability functions like the druid's animal companion ability (see Chapter 3: Classes of the *Player's Handbook*), substituting barbarian lord levels for effective druid levels. However, the creature is considered Inspired, rather than a magical beast, for the purpose of all effects that depend on its type. It otherwise retains the Hit Dice, base attack bonus, saves, skill points and feats of an animal (or vermin, as appropriate). Like a druid, a barbarian lord cannot select an animal as a companion if the choice would reduce his effective druid level below 1st.

Disciple

Description: The disciple strives for the perfection of physical action. This can take any number of forms — an acolyte who works to master kung fu; an assassin who studies the perfect killing method; a boxer who hopes to become the greatest pugilist in the world; a street tough who seeks to be the toughest bastard around. Their motives and styles of fighting may vary widely, but all disciples have one thing in common: their bodies become weapons as dangerous as any blade or gun.

Allegiance: Disciples are defined by their concentration on martial arts. They do not share a particular philosophy or allegiance among themselves, so disciples are not attracted to one organization over another. Any group that provides the disciple with the opportunity to utilize her unique skills may attract her attention. Branch 9 likely has a few disciples among its operators, and nearly any villainous mastermind might attract a disciple as a lieutenant or assassin.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +3; Jump 5 ranks; Combat Martial Arts, Defensive Martial Arts.

Hit Die: d8.

Class Skills: The disciple's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (current events, history, theology and philosophy) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Living Weapon (Ex): The disciple attacks with either fist interchangeably, or even with elbows, knees and feet. This means that she may even make unarmed strikes when her hands are full, and there is no such thing as an off-hand attack for a disciple striking unarmed.

The disciple also deals more damage with unarmed strikes. At 1st level, the disciple inflicts 1d6 points of damage with an unarmed strike. At 3rd level, damage increases to 1d8. At 5th level, it increases to 1d10.

Flying Kick (Ex): Starting at 2nd level, a disciple can use a charge to deliver a devastating flying kick. At the end of this charge, the disciple adds her disciple level as a bonus to the damage she deals with an unarmed strike. This damage is multiplied on a critical hit.

Iron Fist (Ex): At 3rd level, a disciple can increase the damage that she deals to a single opponent with a single unarmed strike. She may use this ability a number of times per day equal to half her disciple level (round down), and must declare her intent prior to making an unarmed strike. On a successful strike, she adds her disciple level as a bonus to the damage applied for that attack. This damage is multiplied on a critical hit.

At 5th level, the bonus applies to all successful attacks made in a round; the disciple must declare her intent prior to beginning her actions for the round.

Iron Fist does not stack with Flying Kick.

Flurry of Blows (Ex): At 4th level, a disciple can make one extra attack in a round at her highest base attack bonus. This attack and each other attack made in the round take a –1 penalty. To use this



Table 5–13: The Disciple (Dis)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+1	+0	+2	+0	Living weapon (1d6 damage)
2nd	+2	+2	+0	+3	+0	Flying kick
3rd	+3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Iron fist, living weapon (1d8 damage)
4th	+4	+3	+1	+4	+1	Flurry of blows
5th	+5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Fast recovery, living weapon (1d10 damage)

ability, the disciple must be unarmored and must spend a full-round action using unarmed strikes.

Fast Recovery (Ex): Starting at 5th level, a disciple’s body is so disciplined that she recovers from damage faster than normal. The disciple adds her Constitution bonus (if any) to the total hit points

that she can recover per each day of rest. This is applied prior to any modifiers to hit point recovery (such as complete bed rest). For example, a disciple with 7 total character levels and Constitution of 15 recovers 11 hit points per day of rest, and 16 hit points per day of complete bed rest.

Explorer

Description: The explorer braves the unknown. Whether searching for treasure, seeking ancient knowledge or questing to see what lies over the horizon, the explorer searches for that which is new and exciting. He is the one others turn to when they find themselves lost or in search of new wonders — whether on the plain of the Serengeti, high in the Andes, deep beneath the surface of the Earth, or places more remote still.

Allegiance: The Æon Society for Gentlemen sponsors exploration across the uncharted world, thereby attracting many explorers to its ranks. Organizations like the National Geographic Society or Royal Geographic Society also draw the interest of explorers.

Prerequisites: Constitution 13; Survival 10 ranks; Endurance.

Hit Die: d10.

Class Skills: The explorer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (art, current events, Earth and life sciences, history, occult, physical sciences, theology and philosophy) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Survivor (Ex): An explorer gains the Track and Self-Sufficient feats.

Regional Lore: At 2nd level, the explorer gains greater knowledge of one particular terrain type of his choice — aquatic, jungle, desert, forest, hills, marsh, mountains, plains, or underground. The explorer thereafter has a +2 bonus on any skill checks relating to the exploration of that region, from navigating the wilderness to knowing whether a particular animal is dan-



Table 5–14: The Explorer (Exr)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+1	+2	+1	+0	Survivor
2nd	+1	+2	+2	+1	+1	Regional lore
3rd	+2	+2	+3	+1	+1	Construction sense
4th	+2	+3	+3	+2	+1	Ignore hardship, regional lore
5th	+3	+3	+4	+2	+2	Master of the unknown

gerous. This includes the use of Gather Information, Handle Animal, Knowledge, Search and Survival. The explorer can choose an additional regional lore at 4th level.

Construction Sense (Ex): At 3rd level, an explorer has amassed sufficient knowledge of architectural designs to gain a +2 bonus on checks to notice unusual work in any construction, such as sliding walls, new construction (even when built to match the old), unsafe surfaces, shaky ceilings and the like. Construction disguised as a natural object or environment counts as unusual workmanship. An explorer who merely comes within 10 feet of unusual construction can make a check as if he were searching actively. This bonus stacks with that granted by regional lore.

This ability functions for all manner of construction, whether stone, wood, metal, bone or otherwise. The bonus increases to +4 at 5th level.

Ignore Hardship (Ex): At 4th level, the explorer gains an almost supernatural ability to ignore the worst hardships of traveling in a harsh wilderness. He gains 5 points of cold resistance and fire resistance, and 5/— damage reduction against falling damage only.

Master of the Unknown (Ex): At 5th level, the explorer gains +4 on all Reflex saves to avoid natural hazards, from rockfalls to quicksand. He also gains +4 on Fortitude saves against natural poisons of all kinds. Additionally, the explorer can persevere for double the length of time before having to check against any adverse environmental effects. (See *DMG*, Chapter 8: Glossary, “The Environment” for details on natural hazards.)

Inventor

Description: The inventor is the personification of a stereotype; he is the Thomas Edison or Nikola Tesla of his generation. The inventor spends much of his time in the lab, working on new creations. He is not a scientist per se — he is not interested in pure knowledge. He tinkers, experiments and creates, driven to know how things work, and how to *make* things work. Theoretical limits on the possible and impossible do not matter to the inventor; he cares only for the practical.

Allegiance: An inventor does not pursue his craft out of any particular political philosophy; he is driven by the urge to create. Any organization that can help fund his inventions, or provide him with laboratory or engineering facilities, might attract his services. At least one Air Circus ace owes his success to the results of a talented inventor's labors, and nearly every criminal mastermind from Baron Zorbo to the Ubiquitous Dragon uses inventors' talents to challenge the world's heroes. The Machinatrix is representative of an inventor who will work for the highest bidder.

Prerequisites: Intelligence 13; Craft 7 ranks (any three).

Hit Die: d6.

Class Skills: The inventor's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Demolitions (Int), Disable Device (Int), Knowledge (any) (Int), Profession (Wis), Research (Int), Search (Int), Speak Language.

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Invent Device: The starting inventor receives the Invent Device super-science feat. If the inventor has the feat already, he adds his Intelligence modifier as a bonus on all super-science checks relating to the feat.

Jury-Rig (Ex): At 2nd level, an inventor gains a +2 bonus on Repair skill checks made to attempt temporary or jury-rigged repairs. See the Repair skill for details on jury-rigging. This bonus increases to +4 at 4th level.



Table 5–15: The Inventor (Ivr)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+1	+0	+1	+2	Invent Device
2nd	+0	+2	+0	+1	+3	Jury-rig +2
3rd	+1	+2	+1	+2	+3	Invent Compound
4th	+1	+3	+1	+2	+4	Calm under fire, jury-rig +4
5th	+1	+3	+2	+3	+4	Invent Organism

Invent Compound: At 3rd level, the inventor receives the Invent Compound super-science feat. If the inventor has the feat already, he adds his Intelligence modifier as a bonus on all super-science checks relating to the feat.

Calm Under Fire (Ex): At 4th level, once per day the inventor can take 10 on any roll that involves operating or building a mechanical device

when circumstances would otherwise prevent it. This ability does not apply to attack rolls, so the inventor cannot take 10 while firing a rifle.

Invent Organism: At 5th level, the inventor receives the Invent Organism super-science feat. If the inventor has the feat already, he adds his Intelligence modifier as a bonus on all super-science checks relating to the feat.

Mercenary

Description: A mercenary is a warrior for hire; he owes his allegiance to no country and no man, but only to the wealth of his employer. Mercenaries are pragmatic; they will not fight to the death for a cause, but rather surrender where necessary — live today to fight again tomorrow. A mercenary prides himself on his professional attitude and his military abilities; an experienced mercenary cannot be matched on the battlefield.

Allegiance: Mercenaries never ally themselves permanently with any employer or political organization, but they may become permanent members of a mercenary company or guild. There are exceptions, but most mercenaries are defined by their loyalty to the dollar rather than their allegiance to a cause.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +5; Knowledge (tactics) 5 ranks.

Hit Die: d10.

Class Skills: The mercenary's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Demolitions (Int), Drive (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (current events, history, popular culture, tactics) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Training Focus (Ex): At 1st level, the mercenary chooses a specific weapon in which he is proficient (he may select unarmed strike or grapple); he adds a +1 bonus on all attack rolls made using the selected weapon.

Training Specialization (Ex): At 2nd level, a mercenary gains a +2 bonus on damage rolls with the weapon he chose for training focus.

Tactical Aid (Ex): Upon reaching 3rd level, the mercenary can provide tactical aid to one or more allies within sight and voice range of his position. With an attack action, he can



Table 5–16: The Mercenary (Mrc)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Training focus
2nd	+2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Training specialization
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Tactical aid
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Defensive position
5th	+5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Critical strike

provide tactical aid to any single ally (other than himself). With a full-round action, he can provide tactical aid to all of his allies (including himself).

This aid provides either a bonus on attack rolls or to Armor Class (mercenary’s choice). This bonus is equal to the mercenary’s Intelligence modifier (minimum +1), and lasts for a number of rounds equal to his levels in mercenary.

Defensive Position (Ex): Starting at 4th level, the mercenary gains an additional +2 cover bonus to Armor Class and an additional +2 cover bonus on Reflex saves whenever he takes cover (see *Player’s Handbook*, Chapter 8: Combat, “Combat Modifiers”).

Critical Strike (Ex): At 5th level, a mercenary can confirm a threat as a critical hit automatically when attacking with his training focus weapon, thereby eliminating the need to make a critical roll.

Occultist

Description: The occultist dedicates herself to the study of the unexplained — and there's quite a bit of that sort of thing since the Hammersmith incident. Occultists may be avowed mystics who seek supernatural truths, or champions of scientific theory who seek to debunk the paranormal. Indeed, proponents of both theories often come into conflict, with neither emerging the clear victor.

An occultist's style of dress often suggests which discipline she follows. Those of a scientific temperament often wear conventional (even formal) clothing; those of a mystical bent may don anything from a turban to full ancient Egyptian garb to Merlin-esque cliché robes.

Allegiance: Occultists often work purely for themselves, but certain criminal organizations have influence in the occult world. Certain masterminds have numerous occultists in their employ, including Mister Saturday, the Jaguar Queen and Emma Nazir (the Sun-Disk).

Prerequisites: Knowledge (occult) 5 ranks.

Hit Die: d6.

Class Skills: The occultist's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Investigate (Int), Knowledge (art, history, occult, theology and philosophy) (Int), Profession (Wis), Research (Int), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language.

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Resolve (Ex): The occultist has tremendous inner confidence. This might be confidence in the knowledge at her disposal, faith in a higher power, or simple hubris. This unswerving belief grants the occultist immunity to fear (Inspired or otherwise). Further, others can gain strength from the occultist's resolve — each ally within 10 feet of her gains a +4 bonus on saving throws against fear effects. This ability functions only while the occultist is conscious.

Occult Lore: By 2nd level, the occultist has performed sufficient study of scientific documentation, myths, anecdotes and legends to know much about the world of the strange and unusual. When facing a bizarre individual or circumstance, the occultist can try to discern its root cause and/or capabilities. The occultist must be able to view the subject uninterrupted for at least 10 minutes before making a Knowledge (occult) check. The DC depends on the circumstance, as noted below.

DC	Circumstance	Example
10	Simple mundane	Amateur hoax or clear scientific explanation
15	Complex mundane	Sophisticated hoax or high-quality stage magic
20	Simple telluric	Identify a psi or quantum knack as it is being used
25	Complex telluric	Identify a psi or quantum knack's traces after the fact

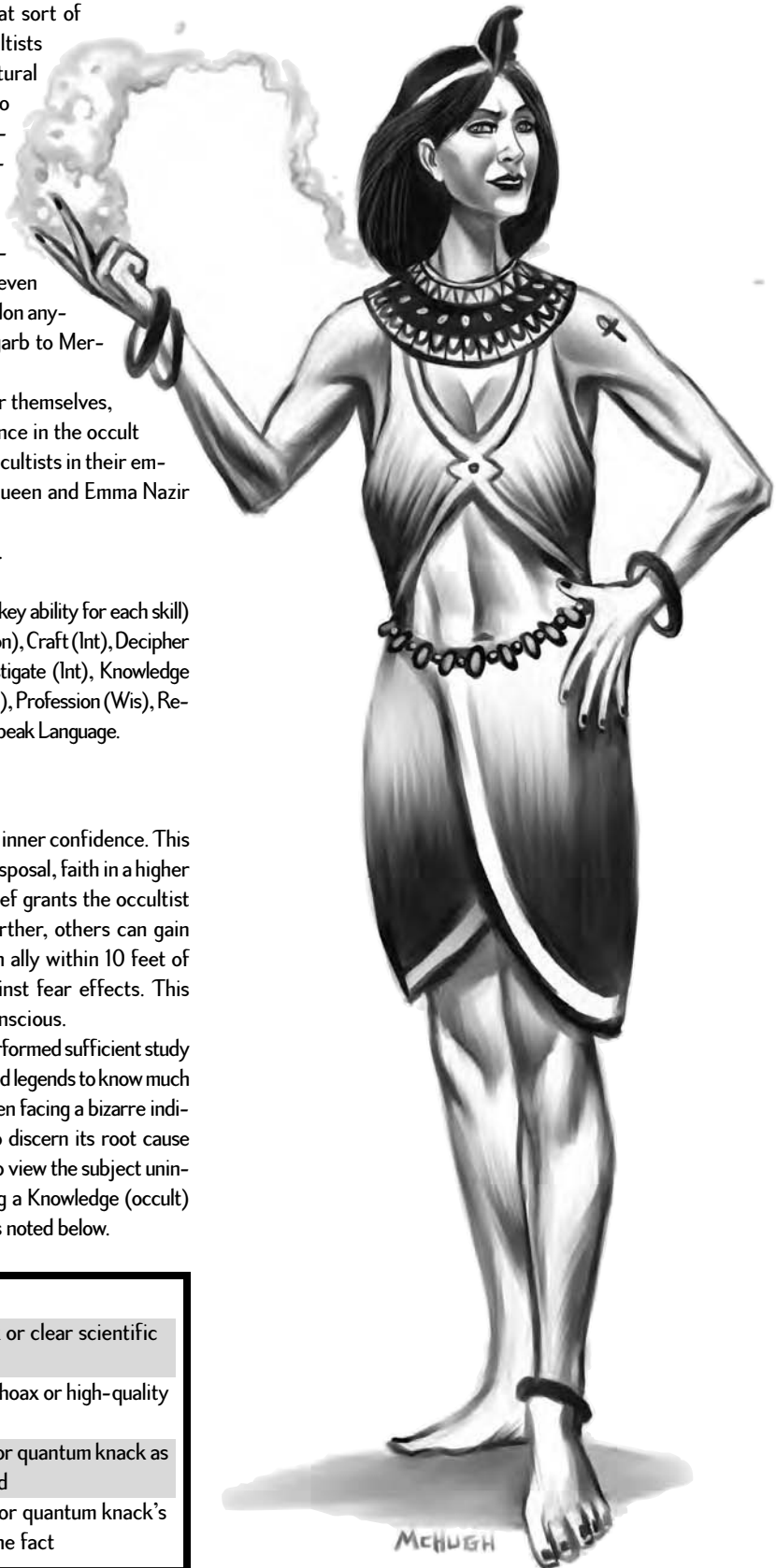


Table 5–17: The Occultist (Occ)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+0	+2	Resolve
2nd	+1	+1	+0	+0	+3	Occult lore
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+1	+3	Slippery mind
4th	+2	+1	+1	+1	+4	Archives
5th	+2	+2	+1	+1	+4	Occult resistance

If successful, the occultist gains a modifier equal to half her occultist level (round down) that she may apply to subsequent Gather Information, Knowledge, Research, Search and Sense Motive checks she makes in further study of the situation. Note that this does not divulge every detail about the subject; rather, it provides a solid working theory as to whether it is mundane or mystical/telluric in origin, what makes it tick and the best means of dealing with it safely.

Slippery Mind (Ex): At 3rd level, the occultist gains the ability to wriggle free from effects that would otherwise control or compel her. If an occultist with this ability is affected by an effect and fails her saving throw, she can attempt the saving throw again 1 round later at the same DC. She gets only this one extra chance to succeed on her saving throw.

Archives: By 4th level the occultist has amassed a large archive of personal records of many of the mysterious goings-on occurring in

the civilized world. The character has also established her credentials sufficiently to gain select access to some of the world’s greatest archives — Cambridge University’s secret library, the *New York Times*’basement archives, the *Æon Society*’s adventurers’ logs, and so on.

Access to these archives gives the character a bonus equal to her occultist level on any single Knowledge skill check pertaining to an ongoing investigation. Also, once per game session the occultist can visit the archives for intensive research. This allows the character to take 20 on a Research or Knowledge roll with only one-quarter the normal time required.

Occult Resistance (Ex): At 5th level, the occultist has been exposed to enough Z-rays that she gains an inadvertent resistance to telluric energy. This grants 5 points of resistance to all energy types. This resistance applies only to damage caused directly by telluric energy.

Spy

Description: The spy is a manipulator, charmer and infiltrator who pursues a life of intrigue, politics and diplomacy throughout the world. The spy traffics in information; her keen senses and insight into human motivations allow her to notice facts and behaviors that most others miss. Most spies are master infiltrators, and can ease their way into any group. Good spies have connections across the globe, and maintain numerous cover identities. Along with those cover identities go contingency plans and escape routes — a spy is never entirely surprised when plans go to hell.

Allegiance: A spy's true allegiance is not always known — sometimes even to herself — but the typical spy shows an allegiance to one group while holding a true allegiance to another (often conveyed through the purchase of background feats). Most governments maintain extensive spy networks; additionally, organized crime has a propensity for spying on law enforcement and on itself.

Prerequisites: Bluff 8 ranks, Sense Motive 8 ranks; Shadowy Past.

Hit Die: d6.

Class Skills: The spy's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Drive (Dex), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (art, behavioral sciences, business, civics, current events, popular culture, streetwise, tactics) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Perform (Cha), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Conceal Motive (Ex): A spy may add a bonus equal to her spy level whenever she opposes a Sense Motive check.

Connections (Ex): The spy has friends in high and low places. Starting at 1st level, once per day, in any inhabited environment — even one that she has never been to before — the spy can check to see if she has a connection in the area. Roll 1d20 + spy class level + Charisma bonus; the DC depends on the importance of the desired connection:

DC	NPC Importance
10	Police officer, fence, shopkeeper
15	Police captain, mob lieutenant, merchant
20	Mayor, foreign attaché, mob boss
25	Senator/congressman, foreign ambassador, mob kingpin

Having 5 ranks or higher in the appropriate Knowledge skill provides a +2 synergy bonus on this check, as appropriate: i.e., Knowledge (civics) will help if the spy is looking for a beat cop, but will do no good if she's looking for a local fence.

React First: By 2nd level, a spy is always ready to take action in case a mission goes bad. When a spy makes contact with and speaks to others prior to the start of combat, she gains a free readied action. This allows her to make either a move or attack action if either side in the conversation (other than the spy) decides to start hostilities. The spy gets to act before any initiative checks are made, in effect giving her the benefit of surprise.



Table 5–18: The Spy (Spy)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+1	+0	+2	+0	Conceal motive, connections
2nd	+1	+2	+0	+3	+0	React first
3rd	+2	+2	+1	+3	+1	Flawless disguise
4th	+3	+3	+1	+4	+1	Without a trace
5th	+3	+3	+2	+4	+2	Master spy

Flawless Disguise (Ex): Starting at 3rd level, the spy adds a +4 bonus on all Disguise checks and can take 10 on Disguise checks no matter the circumstance.

Without a Trace (Ex): By 4th level, the spy leaves hardly a trace of her activities. Those who use Gather Information, Listen, Search or Spot take a –4 penalty on checks to detect the spy’s use of Balance, Climb, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Hide, Move Silently and Sleight of Hand.

Master Spy: At 5th level, the spy gains the next Cipher background feat (e.g., a character with Secret Life gains Mystery Man). If the spy has Mystery Man already, she may bestow the benefits of Shadowy Past on a number of allies, contacts, companions or friends equal to her Charisma modifier (minimum 1). (This requires roleplaying out the steps taken to conceal or confuse the evidence trail between them and whatever secret the spy conceals.)

Mastermind

Description: The mastermind is a spider sitting at the center of a web of crime. He sponsors criminal or violent activities all in the name of his own personal goals, or perhaps in the name of a great philosophy. Most masterminds really are geniuses, and they have plans within plans — the failure of a single scheme is never enough to throw a true mastermind off course. The greatest masterminds design their plans such that success and failure both advance their overall schemes.

While all classes are available to characters of either heroic or villainous bent, only a very rare hero qualifies for the mastermind's prerequisites. The mastermind is truly intended as a villainous class, and its abilities help a GM to provide a good foil for his PCs.

Allegiance: The mastermind holds an allegiance only to himself, or to his driving cause. Occasional masterminds might ally themselves with powerful organizations such as national governments or shadowy international syndicates — or even with other masterminds — but a mastermind's ultimate loyalty is to himself alone.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +6; Intelligence 13, Charisma 13; character must have committed or made a serious attempt at a wicked act (murdering an important personage, the destruction of a city, etc).

Hit Die: d8.

Class Skills: The mastermind's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Demolitions (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Drive (Dex), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (any) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Repair (Int), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Speak Language, and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Escape Death: At 1st level, a mastermind gains the Death Defiance daring feat. At 5th level, a mastermind may use Death Defiance even if he is out of power points.

Sudden Action: Once per day, a mastermind of 1st level or higher can burst into sudden action when the situation calls for it. The mastermind can change his place in the initiative order, moving higher in the count by a number up to his mastermind class level, as he sees fit. The mastermind can declare the use of this ability at the start of any round, before anyone else takes an action.

Monologue (Ex): Starting at 2nd level, once per session, a mastermind can halt a group of heroic characters in their tracks with a villainous monologue. He expounds upon their weaknesses and his own great cunning, possibly launching into a brief explanation of the ways in which one of the heroes is but a shadowy reflection of himself. This monologue is a full-round action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity and requires that at least one hero be able to hear the



Table 5–19: The Mastermind (Mas)

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	AC Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+1	+1	+1	+1	Escape death, sudden action
2nd	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	Monologue
3rd	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3	Summon minions
4th	+3	+2	+4	+4	+4	Sow distrust
5th	+3	+3	+5	+5	+5	Diabolical plan

mastermind. At the end of this action, the mastermind recovers 2d3 power points.

Summon Minions (Ex): Once per day as a move action, a 3rd-level mastermind can call forth 1st-level minions (see the minions template in Appendix Two) equal in number to his mastermind level + Cha modifier. These minions are assumed to be within a full move of the area where the mastermind is located.

Sow Distrust (Ex): A mastermind of 4th level or higher can turn one character against another. The mastermind must spend a full-round action and know the name of the character he is attempting to persuade as well as the name of the character toward whom the target’s distrust will be directed. The target must be able to hear and understand the mastermind.

The target makes a Will save (DC = 10 + mastermind’s class level + mastermind’s Charisma modifier). If the target fails the save, her attitude toward the other designated character worsens by one step: helpful turns to friendly, friendly to indifferent, indifferent to unfriendly, unfriendly to hostile (see the *Player’s Handbook*,

Chapter 4: Skills, “Skill Descriptions,” *Diplomacy*). The target makes a new Will save whenever the mastermind uses this talent against her. As long as the target continues to fail the Will save, the mastermind can continue taking full-round actions to worsen the target’s attitude toward a designated character. When the target’s attitude drops to hostile, she attacks the designated character at the earliest opportunity.

A successful Will save doesn’t restore previous attitude shifts, but it does render the target immune for 24 hours to further attempts by the mastermind to sow distrust.

Diabolical Plan: Once per session, a 5th-level mastermind may stop a group of heroes cold with an explanation of his diabolical plan. The mastermind makes an Intimidate check; the result is the DC for a Will save each hero must make. Any character who fails is paralyzed (frozen in place, unable to move or act) for 2 rounds as the mastermind’s diabolical plan sinks in. A character who makes this save is still startled by the plan’s revelation and is considered shaken (–2 on attacks, saves, skill checks and ability checks) for 2 rounds.

Skills

All the existing skills that follow function in the same way as described in Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook*. However, the categories they cover require adjustment for the modern time frame in which **Adventure!** is set. Following this section are six new skills — Demolitions, Drive, Investigate, Pilot, Repair, Research — that likewise reflect the time in which the game is set. The Spellcraft and Use Magic Device skills are not used in **Adventure!**.

Craft (Int)

Adventure! adds to the Craft skill options, as described below. Note that some Craft skills may require training. Also, there is no Craft (alchemy); for the creation of poisons, use Craft (chemical). A short list of poisons is in the Appendix. Table 5–20: Craft Examples lists sample tasks and related DCs.

Craft (chemical): A character needs this to mix chemicals to create acids, bases, explosives and poisonous substances. (Trained use only.)

Craft (electronic): This allows a character to build or repair electronic equipment such as timers, radios or other communications equipment. (Trained use only.)

Craft (mechanical): With this skill, a character can build mechanical devices from scratch, including engines and engine parts, weapons, armor, and other gadgets. (Trained use only.)

Craft (pharmaceutical): A character must have this skill to compound medicinal drugs to aid in recovery from treatable illnesses. The proper medicinal drug gives a +2 circumstance bonus on Fortitude saves made to resist the effects of a disease. The DC to create a medicinal drug to combat a given illness is equal to the disease's Fortitude save DC + 5. (Diagnosis is made using the Heal skill.) (Trained use only.)

Craft (structural): This allows a character to build wooden, concrete or metal structures from scratch (including bookcases, desks, walls, houses and so forth), and includes such handyman skills as plumbing, house painting, drywall, laying cement and building cabinets.

Craft (visual art): With this skill, a character can create paintings or drawings, take photographs, use a movie camera, or in some other way create a work of visual art.

Table 5–20: Craft Examples

Task	Craft Skill	DC
Acid, potent (2d6 splash damage)	Chemical	20
Explosive, simple (2d6 damage within 5 ft.)	Chemical	15
Electronic timer	Electronic	15
Electronic detonator	Electronic	20
Tripwire trap	Mechanical	15
Engine component	Mechanical	20
False wall	Structural	15
Catapult	Structural	20
House	Structural	30
Talented amateur work	Visual Art or Writing	10
Professional work	Visual Art or Writing	20
Masterwork	Visual Art or Writing	30+

Craft (writing): This allows a character to create short stories, novels, scripts and screenplays, newspaper articles and columns, and similar works of writing.

Knowledge

Knowledge skills function as written in the *Player's Handbook*, except that characters select from the following categories:

Art: Fine arts and graphic arts, including art history and artistic techniques. Antiques, modern art, photography, and performance art forms such as music and dance, among others.

Behavioral Sciences: Psychology, sociology and criminology.

Business: Business procedures, investment strategies and corporate structures. Bureaucratic procedures and how to navigate them.

Civics: Law, legislation, litigation, and legal rights and obligations. Political and governmental institutions and processes.

Current Events: Recent happenings in the news, sports, politics, entertainment and foreign affairs.

Earth and Life Sciences: Biology, botany, genetics, geology and paleontology. Medicine and forensics.

History: Events, personalities and cultures of the past. Archaeology and antiquities.

Occult: The occult, magic and the supernatural, astrology, numerology and similar topics.

Physical Sciences: Astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, physics and engineering.

Popular Culture: Popular music and personalities, genre films and books, urban legends, and science fiction, among others.

Streetwise: Street and urban culture, local underworld personalities and events.

Tactics: Techniques and strategies for disposing and maneuvering forces in combat.

Technology: Current developments in cutting-edge devices, as well as the background necessary to identify various technological devices.

Theology and Philosophy: Liberal arts, ethics, philosophical concepts, and the study of religious faith, practice and experience.

Perform

Characters select from the following categories for Perform.

Act: The character is a gifted actor, capable of performing drama, comedy or action-oriented roles with some level of skill.

Dance: The character is a gifted dancer, capable of performing rhythmic and patterned bodily movements to music.

Keyboards: The character is a musician gifted with a talent for playing keyboard musical instruments, such as piano and organ.

Percussion Instruments: The character is a musician gifted with a talent for playing percussion musical instruments, such as drums, cymbals, triangle, xylophone and tambourine.

Sing: The character is a musician gifted with a talent for producing musical tones with her voice.

Stringed Instruments: The character is a musician gifted with a talent for playing stringed musical instruments, such as banjo, guitar, harp, lute, sitar and violin.

Vaudeville: The character is a gifted comedian, capable of performing a vaudeville routine before an audience.

Wind Instruments: The character is a musician gifted with a talent for playing wind musical instruments, such as flute, bugle, trumpet, tuba, bagpipes and trombone.

Also, since **Adventure!** uses a DC rating for wealth, Perform requires a different method for determining how much money a character can make from a single performance. (See Chapter Nine: Adventuring for the Wealth system in action.)

A character with Wealth bonus of +0 gains a +1 bonus if he succeeds at a DC 15 Perform check for a single performance. A character with a Wealth bonus from +1 to +20 gains a +1 bonus if he succeeds at five consecutive DC 15 Perform checks (each indicating a single performance) or one DC 20 Perform check for a single performance. A character with Wealth bonus +21 or higher gains a +1 bonus if he succeeds at 10 consecutive DC 20 Perform checks (each indicating a single performance) or one DC 25 Perform check for a single performance.

A Perform check result of at least 10 but lower than the DC required indicates that the character simply isn't performing well enough to draw a significant crowd. The character earns enough to get by, but that's it.

Speak Language

The languages listed in the *Player's Handbook* do not exist in the Trinity Universe. There are thousands of languages to choose from. A few are listed here, sorted into their general language groups. This list is not exhaustive, and languages in listed groups are shown for reference; a character gets a whole language group each time he buys a rank in Speak Language.

Languages noted with asterisks are ancient, spoken only by scholarly types or by small populations in isolated corners of the world. Speak Language functions as noted otherwise in the *Player's Handbook*.

Algic: Algonkin, Arapaho, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Shawnee.

Armenian: Armenian.

Athabaskan: Apache, Chipewyan, Navaho.

Attic: Ancient Greek*, Greek.

Baltic: Latvian, Lithuanian.

Celtic: Gaelic (Irish), Gaelic (Scots), Welsh.

Chinese: Cantonese, Mandarin.

Finno-Lappic: Estonian, Finnish, Lapp.

Germanic: Afrikaans, Danish, Dutch, English, Flemish, German, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish, Yiddish.

Hamo-Semitic: Coptic*, Middle Egyptian*.

Indic: Hindi, Punjabi, Sanskrit*, Urdu.

Iranian: Farsi, Pashto.

Japanese: Japanese.

Korean: Korean.

Romance: French, Italian, Latin*, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish.

Semitic: Akkadian (aka Babylonian)*, Ancient Hebrew*, Arabic, Aramaic*, Hebrew.

Slavic: Belorussian, Bulgarian, Czech, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Ukrainian.

Tibeto-Burman: Burmese, Sherpa, Tibetan.

Turkic: Azerbaijani, Turkish, Uzbek.

Ugric: Hungarian (aka Magyar).

New Skills

Demolitions (Int; Trained Only)

The character is familiar with setting and disarming high explosives, including dynamite, TNT and simple gunpowder bombs, as well as improvised explosives and even doomsday devices.

Check: Setting a simple explosive to blow up at a certain spot doesn't require a check, but connecting and setting a detonator does. Also, placing an explosive for maximum effect against a structure calls for a check, as does disarming an explosive device.

Set Detonator: Most explosives require a detonator to go off. Connecting a detonator to an explosive requires a DC 10 Demolitions check. Failure means that the explosive fails to go off as planned. Failure by 10 or more means the explosive goes off as the detonator is being installed.

A character can make an explosive difficult to disarm. To do so, the character chooses the disarm DC before making her check to set the detonator (it must be higher than 10). The character's DC to set the detonator is equal to the disarm DC.

Place Explosive Device: Placing an explosive against a fixed structure (a stationary, unattended, inanimate object) can maximize the damage dealt by exploiting vulnerabilities in the structure's construction.

The GM makes the check (so that the character doesn't know how well he has done). On a result of 15 or higher, the explosive deals double damage to the structure against which it is placed. On a result of 25 or higher, it deals triple damage to the structure. In all cases, it deals normal damage to all other targets within its burst radius.

Disarm Explosive Device: Disarming an explosive that has been set to go off requires a Demolitions check. The DC is usually 10, unless the person who set the detonator chose a higher disarm DC. If the character fails the check, she does not disarm the explosive. If the character fails by more than 5, the explosive goes off.

Special: A character can take 10 when using the Demolitions skill, but can't take 20.

A character with the Nimble Fingers feat and at least 1 rank in this skill gets a +2 bonus on all Demolitions checks.

Making an explosive requires the Craft (chemical) skill. Making an electronic detonator requires the Craft (electronic) skill. (See Table 5–20: Craft Examples, above.)

Time: Setting a detonator is usually a full-round action. Placing an explosive device takes 1 minute or more, depending on the scope of the job.

Drive (Dex)

This skill allows a character to drive a surface vehicle (car, motorcycle, boat, truck).

Check: Routine tasks, such as ordinary driving, don't require a skill check. Make a check only when some unusual circumstance exists (such as inclement weather or an icy surface), or when the character is driving during a dramatic situation (being chased or attacked, or trying to reach a destination in a limited amount of time). When driving, the character can attempt simple maneuvers or stunts. (See Chapter Nine: Adventuring, "Pursuit" for more details.)

Try Again?: Most driving checks have consequences for failure that make trying again impossible.

Special: A character can take 10 when driving, but can't take 20.

Time: A Drive check is a move action.

Investigate (Int; Trained Only)

Investigate encompasses a number of crime analysis techniques, including the reliable technology of fingerprinting and the new and exciting field of ballistics. It also involves more than passing familiarity with the art of deduction.

Check: A character uses Search to discover clues and Investigate to analyze them. If the character has access to a crime lab (these rare establishments are almost always fueled by super-science in the Inspiration Age), the character uses the Investigate skill to collect samples for the lab. The result of the Investigate check provides bonuses or penalties to further analysis.

Analyze Clue: The character can make a DC 15 Investigate check to apply forensics knowledge to a clue. The check DC is modified by the time that has elapsed since the clue was left, and whether or not the scene was disturbed.

DC Modifier	Circumstances
+2	Every day since event (max modifier +10)
+5	Scene is outdoors
+2	Scene disturbed slightly
+4	Scene disturbed moderately
+6	Scene disturbed extremely

Collect Evidence: The character can collect and prepare evidentiary material for a lab. On a successful DC 15 Investigate check, the character collects a usable piece of evidence. If the character fails the check by less than 5, a crime lab analysis can be done, but the analyst takes a -5 penalty on any necessary check. If the character fails by 5 or more, the analysis cannot be done. On the other hand, if the character succeeds by 10 or more, the analyst gains a +2 circumstance bonus on his checks.

Try Again?: Analyzing a clue again doesn't add new insight unless another clue is introduced. Evidence collected cannot be recollected, unless there is more of it to take.

Special: A character can take 10 when making an Investigate check, but cannot take 20. The Investigate skill does not provide the character with evidentiary items. It simply allows the character to collect items he has found in a manner that best aids in analysis later.

Time: Analyzing a clue is a full-round action. Collecting evidence generally takes 1d4 minutes per object.

Pilot (Dex; Trained Only)

This skill allows a character to fly and land an airplane or seaplane, or maneuver a submersible.

Check: Typical piloting tasks don't require checks. Checks are required during combat, for special maneuvers, or in other extreme circumstances, or when the pilot wants to attempt something outside the normal parameters of the vehicle. When piloting, the character can attempt simple maneuvers and stunts (actions in which the pilot attempts to do something complex very quickly or in a limited space).



Each vehicle’s description includes a maneuver modifier that applies to Pilot checks made by the operator of the vehicle.

Special: A character can take 10 when making a Pilot check, but can’t take 20.

Time: A Pilot check is a move action.

Repair (Int; Trained Only)

This skill allows trained characters to repair complex electronic or mechanical devices ranging from steam engines to factory conveyor belts or even wristwatches.

Check: Most Repair checks are made to fix complex electronic or mechanical devices. The GM sets the DC. In general, simple repairs have a DC of 10 to 15 and require no more than a few minutes to accomplish. More complex repair work has a DC 20 or higher and can require an hour or more to complete. Making repairs also involves a monetary cost when spare parts or new components are needed, represented by a Wealth check. If the GM decides this isn’t necessary for the type of repair the character is attempting, then no Wealth check is needed.

Task (Example)	Purchase DC	Repair DC	Repair Time
Simple (tool, simple weapon)	4	10	1 min.
Moderate (mechanical or electronic component)	7	15	10 min.
Complex (mechanical or electronic device)	10	20	1 hour
Advanced (cutting-edge mechanical or electronic device)	13	25	10 hours

Jury-Rig: A character can attempt jury-rigged, or temporary, repairs. This reduces the purchase DC by 3 and the Repair check DC by 5, and allows the character to make the checks in as little as a full-round action. However, a jury-rigged repair only fixes a single problem with each check, and the repair only lasts until the end of the current scene or encounter. The jury-rigged object must be repaired fully thereafter.

A character can also use jury-rig to hot-wire a car or jump-start an engine or electronic device. The DC for this is at least 15, and it can be higher depending on the presence of security devices. Jury-rigging can be used untrained.

Try Again?: Yes, though in some specific cases, the GM may decide that a failed Repair check has negative ramifications that prevent repeated checks.

Special: A character can take 10 or take 20 on a Repair check. When making a Repair check to accomplish a jury-rig repair, a character can’t take 20.

Repair requires an electrical tool kit, a mechanical tool kit, or a multipurpose tool, depending on the task. If the character does not have the appropriate tools, he takes a –4 penalty on the check.

Craft (mechanical) or Craft (electronic) can provide a +2 synergy bonus on Repair checks made for mechanical or electronic devices.

Time: See the table for guidelines. A character can make a jury-rig repair as a full-round action, but the work only lasts until the end of the current encounter.

Research (Int)

The Research skill allows a character to use libraries, university resources and newspaper archives to learn obscure or forgotten information about a given topic. Research is often quite time-consuming; it is the specialty of scholars.

Check: Researching a topic takes time, skill and some luck. The GM determines how obscure a particular topic is (the more obscure, the higher the DC) and what kind of information might be available depending on where the character is conducting his or her research.

Information ranges from general to protected. Given enough time and a successful skill check, the character gets a general idea about a given topic. This assumes that no obvious reasons exist why such information would be unavailable, and that the character has a way to acquire restricted or protected information.

The higher the check result, the better and more complete the information. If the character wants to discover a specific fact, date, map or similar bit of information, add +5 to +15 to the DC.

Try Again?: Yes.

Special: A character can take 10 or take 20 on a Research check.

Time: A Research check takes 1d4 hours.

CHAPTER

FEATS

SIX

Adventure! is not a traditional fantasy setting, but most of the feats from the *Player's Handbook* work just fine in the pulp era. Table 6–1: Feats lists the general feats that characters may use from the *Player's Handbook* as well as new general feats described below. Two new categories are also covered in this chapter: background feats and daring feats.

General Feats

Advanced Firearms Proficiency (General)

You are skilled in the operation of submachine guns like the Schmeisser or Thompson and light machine guns such as the Browning Automatic Rifle.

Prerequisite: Personal Firearms Proficiency.

Benefit: You suffer no penalty when firing a personal firearm on autofire (the gun must have an autofire setting).

Normal: Characters without this feat take a –4 penalty on attack rolls made with personal firearms set on autofire.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Archaic Weapons Proficiency (General)

Whether from taking a fencing class or growing up in a Lost World, you are familiar with archaic weapons such as spears and swords.

Benefit: You take no penalty on attack rolls when using any kind of archaic weapon.

Normal: A character without this feat suffers a –4 penalty when making attacks with archaic weapons.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Bonus Knack (Special)

You gain an additional psi or quantum knack, as appropriate to your template.

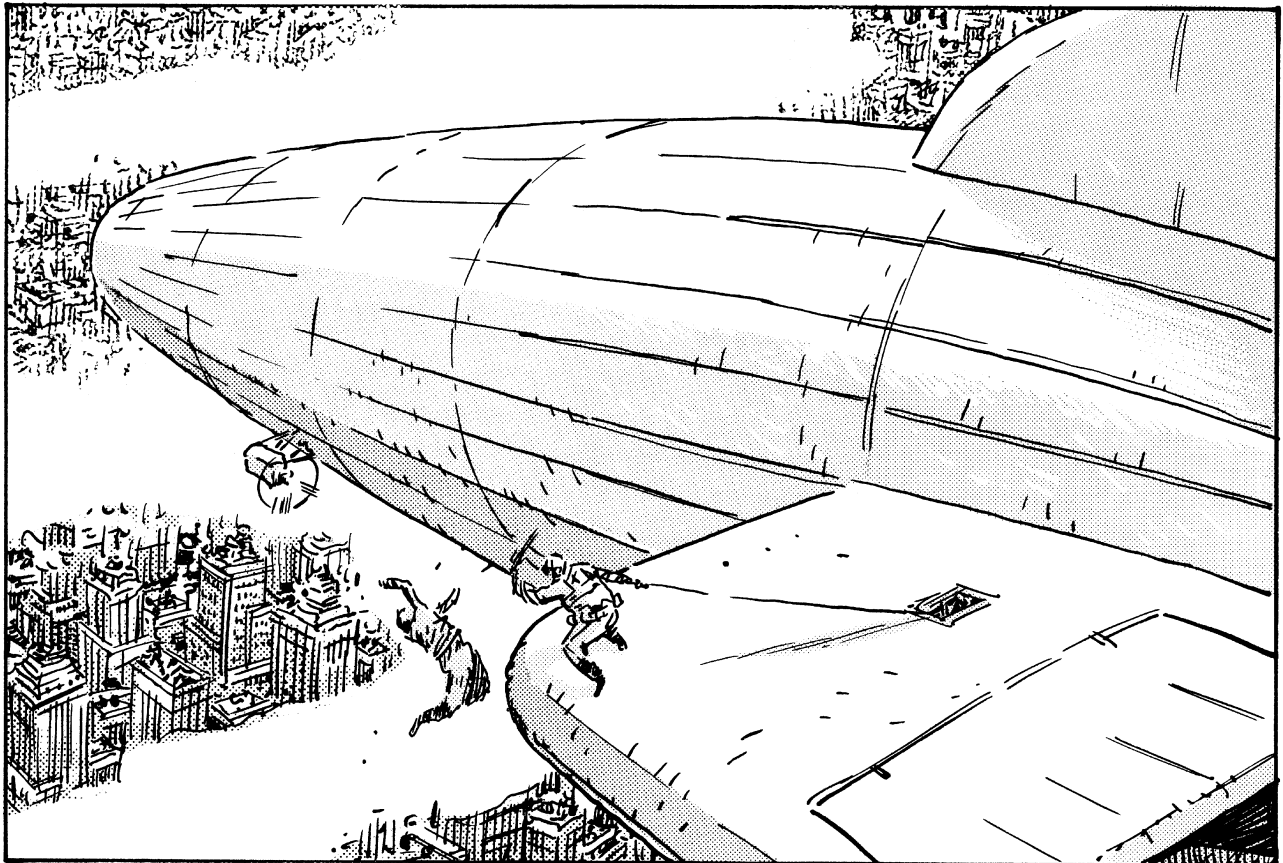


Table 6–1: Feats

General Feats

Player's Handbook

Acrobatic
Agile
Alertness
Animal Affinity
Armor Proficiency (light)¹
Athletic
Blind-Fight¹
Cleave¹
Combat Expertise¹
Combat Reflexes¹
Deceitful
Deflect Arrows
Deft Hands
Diehard
Diligent
Dodge¹
Endurance
Far Shot¹
Great Cleave¹
Great Fortitude
Greater Two-Weapon Fighting¹
Greater Weapon Focus¹
Greater Weapon Specialization¹
Improved Bull Rush¹
Improved Critical¹
Improved Disarm¹
Improved Feint¹
Improved Grapple¹
Improved Initiative¹
Improved Overrun¹
Improved Precise Shot¹
Improved Sunder¹
Improved Trip¹
Improved Two-Weapon Fighting¹

Player's Handbook

Investigator
Iron Will
Lightning Reflexes
Manyshot¹
Mobility¹
Mounted Archery¹
Mounted Combat¹
Negotiator
Nimble Fingers
Persuasive
Point Blank Shot¹
Power Attack¹
Precise Shot¹
Quick Draw¹
Rapid Shot¹
Ride-By Attack¹
Run¹
Self-Sufficient
Shot on the Run¹
Skill Focus
Snatch Arrows
Spirited Charge¹
Spring Attack¹
Stealthy
Stunning Fist
Toughness¹
Track
Trample¹
Two-Weapon Defense¹
Weapon Finesse¹
Weapon Focus¹
Weapon Specialization¹
Whirlwind Attack¹

Adventure!

Advanced Firearms Proficiency¹
Archaic Weapon Proficiency^{1, 2}
Bonus Knack
Brawl¹
Combat Martial Arts¹
Defensive Martial Arts¹
Double Tap¹
Drive-By Attack¹
Escapist
Exotic Firearms Proficiency¹
Exotic Melee Weapon Proficiency¹
Force Stop
Improved Brawl¹
Improved Knockout Punch¹
Improved Combat Martial Arts¹
Invent Compound
Invent Organism
Invent Device
Knockout Punch¹
Personal Firearms Proficiency¹
Swiftess
Quick Reload¹
Skip Shot¹
Strafe¹
Streetfighting¹
Surgery
Unbalance Opponent¹
Vehicle Dodge

Background Feats

Ally

Loyal Friend
Boon Companions
Band of Heroes

Backing

Company Man
Boss
In Charge

Cipher

Shadowy Past
Secret Life
Mystery Man

Followers

Retainers
Servants
Legions

Gadget

Gizmo
Contraption
Artifact

Influence

Celebrity
Luminary
Icon

Nemesis

Thorn in the Side
Dedicated Foe
Archenemy

Reputation

Recognized
Eminent
Renowned

Resources

Well-Off
Deep Pockets
Wealth Beyond Avarice

Table 6–1: Feats (cont.)

Background Feats (cont.)

Contacts

Well-Connected
Information Broker
Kingpin

Menagerie

Wild Friend
Animal Ally
Companion to Beasts

Mentor

Elder Brother
Wise Uncle
Learned Grandfather

Sanctum

Hideout
Private Palace
Sanctum Sanctorum

Daring Feats

Barnstormer
Complete Privacy
Death Defiance
Dramatic Entrance
Eagle Eyes
Enhanced Impact
Fists of Stone
Forgettable
Gadgeteer

Indomitable Will
Instant Expert
Jack of all Tongues
Lie Detector
Greased Lightning
Master of Dissimulation
One-Man Army
Perfect Poise

Resilient
Sea Dog
Steely Gaze
Trick Rider
Trick Shot
Universally Deadly
Untouchable
Wheelman

¹ This feat is available to a warrior as a warrior bonus feat. This does not restrict characters of other classes from selecting the feat, assuming that they meet any prerequisites.

² Since melee weapons are somewhat rare in the age of firearms, the Archaic Weapon Proficiency replaces the Simple and Martial Weapon Proficiencies.

At the GM's option, each existing feat that references ranged attacks, bows or crossbows can also be used with firearms.

Prerequisite: Psychic or superhuman template.

Benefit: Choose one additional free psi or quantum knack.

Special: You may choose a knack of any level available to you, but you must have fewer knacks of higher level than you have of lower level (see “Inspired Templates” in Chapter Five).

You may take this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack; instead, choose a new knack.

Brawl (General)

You have a lot of experience in fistfights, whether from boxing experience or a hard life on the street.

Benefit: When making an unarmed attack, you receive a +1 competence bonus on attack rolls and inflict (1d6 + Strength modifier) points of nonlethal damage.

Normal: Unarmed attacks normally deal (1d3 + Strength modifier) points of nonlethal damage.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Combat Martial Arts (General)

You are a professional unarmed fighter, or you have learned a fighting style from the distant Orient.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +1.

Benefit: With an unarmed strike, you inflict (1d4 + the character's Strength modifier) points of lethal or nonlethal damage (choose with each

strike). Your unarmed attacks count as armed — opponents do not get attacks of opportunity when you attack them unarmed. You may make attacks of opportunity against opponents who provoke such attacks.

Normal: Without this feat, a character deals (1d3 + Strength modifier) points of nonlethal damage. Unarmed attacks provoke attacks of opportunity, and unarmed combatants cannot make attacks of opportunity.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Defensive Martial Arts (General)

You prefer that others keep their hands to themselves.

Benefit: You gain a +1 dodge bonus to Armor Class against melee attacks.

Special: A condition that makes a character lose his Dexterity bonus to Armor Class also makes him lose dodge bonuses. Also, dodge bonuses stack, unlike most other types of bonuses.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Double Tap (General)

You have a steady hand and a quick trigger finger. With a revolver, you fan the hammer; with a semiautomatic pistol, you manage a quick double-shot.

Prerequisites: Dexterity 13, Point Blank Shot.

Benefit: When using a semiautomatic firearm with at least two bullets loaded, you may fire two bullets as a single attack against a

single target. You receive a –2 penalty on this attack, but inflict an additional die of damage appropriate to the weapon with a successful hit. Using this feat fires two bullets, and can only be used if the weapon has two bullets in it.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Drive-By Attack (General)

From military or gang experience, you can adjust your shooting style to account for the motion of a car, boat or plane.

Benefit: You take no vehicle speed penalty when making an attack while in a moving vehicle. If you are the driver, you can take your attack action to make an attack at any point along the vehicle's movement.

Normal: When attacking from a moving vehicle, a character takes a penalty based on the vehicle's speed. Passengers can ready an action to make an attack when the vehicle reaches a particular location, but the driver must make his attack action either before or after the vehicle's movement.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Escapist (General)

You are almost impossible to keep locked up.

Prerequisite: Search 6 ranks.

Benefit: Once per session on a successful DC 20 Search check, you can find your way out of nearly any enclosed space — jail cell, dead end alley, meat locker, basement — via some mundane manner of escape — loose bars, an air shaft, a rusted grate, a previously unseen alleyway, etc. This feat does not work against a secure space designed by an Inspired character.

Exotic Firearms Proficiency (General)

From military or other unusual experience, you have been exposed to heavy weaponry. Choose a weapon type from the following list: cannons, heavy machine guns, mortars.

Prerequisites: Personal Firearms Proficiency, Advanced Firearms Proficiency.

Benefit: You make attack rolls with the weapon normally.

Normal: A character who uses a weapon without being proficient with it takes a –4 penalty on attack rolls.

Special: A character can take this feat up to three times, each time selecting a different weapon group. A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Exotic Melee Weapon Proficiency (General)

You have been exposed to unusual weapons from distant lands.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +1.

Benefit: Choose one exotic melee weapon from the Exotic Weapons section of Table 7–5 in the *Player's Handbook*. You are proficient with that melee weapon in combat, making attack rolls with it normally.

Normal: A character who uses a weapon without being proficient with it takes a –4 penalty on attack rolls.

Special: For exotic weapons with fantasy race references, ignore the race name — so, waraxe, double axe and hooked hammer — and substitute “axe-spear” for “urgrosh.” A character can take this

feat multiple times, each time selecting a different exotic weapon. A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Force Stop (General)

When driving, you can exert some control over other vehicles by shoving them around with your vehicle.

Prerequisites: Drive 6 ranks.

Benefit: When you attempt a sideswipe stunt while you have movement remaining equal to your turn number, you can force the other vehicle to a stop by nudging it into a controlled sideways skid. (See Chapter Nine for rules on vehicle maneuvers.)

After succeeding on the sideswipe check, make a Drive check opposed by the other driver. If you succeed, the other vehicle turns 90 degrees in front of your vehicle to form a “T”, and the two move a distance equal to your turn number. The vehicles end their movement at that location, at stationary speed, and take normal sideswipe damage. If you fail the check, resolve the sideswipe normally.

Improved Brawl (General)

You're a very experienced fighter — you may have won some professional bouts, or you may be the guy in the back of the bar that everyone knows not to mess with.

Prerequisites: Brawl, base attack bonus +3.

Benefit: When making an unarmed attack, you receive a +2 competence bonus on attack rolls and inflict (1d8 + Strength modifier) points of nonlethal damage.

Normal: Unarmed attacks normally deal (1d3 + Strength modifier) points of nonlethal damage.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Improved Knockout Punch (General)

You have quite a way with a sucker punch. When you decide to start a fight, you often finish it with that same blow.

Prerequisites: Brawl, Knockout Punch, base attack bonus +6.

Benefit: When you make your first unarmed attack against a flat-footed opponent, treat a successful attack as a critical hit that inflicts triple damage. The damage inflicted is nonlethal.

Special: Even if the character can inflict lethal damage with unarmed attacks, a knockout punch always inflicts nonlethal damage. A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Improved Combat Martial Arts (General)

You have extensive experience with hand to hand combat in the style of your choice, and know just where to strike a target to do the most damage.

Prerequisites: Combat Martial Arts, base attack bonus +4.

Benefit: Your threat range on an unarmed strike improves to 19–20.

Normal: A character without this feat threatens an unarmed strike critical hit on a 20 only.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Invent Compound (Super-Science)

You have pushed the envelope of chemical science, venturing into entirely new realms of discovery.

Prerequisites: Inspired; Intelligence 13; Knowledge (physical sciences) 6 ranks, Craft (chemical or pharmaceutical) 6 ranks.



Benefit: You can use super-science to create compounds, as described in Chapter Eight: Knacks and Super-Science.

Invent Device (Super-Science)

You have unlocked the secrets of mechanical design.

Prerequisites: Inspired; Intelligence 13; Craft (mechanical) 6 ranks, Knowledge (technology) 6 ranks.

Benefit: You can use super-science to create devices, as described in Chapter Eight.

Invent Organism (Super-Science)

You have laid bare the secrets of physiology.

Prerequisites: Inspired; Intelligence 13; Heal 6 ranks, Knowledge (Earth & life sciences) 6 ranks; Surgery.

Benefit: You can use super-science to create organisms, as described in Chapter Eight.

Knockout Punch (General)

You know how to catch an opponent off-guard at the start of a fight.

Prerequisites: Brawl, base attack bonus +3.

Benefit: When you make your first unarmed attack against a flat-footed opponent, treat a successful attack as a critical hit. The damage inflicted is nonlethal.

Special: Even if the character can inflict lethal damage with unarmed attacks, a knockout punch always inflicts nonlethal damage. A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Personal Firearms Proficiency (General)

You are familiar with the operation of pistols, hunting rifles, shotguns and other standard personal sidearms.

Benefit: You can fire any personal firearm without penalty.

Normal: Characters without this feat take a –4 penalty on attack rolls made with personal firearms.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Quick Reload (General)

You can get bullets into a gun even faster than you usually get them out.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +1.

Benefit: Using a filled box magazine or a speed loader to reload a firearm is a free action. Reloading a revolver without a speed loader, or reloading any firearm with an internal magazine, is a move action.

Normal: Using a filled box magazine or a speed loader to reload a firearm is a move action. Reloading a revolver without a speed loader, or reloading any firearm with an internal magazine, is a full-round action.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Skip Shot (General)

You can ricochet a bullet off a hard surface and still threaten a target with that bullet.

Prerequisites: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

Benefit: If a target is within 10 feet of a solid, relatively smooth surface on which to skip a bullet, you may ignore cover between yourself and the target. You receive a –2 penalty on your attack roll, and the attack deals –1 die of damage. The surface need not be perfectly smooth and level — a brick wall or an asphalt road will work. You can attempt a skip shot around up to double cover (see *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 8: Combat, “Combat Modifiers,” *Cover*).

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Strafe (General)

You have superior control over a Tommy gun or other fully automatic weapon when hosing an area down.

Prerequisites: Personal Firearms Proficiency, Advanced Firearms Proficiency.

Benefit: When using a firearm on autofire, you can affect an area four 5-foot squares long and one square wide (that is, any four squares in a straight line).

Normal: A firearm on autofire normally affects a 10-foot-by-10-foot area.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Streetfighting (General)

You've picked up many dirty brawling techniques during your time on the streets, in jail or in a foreign land.

Prerequisites: Brawl, base attack bonus +2.

Benefit: Once per round, you inflict an extra 1d4 points of damage if you make a successful melee attack with an unarmed strike or a light weapon.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Surgery (General)

You are trained in surgical techniques.

Prerequisite: Heal 4 ranks.

Benefit: You can use the Heal skill to perform surgery without penalty.

Normal: Characters without this feat take a –4 penalty on Heal checks made to perform surgery.

Swiftness (General)

You are fast on your feet.

Benefit: Your movement rate increases by 5 feet per round so long as you are under no greater than a light or medium load.

Special: A character may gain this feat multiple times. Its effects stack.

Unbalance Opponent (General)

Your skill in combat is such that you never present a suitable target for a foe to land an accurate blow.

Prerequisites: Defensive Martial Arts, base attack bonus +6.

Benefit: During your action, you choose an opponent no more than one size category larger or smaller than yourself. That opponent cannot add his Strength modifier to attack rolls when targeting you (an opponent with a Strength penalty still suffers that penalty). Your foe's Strength modifier applies to damage, as usual. You can select a new opponent each time you have an action.

Special: A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

Vehicle Dodge (General)

Thanks to your driving skill, any vehicle you steer suffers comparatively little damage in combat.

Prerequisites: Dexterity 13, Drive or Pilot 6 ranks.

Benefit: During your action when driving a vehicle, designate an opposing vehicle or a single opponent. Your vehicle and each passenger aboard it receives a +1 dodge bonus to Armor Class against attacks from that vehicle or opponent. You can select a new vehicle or opponent each time you have an action.

Background Feats

Background feats represent your social support structure and pre-adventuring life. You start with one free background feat, but you may use regular feat slots to purchase additional background feats. Some classes acquire additional background feat slots, which may be used to purchase a background feat only. These feats are organized in “trees;” the listings below include a general description of the background feat tree, followed by the feats within that tree. Unless stated otherwise, the bonus for a higher-ranking feat replaces that from a previous level (e.g., under Backing, the +4 bonus a Boss enjoys replaces the +2 bonus that a Company Man has).

Background feats are not required for you to have friends, a job, a nice car, a swank home and the like. Rather, these feats indicate parts of your life and associations that are unique and special — you may have plenty of friends, but those purchased through the Allies background feat are the only ones who'll stick around when the going gets tough; you may have a government job, but it's a mundane post of no consequence unless you get some Backing.

Ally

“We’ve been friends since we were both in short pants. Whatever you need, just ask.”

Allies represent the people who are closest to you — not just pool hall pals to help you spend a paycheck, but bosom companions you can go to for advice if you're in dire straits. Thick or thin, wrong or right, the ally is there for you. Can an ally betray you? Sure — ask Othello or Julius Caesar. But that's unlikely to happen unless you mistreat your buddy. (If you only visit your boyhood chum when you need a body hidden, said chum will fast realize the *real* basis of the relationship.) Friendship is a two-way street, and the pal who bailed you out last week may be the chump who needs your help right now.

It's important to define the relationship you have with each ally. Are you all members of the same Masonic group? Childhood playmates? Did some time on the same cell block? Defining the connection gives the GM a better means to put your allies in the story the way you envisioned them.

An ally is most often a regular, un-Inspired human. The details of an ally's abilities and resources are left to the GM's discretion, but he should keep the player's general intent and the characters' shared background in mind. The typical ally leads a quieter life than that of a PC, but he may still learn and grow with time — perhaps even becoming Inspired after exposure to Z-rays! (Of course, such an event is subject to GM approval.)

The ally always supports you; he isn't the hero of the story — that's the PC's role. To clarify this supporting role, an ally does not gain experience points in the normal fashion (although he is always included when calculating the experience point awards if he takes an active role in an encounter). Instead, the ally is always two character

levels lower than you are. The ally gains a level whenever you do, maintaining the two-level difference. (A starting character's ally is 1st level, and stays at 1st level until the PC reaches 3rd level.)

Loyal Friend

You have a steadfast pal.

Benefit: One un-Inspired ally of any class (or combination of classes).

Boon Companions

You also have a pair of close companions.

Prerequisites: Loyal Friend.

Benefit: Two allies, one of whom may be Inspired pending GM approval.

Special: These allies are in addition to those gained from Loyal Friend.

Band of Heroes

You enjoy the company of three more friends.

Prerequisites: Loyal Friend, Boon Companions.

Benefit: Three allies, one of whom may be Inspired pending GM approval.

Special: These allies are in addition to those gained from Loyal Friend and Boon Companions.

Backing

"You know whom I represent. Do you really want to cross us?"

Backing represents your standing in an official (or unofficial) organization. This could be a business, a government agency, the military or a shadowy secret society. With GM approval, you may take Backing multiple times to represent status in different organizations (perfect for double agents...).

This is more than an average job. Backing gives you special authority within the organization, as indicated by Charisma and Wealth check bonuses. The Wealth check bonus can be applied to temporary requisitions or outright purchases. To requisition equipment, apply the bonus to a standard Wealth check (see Chapter Nine: Adventuring) as normal, except that your Wealth bonus doesn't change regardless of the item's purchase DC. A successful roll indicates that you have "checked out" the item for a period of time. The exact duration may vary depending on the story, but should only ever be long enough for one short mission — trailing a subject through the city for the night, making a dawn raid on an enemy stronghold, etc. If you lose a requisitioned item or return it damaged beyond repair, your pay is docked to cover the loss — in other words, your Wealth bonus drops -1 for an item up to purchase DC 15 and -2 for an item over purchase DC 15. (See Chapter Nine: Adventuring, "Wealth" for more details.)

You can also apply the Backing feat's Wealth bonus to purchase items outright, as someone in the organization puts you in touch with those who have the object available. This is not a constant bonus; instead, you gain this benefit less often for more expensive items, as indicated on the chart below.

Purchase DC	Backing Applies...
1–15	once a week
16–20	once a month
21–30	once every 6 months
31+	once a year

You aren't solely on the receiving end of the gravy train here. The group looks out for you, trusts you with its finances and equipment, gives you leadership over its personnel and so on because it expects you to further its goals. (Backing from an organization you don't believe in is ripe with dramatic potential, but don't be surprised if the group stops trusting you pretty quick.) If you abuse the benefits of your Backing, you will face the consequences, sooner or later.

Company Man

You have some weight you can throw around — just remember that you can catch it from on high if you make waves.

Example: An Army sergeant, division manager.

Benefit: Gain a +2 bonus on Charisma rolls and Charisma-based skill checks when dealing with someone of the same organization; to resist attempts by others in the organization to sway your attitude or activities; and on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks when dealing with other organizations familiar with the one you belong to.

Gain Wealth bonus +2; you can requisition equipment of up to purchase DC 20 once per session.

Boss

You're a mover and a shaker, on a first-name basis with the uppermost powers within the organization.

Example: 33rd-Degree Freemason, vice president of operations.

Prerequisites: Company Man, character level 3rd.

Benefit: Gain a +4 bonus on Charisma rolls and Charisma-based skill checks when dealing with someone of the same organization; to resist attempts by others in the organization to sway your attitude or activities; and on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks when dealing with other organizations familiar with the one you belong to.

Gain Wealth bonus +4; you can requisition equipment of up to purchase DC 30 once per session.

In Charge

You don't just *have* authority in an organization — you *are* the authority. Becoming the Pope or head of the Joint Chiefs is stretch, but you could easily be the ruler of a small nation, the ultimate mastermind behind a global conspiracy or the leader of a fledgling religious cult.

Prerequisites: Company Man, Boss; character level 5th.

Benefit: Gain a +6 bonus on Charisma rolls and Charisma-based skill checks when dealing with someone of the same organization; to resist attempts by others in the organization to sway your attitude or activities; and on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks when dealing with other organizations familiar with the one you belong to.

Gain Wealth bonus +8; you can requisition equipment of up to purchase DC 40 once per session.

You wield significant influence if you're in direct contact with underlings. More often, you are an impersonal figure who rules from a distance. Your orders are carried through proper channels and trickle down to the individual priests/soldiers/employees, who may choose to ignore or alter them. Note also that you are still subject to Wealth constraints. You're using the organization's funds, which are not your own. (Use Resources if you want to throw your own money around.)

Cipher

“Skeletons in the closet?” What a charming turn of phrase.”

Adventure! is set in a world of international danger, intrigue and excitement. That’s all well and good, but you seldom want international danger following you home and kidnapping your fiancée. Cipher represents factors that impair those who would delve into your secrets. You might have simply led an uneventful life (at least as far as written records are concerned). Maybe you don’t have a birth certificate or passport — or maybe you have several of each.

Regardless of how you define your aura of secrecy, each Cipher feat reduces the chance of success for any investigation of your background or identity. Doing something stupid — leaving your business card at the scene of a crime or getting photographed holding a gun to the German ambassador’s head — will have a negative impact on your Cipher background feat: You lose the background benefit until the incident “blows over.” Just when that occurs is subject to the GM’s discretion.

Shadowy Past

There is a certain amount of uncertainty about your past.

Benefit: A –4 penalty applies on any skill checks that involve digging up facts about you or your past.

Secret Life

You are mystery wrapped in an enigma.

Prerequisite: Shadowy Past.

Benefit: A –8 penalty applies on any skill checks that involve digging up facts about you or your past. Additionally, you have one “cover identity,” a set of falsified legal documents — passport, driver’s license and bank account with a Wealth bonus half that of your main identity (round down to a minimum of 1).

Mystery Man

You cover your tracks so well that you wonder who you really are sometimes.

Prerequisites: Shadowy Past, Secret Life.

Benefit: A –15 penalty applies on any skill checks that involve digging up facts about you or your past. The penalty applies as long as you take even simple precautions to protect your secrets. There’s no hiding the fact that you’re also the mysterious vigilante Jet Justice if you run around as Jet Justice with your face uncovered. However, a ruse as simple as wearing glasses in your secret identity baffles the most astute observers. You also gain two additional “cover identities” for a total of three; see Secret Life above.

Contacts

“Yeah, I think I know a guy who knows a guy who can help us.”

You have associates who know things, can supply things or can get things done. Still, these people are not allies. An ally sticks with you out of a close sense of personal responsibility. Contacts are people who associate with you out of a sense of self-interest. The guy you pulled out of a trench in the Great War is an ally. The crooked cop you slip a double-sawbuck in exchange for the latest precinct gossip is a contact.

Contacts are easy to reach, either directly or through an underling, and are available on short notice — though not always at your

convenience. They are not guaranteed to help you in every situation, but they don’t act against you willingly. (Using the *Influencing NPC Attitudes* sidebar in the *Player’s Handbook*, Chapter 4: Skills, “Skill Descriptions,” a contact’s attitude toward you is never worse than indifferent.) The only exception is if you take repeated action to offend the contact. Like an ally or a follower, a contact has a will of his own and won’t long stand for being mistreated.

Contact	Geographic Scale	Example
Local	Large metropolitan area or small country	Parisian high society gossip
National	Large nation or small continent	Mob activities in the U.S.
Global	The known world	Weapons dealers in any port

Each contact has an area of interest, a broad but defined field of inquiry involving a diverse network of experts and informants. The network’s geographic size is limited depending on which Contacts background feat you have. You and the GM must agree upon the contact’s area of interest; the GM then determines secretly the extent of the contact’s expertise, knowledge and resources.

Well-Connected

You know some guys who know things.

Benefit: You receive a +2 bonus on general Gather Information checks. You also gain three local contacts or one national contact; each confers a +4 bonus on your Gather Information checks in a specific area of interest.

Information Broker

You have a solid network of informants.

Prerequisite: Well-Connected.

Benefit: You receive a +4 bonus on general Gather Information checks. You gain three national contacts or one global contact; each confers a +8 bonus on your Gather Information checks in a specific area of interest.

Special: The contacts gained with this feat are in addition to those from Well-Connected.

Kingpin

You don’t just curry favor with powerful individuals; you are the ultimate arbiter of favor. You have many capable folks convinced (perhaps fraudulently) that it is in their best interests to provide you with any favor, information or advantage they can.

Prerequisites: Well-Connected, Information Broker; character level 5th.

Benefit: You receive a +6 bonus on general Gather Information checks. On a successful DC 13 Charisma check, you know of a nearby contact anywhere in the known world who confers a +10 bonus on your Gather Information checks on a local area of interest of your choosing. You can also prevail upon this contact for free food and lodging for a number of weeks (if you’re alone) or days (if you’re with a group) equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). The contact’s receptiveness does not extend to floating you a million-dollar loan or committing felonies at your request.

Special: You retain the contacts gained from Well-Connected and Information Broker.

Followers

"We have them on the run now, my loyal comrades. After them!"

Followers are ordinary people, NPCs who obey your orders. They may be your loyal business staff, sailors under your command or even a local gang drawn by your reputation. Whatever their origins, they follow you for a specific reason — loyalty to a cause, belief in a shared philosophy or even just a steady paycheck. Whatever the case, you must maintain that relationship — promoting the cause, espousing the philosophy, signing the checks — through the course of the series or your followers will become disillusioned and look for more rewarding pursuits. Likewise, followers are not blindly obedient and may leave if treated callously. Followers killed in the line of duty are not replaced automatically; you need to recruit them through roleplay.

A follower has one particular asset or talent, but otherwise does not enjoy tremendous breadth of ability (if he did, he wouldn't be following you). A follower lacks the accomplishment of an ally or a contact. Followers have the minion template (see Appendix Two) and cannot be Inspired.

Follower	Degree of Skill		
Loyalty	Average ¹	Competent ²	Professional ³
Hired	d% + 3d8	5d10	2d8
Loyal	d% + 3d6	4d8	2d6
Fanatic	d% + 3d4	4d6	2d4

¹ 1st-level.

² 3rd-level, up to 25% may be Inspired.

³ 5th-level, up to 50% may be Inspired.

Hired followers are just that — they don't put in any effort beyond what they get paid to do.

Loyal followers trust in your leadership, but won't sacrifice themselves for the cause — each gains a +2 bonus on saving throws and skill checks to resist betraying you knowingly.

Fanatic followers give themselves fully to the cause — each is immune to any Inspired ability or skill check that would cause them to abandon you or subject you to harm knowingly.

Special: These followers add to those gained from Retainers and Servants.

Retainers

You have a few loyalists.

Benefit: Three 1st-level followers or one 2nd-level follower.

Servants

You have a band of loyal followers.

Prerequisite: Retainers; character level 4th.

Benefit: Eight 1st-level followers or three 2nd-level followers.

Special: These followers add to those gained from Retainers.

Legions

You have a great number of people willing to do what you say.

Prerequisites: Retainers, Servants; character level 8th.

Benefit: The number of followers you can call on depends on how loyal and how skilled they are. Conceptually, you could have anything from a dozen expert assassins to hundreds of normal people (or, perhaps, a little more

gullible than the norm) who follow you as long as it doesn't get them in trouble. Practically, you determine your followers' loyalty and parameters of skill, as indicated in the chart below. Once that's set, roll as indicated determine how many members of your legions you can call upon in each game session.

Gadget

"Behold! The ultimate achievement of scientific genius!"

You own something not available to the general public. It could be anything from an antique samurai sword of legendary properties ("It's called 'Oil Merchant' because one of the Emperor's bodyguards once cut an oil merchant clean in half with it.") to an invention decades ahead of the current technological curve. A gadget may also be an existing machine concealed or altered in some way — a machine gun briefcase, a boat capable of short flights. These items are rare as hen's teeth, and you need a good explanation why you have something so esoteric, experimental and/or advanced.

A gadget is likely to be the target of thieves and con men. In the proper circles, the item (and your mastery of it) is nigh-legendary, and your enemies will go to considerable lengths to separate you from it. Yet, it will always return to you somehow, and will never fail when you need it. If your gadget is ever separated from you, coincidence returns it by the end of the story (recovering it may even be the story's focus). A gadget cannot be destroyed except in the most extreme circumstances, or by killing its owner.

The capabilities discussed below are covered under "Super-Science" in Chapter Eight. An advanced gadget cannot have more options than are allowed under the relevant super-science category. Assume an innovative gadget has the following specifications:

Effect: Depends on feat level (see below).

Skill Rank: Equal to your starting Inspiration score.

Options: Depends on feat level (see below).

Operation: By you alone.

Durability: Maximum hardness, hit points and break DC.

Warranty: "Unlimited."

Charges: Equal to your starting Inspiration score +1.

The GM has the final say on any gadget's capabilities.

Gizmo

An impressive item with capabilities beyond the norm. It enjoys a strong reputation within a certain subculture or a vague, widespread reputation among the general populace.

Benefit: In super-science terms, a Gizmo is an advancement with up to 5 options, or an innovation that duplicates a 1st-level knack.

Special: You may take this feat multiple times, with each representing a different gadget.

Contraption

The gadget is rare and powerful, with a reputation that overshadows that of its owner.

Prerequisite: Gizmo.

Benefit: In super-science terms, a Contraption is an advancement with up to 10 options, or an innovation that duplicates one 2nd-level knack or three 1st-level knacks. Alternatively, it has some other unique and very significant capabilities (approved by the GM, of course).

Special: You may take this feat multiple times, with each representing a different gadget.

Artifact

The gadget is a powerful super-science apparatus, something of truly stupendous proportions. Such an amazing item is sure to be sought after by any number of agencies; and its construction, deployment, maintenance and defense could well be the focus of an entire series. The possibilities are wide open, as long as you use common sense and respect the scope of the GM's campaign.

Prerequisite: Gizmo, Contraption.

Benefit: A gadget of this scale may provide up to 20 options or duplicate the effects of any knacks with a total of six levels — six 1st-level knacks, three 2nd-level knacks, two 3rd-level knacks or any combination thereof.

You can combine options and knack effects as long as the respective points don't exceed the total feat rating — so the Artifact might have one 3rd-level knack effect and 10 options. You can create capabilities not described in this book with GM approval.

Special: You may take this feat multiple times, with each representing a different gadget.

Influence

"I'll pass your opinion along to the President at our luncheon next week. What's that? Ah; I was hoping you would see things my way."

Instead of the clear definitions, limits and threats of enforcement of concrete authority, you can apply discretionary social pressure. With influence, you mold how people think and feel about certain issues. This need not be a high-profile affair. Indeed, many influential people are not well known in public circles, but their power is felt where it counts. The source of this influence could be political, social or even religious. In any event, when you talk, people pay attention.

Celebrity

You are a regional celebrity of some note.

Benefit: Gain a +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks. Additionally, on a successful DC 15 Diplomacy check, you can get access for casual or professional conversation with a politician, media representative or celebrity within your sphere of influence (large metropolitan area or small country).

Luminary

You're renowned internationally for an area of expertise or have a broader influence in a smaller area.

Prerequisite: Celebrity; character level 4th.

Benefit: Gain an extra +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks (total +4). Also, once per session you can call for (or call off) official or public intervention — summon the police, arrange for a search warrant, have a nosy reporter pulled off a story, etc. — within your sphere of influence (large nation or small continent). You can't use this to break the law, but you can certainly *bend* it. Still, using this for trivial and/or falsified reasons may work for the moment, but could have repercussions later — whether bringing your activities to the attention of others in power or even resulting in your arrest.

Special: This benefit adds to that gained from Celebrity.

Icon

You seldom debate with the top minds in your field, for your views wield such authority that it's almost impossible to gainsay your words.

Even if your renown is in art history, your influence as a great mind of the 1920s lends you tremendous clout in other areas. Whether global politics or military strategy, if you can speak on the subject knowledgeably, people will give everything you say serious consideration.

Prerequisites: Celebrity, Luminary; character level 8th.

Benefit: Gain an extra +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks (total +6). Once per character level, you may attempt to call for (or call off) official or media attention on an international scale. The world at large may not know about your influence in the matter, but there's no hiding your involvement from other figures of power. This requires a Diplomacy check with the DC based on the desired outcome.

Special: This benefit adds to that gained from Celebrity and Luminary.

DC	Desired Outcome
10	Trigger a union strike
15	Have the <i>New York Times</i> run an exposé
20	Tie up a bill in committee
25	Call for a political prisoner's release
30	Have top secret diplomatic or corporate information leaked
40	Mobilize the Pacific fleet

Menagerie

"Akla! Uriel! To me!"

You are the proud owner of one or more loyal animal companions, as well as the facilities needed to tend to your furry, feathered and/or scaled friends (kennels for dogs, a cave for bats, etc.).

You never need to make Handle Animal checks when dealing with animals from your menagerie. Riding in dangerous or tricky situations may still require a check — the animal wants to obey, but your skill or the circumstances may not oblige. At the GM's discretion, instead of specific animals, you may instead call wild animals to perform your bidding for the scene.

When selecting each feat from this tree, choose from animal or vermin types in the *MM* that meet the feat's listed Challenge Rating. Though un-Inspired, each is a superior specimen (it has the maximum hit points possible for a creature of its kind). If a member of your menagerie dies or if you release it from your service, you must wait 24 hours before calling a new one.

Wild Friend

You have one impressive animal or a group of lesser creatures.

Benefit: You gain one animal or vermin with Challenge Rating 3, two with CR 1, or four with a CR less than 1.

Animal Ally

You have some large, smart, and/or scary creatures at your side.

Prerequisite: Wild Friend; character level 3rd.

Benefit: You gain one animal or vermin with CR 5, two with CR 3, four with CR 1, or six with a CR less than 1.

Special: This adds to animals or vermin gained from Wild Friend.

Companion to Beasts

You have a veritable zoo of loyal creatures.

Prerequisites: Wild Friend, Animal Ally; character level 5th.

Benefit: You gain one animal or vermin with CR 7, two with CR 5, four with CR 3, eight with CR 1, or 12 with CR less than 1.

Special: This adds to animals or vermin gained from Wild Friend and Animal Ally.

Mentor

“Master, your insight is as illuminating as the rays of the morning sun.”

You have someone looking out for you, guiding your career and providing protection, training and the benefits of experience. The mentor’s reasons for offering these benefits may be obvious and noble (“He’s my daddy!”) or less of both (“He’s just this mysterious man who shows up after I dial this code — that has way too many numbers”). Whatever motivates him, your mentor is a powerful figure who can do a lot for you... but expects something in return. Just what that is may be as obvious or mysterious as the mentor himself.

Although you determine the basic concept and relationship for the mentor, the GM handles all aspects of his actual capabilities. Unlike a contact or ally, there’s no question of this being a meeting of equals. The mentor considers himself your superior — and he’s probably right, at least in the beginning. A mentor may be Inspired but is not required to be. He increases in character level up to a certain maximum, as noted below. If you go beyond that level, you surpass your mentor in ability — although he may still have wisdom to bestow.

The mentor may serve as a sort of *deus ex machina* rescuer of last resort, but he won’t help you out of every jam you get into. A mentor forced to save your bacon too often will eventually seek out one who shows more potential.

Each Mentor feat lists the mentor’s character level in relation to yours. This is influenced further by his availability and influence, as indicated below. Each level modifier increases the mentor’s level relative to you, but reduces his maximum possible level. So, an Elder Brother who is moderately available gains one additional character level and is reduced to a 9th-level possible maximum.

Level Adjustment	Reason
1	Moderately available (brief scene once per session)
2	Readily available (frequent interaction each session)
2	Extensive influence or resources (mentor is police chief, etc.)

Elder Brother

Your benefactor is probably a great deal like you, only more experienced and better connected.

Benefit: Mentor is two levels higher than you, to a maximum of 10th level.

Wise Uncle

The person supporting you has broad and deep connections, and a great deal of experience when it comes to using them.

Prerequisite: Elder Brother.

Benefit: Mentor is three levels higher than you, to a maximum of 15th level.

Learned Grandfather

Whoever your mentor is, he is well known among the corridors of power.

Prerequisites: Elder Brother, Wise Uncle,

Benefit: Mentor is four levels higher than you, to a maximum of 18th level.

Nemesis

“You?! I should have known that you were behind this!”

You have an enemy, someone you have a burning, driving urge to stymie, confound and destroy — and she feels the same way about you. You may not want to kill one another (though it’s likely), but nothing else short of the others’ total destruction will do. This is not like hating the Ku Klux Klan or some other abstract organization. It’s personal. A nemesis must be an individual — though she may employ any number of lackeys to cause you grief.

This may not seem like an advantage at first blush, but these feats do confer ancillary benefits, not the least of which is the sense of purpose a nemesis gives to your life. If the nemesis has other enemies, they’re your friends (at least nominally). And if your nemesis is a known villain, being known as her enemy can be good for your reputation.

Also, when you know *for certain* — assuming doesn’t count — that your nemesis is behind the plot you’re mixed up in, you can roll to regain temporary Inspiration (up to your total capacity) as indicated for each feat below. Discovering the nemesis’s influence should be a challenge, perhaps the result of multiple games’ worth of adventuring. Uncovering the truth should be as dramatic as if you’ve actually encountered the nemesis face-to-face. (Note that your enemy can do the exact same thing in response to any plans that you make against her, too....)

Thorn in the Side

You and your foe have crossed paths a few times.

Benefit: Regain 1d3 temporary Inspiration. When investigating some activity or mystery, gain a +4 bonus on any Sense Motive checks to determine whether it smacks of involvement by your nemesis.

Special: You may take this feat multiple times, with each representing a different nemesis. However, you only regain Inspiration through this feat once per session — even if your multiple nemeses have joined forces.

Dedicated Foe

The battles between you and your enemy are memorable and well known.

Prerequisite: Thorn in the Side

Benefit: Regain an additional power point when your nemesis’ plans are uncovered. Also gain a +4 bonus to Bluff and Intimidate checks against those in the employ of your nemesis, due to the stories that have spread about your conflict. (The GM may apply this bonus in secret if you aren’t aware that a given person works for your nemesis.)

Special: These benefits add to those gained from Thorn in the Side.



"Menschheit! Zum Himmel!"

Archenemy

The conflict between you and your foe is the stuff of legend.

Prerequisites: Thorn in the Side, Dedicated Foe.

Benefit: Regain an additional power point (for a total of two power points) when your nemesis' plots are revealed. Also, once per session while in combat with your nemesis or with those who you have established serve her, you may confirm a critical hit automatically. That is to say, if you've rolled a threat (a natural 20 or a roll within the weapon's threat range), you confirm that hit as a critical without the need to roll again.

Special: These benefits add to those gained from Thorn in the Side and Dedicated Foe.

Reputation

"Jumpin' Jiminy! D'you know who that is?!"

Charismatic (and terrifying) figures have begun to seize the spotlight on the world stage in the early 20th century. A reputation can be positive or negative, accurate or spurious. Ruis the Yellow may be known throughout Brazil as the most cowardly thief alive, while only a few souls in the Hague know of the terrifying figure known as Dread Alabaster — yet while Ruis the Yellow really is willing to ditch his cohorts at the first sign of trouble, "Dread Alabaster" is actually an urban fiction concocted by a trio of bored university students.

A reputation's truth matters little compared to its impact on those who know of it. Although it conveys no actual authority, a reputation may have

a positive or negative connotation — related as modifiers to certain Charisma-based skill checks — depending on the person who recognizes you.

If your reputation might influence an NPC you encounter, the GM makes a Reputation check using (1d20 + your Reputation bonus + the NPC's Intelligence modifier or Knowledge skill rating if relevant) against DC 25. If successful, the listed modifiers apply to any skill checks relating to that character for the rest of the scene.

You must describe your reputation in a sentence or two when selecting the first feat of this tree. All relating benefits depend on that reputation. Of course, a character who doesn't know — or know of — you can't be influenced by your reputation.

Recognized

Minor fame or notoriety.

Benefit: Your Reputation bonus is +3. If considered famous, you gain a +2 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information and Perform checks. If considered infamous, you gain a +2 bonus on Intimidate and Perform checks and apply a –2 penalty on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks.

Special: You may take this feat more than once, with each applying to different forms of renown.

Eminent

You are well-known in the mainstream.

Prerequisite: Recognized.

Benefit: Your Reputation bonus is +5. If considered famous, you gain a +4 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information and Per-

form checks. If considered infamous, you gain a +4 bonus on Intimidate and Perform checks and apply a –4 penalty on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks.

Special: You may take this feat more than once, with each applying to different forms of renown.

Renowned

Your name is familiar to all but the most remote and secluded individuals.

Prerequisites: Recognized, Eminent.

Benefit: Your Reputation bonus is +10. If considered famous, you gain a +6 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information and Perform checks. If considered infamous, you gain a +6 bonus on Intimidate and Perform checks and apply a –6 penalty on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks.

Special: You may take this feat more than once, with each applying to different forms of renown.

Resources

“Money is no object!”

Your class determines your base Wealth bonus, which you use to buy the things you want (see Appendix Two for specifics). This feat tree indicates your ability to get the most out of your finances. Just how it’s handled is up to you — you negotiate incredible deals, someone is always popping by to repay a debt, you enter (and win) every raffle under the sun, you have a keen eye for the stock market, or you’re just really, really loaded. The bottom line is that your finances don’t suffer the same ebb and flow that others experience.

Well-Off

You always make sure you have money set aside for a rainy day — or for an urge to indulge.

Benefit: Increase your Wealth bonus by +2. An item’s purchase DC is considered five points lower when applying a Wealth bonus decrease. The item’s purchase price remains the same, and the decrease for a purchase DC 15 or higher still applies.

Deep Pockets

You lack nothing in the way of comfort and can buy just about anything that catches your eye.

Prerequisite: Well-Off.

Benefit: Increase your Wealth bonus by +4. An item’s purchase DC is considered 10 points lower when applying a Wealth bonus decrease. The item’s purchase price remains the same, and the decrease for a purchase DC 15 or higher still applies.

Wealth Beyond Avarice

It’s simplicity itself for you to acquire any mass-produced or common object. More expensive items may require longer (months or possibly even years) — not because you can’t afford them, but because they have to be made to order. After all, not many zeppelins get built. The plus side is that when you buy very expensive things such as custom yachts and buildings, you can design them to your own eccentric specifications.

Prerequisites: Well-Off, Deep Pockets

Benefit: Increase your Wealth bonus by +8. An item’s purchase DC is considered 20 points lower when applying a Wealth bonus decrease. The item’s purchase price remains the same.

Alternately, you can purchase a unique device, vehicle or building — the sort of thing that counts as a gadget or sanctum. In such circumstances, your Resources feat benefit drops to the equivalent of Well-Off for as long as the gadget or sanctum is under construction. After it’s completed, you regain the full benefit of Wealth Beyond Avarice within (18 months — your unmodified Wealth bonus).

Sanctum

“Welcome to my humble abode.”

Just as a gadget represents a unique machine or possession, a sanctum represents a unique location. It could be an Antarctic “meditation mansion,” a private island, an underground headquarters, a secret valley or some other place. Sanctum feats determine how exotic your special residence is, how useful it is and how difficult it is for your enemies — or simply the curious — to discover and infiltrate it.

You’re not homeless if you don’t have a sanctum (unless you want to be) — you simply own an ordinary home or rent a regular apartment.

A sanctum is more secure and private than a normal dwelling. Each feat on the tree applies a penalty to any efforts to discover anything about the sanctum — from its very existence to its specific location to its security measures to how many light fixtures it has — and to breach its security. See below for specifics.

Hideout

A place of limited size that’s either particularly pleasant or unusually secure (e.g., a handful of secret rooms under your basement).

Benefit: A hideout can be as small as a single room or as large as a two-bedroom apartment. It may be especially secure or well-appointed.

Secure: A –6 penalty applies on any efforts to learn about a secure hideout. Good security (DC 30 Open Lock, Disable Device); basic furnishings.

Well-appointed: A –2 penalty applies on any efforts to learn about a well-appointed hideout. Average security (DC 25 Open Lock, Disable Device); you gain a +4 bonus on any checks made in the sanctum to impress or otherwise influence visitors due to the masterwork furnishings and modern conveniences.

Special: This feat may be taken more than once; each additional Hideout feat represents another sanctum.

Private Palace

Your sanctum is of significant size and is both unusually secure and well-appointed.

Prerequisite: Hideout.

Benefit: A private palace can be anything from a city penthouse apartment to a mansion to a luxury yacht. It includes sleeping quarters for your entire team and any mentor, allies or followers that you may have. It is also equipped in whatever fashion you wish — expensive furniture, a library, fine china; stark and imposing with gleaming machinery arrayed in impressive fashion; relaxing and spare décor with a breathtaking view; and so on.

A –6 penalty applies on any efforts to learn about a private palace. Superior security (DC 40 Open Lock, Disable Device); you gain a +6 bonus on any checks made to impress or otherwise influence visitors in the sanctum due to its impressive location, design and/or furnishings.

Special: This feat may be taken more than once; each additional Private Palace feat is in addition to and independent from any gained from Hideout.

Sanctum Sanctorum

A sanctum sanctorum is frightfully secure and remarkably useful. It is invulnerable to infiltration by any but the most immensely capable burglar, and its defenses are sufficient to hold off the entire Russian Army for a week, if necessary.

Prerequisites: Hideout, Private Palace.

Benefit: A sanctum sanctorum is limited in the direct in-game benefit it offers you, as noted below. Otherwise, however, you are free to design almost any exotic domain imaginable (subject to GM approval): A submersible fortress that cuts through the waves as fast as a bootlegger's jalopy and that can descend to the very ocean floor? Feel like stealing a page from *Mr. X* to establish that architects built a secret, interconnecting labyrinth beneath the great buildings, streets and monuments of Washington, D.C.? A massive, lighter-than-air craft with multiple airplane landing strips that plies the skies without regard for political borders? A mysterious outpost on Mars that can be reached through one of six "aetherial transponders" hidden along the Earth's equator? Go for it.

A -10 penalty applies on any efforts to learn about a sanctum sanctorum. Unparalleled security (DC 45 Open Lock, Disable Device); you gain a +8 bonus to any checks made to impress or otherwise influence visitors in the sanctum due to its impressive location, design and/or furnishings.

Special: You may have only one sanctum sanctorum; this is in addition to and independent from any number of Hideouts and Private Palaces.

Daring Feats

Daring feats represent a certain presence of mind and personality that daredevils have inherently. As such, only characters with the daring template may take these feats (see Chapter Five: Character). Still, the GM may consider making daring feats available to other Inspired types. If so, a minimum level requirement (say, 8th level) should be imposed in addition to any other listed prerequisites.

A number of daring feats refer to Inspiration facets and other abilities relating to the Inspired. See Chapter Seven: Inspiration for full information on Inspiration and related abilities.

Barnstormer (Daring)

"A biplane will never make it through that gap? Well, let's just see what this baby can do!"

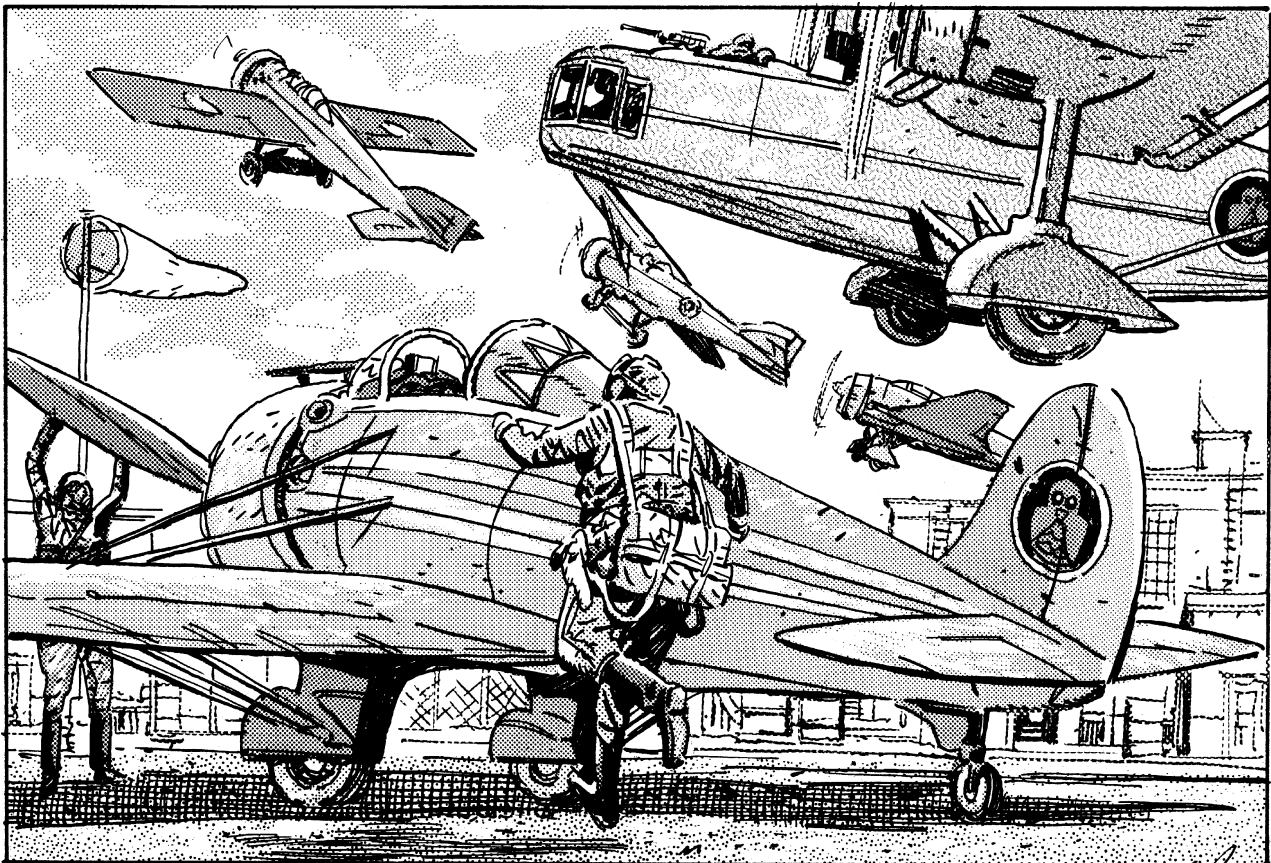
You were born with a stick in one hand and a throttle in the other. You can overcome any damage to an aircraft you pilot short of its total destruction — assuming anyone can hit you at all.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Pilot 4 ranks.

Benefit: This feat offers benefits to you and to any air vehicle (airplane, zeppelin, experimental flying machine, etc.) that you pilot.

Pilot Benefits: You gain a competence bonus equal to your Intuition facet score on any piloting maneuver checks. If reduced to 0 hit points or lower while piloting, you gain the benefit of the Diehard feat until the vehicle is destroyed or stops moving.

Vehicle Benefits: The vehicle's top speed increases by 25%. While in motion, it receives a +2 dodge bonus to its AC against attacks that



you are aware of. The vehicle is not considered disabled after being reduced to 0 hit points. It operates as normal under your control except that you no longer gain your Intuition facet bonus on maneuver rolls. The vehicle is destroyed when it loses hit points equal to twice its full normal total.

Complete Privacy (Daring)

“The deal’s set. We’ll meet at —” Vrooom! Honk! Honk! — night. See you then.”

You’ve never been caught talking about or doing something you shouldn’t have been. A truck backfires at just the right time to cover your voice from eavesdroppers, a shadow falls on your face just as the hidden muckracker’s camera snaps a picture, drips from a leaky pipe bleed the ink of the address scrawled on your notepad — in these and other ways, it’s nearly impossible to monitor you without being blatantly obvious.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Hide 4 ranks and Move Silently 4 ranks or Secret Life.

Benefit: Any effort that uses subtlety to monitor your personal actions — eavesdropping, lip-reading, phone taps, etc. — fails automatically. Skill checks to shadow or tail you suffer a –6 penalty just to keep you in sight. Effects that use a daring feat or an Inspired power are not affected by this feat.

This feat is only good against *covert* attempts at invading your privacy. It offers no defense against obvious, direct scrutiny, such as a news camera or police interrogator, nor does it keep people from breaking into your room and searching your belongings.

Death Defiance (Daring)

“But... but... I saw you die!”

Your cohorts have seen your plane explode in midair. They’ve heard your screams as you’ve toppled off a 20-story building. They’ve watched you fall in the spray of a score of Tommy guns. They’ve watched you drown, only to learn a week later that you washed ashore, alive, on the Phantom Isle. Yet, no matter how many times you’ve faced certain death, you’ve resurfaced — rent, bent, but very much alive.

Prerequisites: Daring template.

Benefit: When using dramatic editing, you may spend 1 power point to survive any situation that will likely result in your death. The only limitation is that you are apparently dead for a reasonable span of time. The GM is the final arbiter of when you return, but it should be no earlier than after the other PCs’ next encounter and no later than within the first part of the next game session.

Dramatic Entrance (Daring)

“Whoa; get a load of her!”

You’ve got *it* — and even if you don’t know quite what *it* is, everyone else sure does. Whether it’s your stunning features, your gleaming smile, your distinctive mode of dress or your aura of palpable menace, *something* makes people take notice of you when they first see you. This reaction isn’t indefinite — the novelty of your presence soon wears off — but you may be able to milk it while your new acquaintances are sandbagged.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Charisma 13.

Benefit: You gain a +8 bonus to determine an NPC’s initial reaction to you. This feat has no effect on subsequent encounters with

the same individuals. Also, you suffer a –2 penalty to remain inconspicuous in any situation where more than half the observers haven’t seen you before.

Eagle Eyes (Daring)

“How’d I know he was a spy? A cabbie wouldn’t have an impeccable manicure.”

You often irritate your companions by pointing out things that their lesser eyes can’t see. This uncanny visual acuity even allows you some clarity in weather conditions that leave most people blind to anything more than 5 feet away.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Wisdom 13 or the Alertness feat.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus on checks related to long-range or precise visual perception, and a +2 bonus on Spot and Search checks in low visibility (darkness, fog).

Enhanced Impact (Daring)

Wha-pow! CRASH!

Just like in the pulps, your attacks stagger victims back several feet in pain and shock. This can offer a tactical advantage (opening the range between you and a closing opponent), or even be fatal if your foe is driven into something harmful. However you use it, Enhanced Impact sure looks impressive.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Strength 13; Power Attack.

Benefit: Choose one type of attack (unarmed combat or a specific weapon). Attacks of this type that strike a target deal damage as normal and also have a chance of pushing the target back. This functions as per the bull rush maneuver (see “Special Attacks” in Chapter 8: Combat of the *Player’s Handbook*), except that you do not provoke an attack of opportunity and do not make the initial move into the defender’s square.

Special: This feat may be purchased more than once. Its effects do not stack; instead, each time you take the feat, it applies to a new type of weapon.

Fists of Stone (Daring)

“Brass knuckles? Who needs ‘em?”

You have a grip like a vise, and you often leave dents when you knock on doors. Why bother with tricks such as a roll of quarters or brass knuckles? The collection of scars and calluses on your gnarled mitts works just fine.

Prerequisites: Daring template or character level 8th; Strength 15.

Benefit: Your punches ignore a target’s first 2 points of damage reduction, and the damage you inflict with them increases (see table).

Original Damage	New Damage
1d2	1d3
1d3	1d4
1d4	1d6
1d6	1d8
1d8	2d6
1d10	2d8
2d6	3d6
2d8	3d8

This adjustment applies even if you have Brawl and its related feats (see “General Feats” in this chapter).

Forgettable (Daring)

“This guy, he — well, that is... I mean, I think... huh. Y’know? I don’t remember a thing about ‘im.”

It’s not that you don’t make a good impression; simply no one remembers it once you’re gone. They may recall clearly everything you did or said, but your name, your face and the sound of your voice escape memory. Even photographs of you are blurry or faded. This feat is invaluable if you don’t want your actions to haunt you, but it also makes it hard to get a second date.

Prerequisites: Daring template.

Benefit: After you leave the presence of NPCs, they must succeed at a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Charisma modifier) or forget any specific, tell-tale details about you. Characters with the daring or psychic template gain a +2 bonus on this save.

Special: You cannot have both Forgettable and any Reputation background feats. Further, at the GM’s discretion, you may suffer complications in maintaining contacts or followers.

Gadgeteer (Daring)

“Hand me that whatchamacallit, then push the button on the doohickey when I give you the go-ahead!”

Intuition and a good deal of mechanical sense give you the uncanny ability to operate any piece of machinery you encounter. You may not always know exactly what you’re messing with, but you know how to make it do... well, whatever it’s supposed to do.

You’re also no slouch when it comes to improving on standard technology. Coming up with technological breakthroughs is as easy as falling off a log — and you could probably figure out how to improve on *that*, too.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Intelligence 13, Wisdom 13, Inspiration 4.

Benefit: You can operate any simple device (five or fewer controls) within one round of seeing it. Complex machinery requires a few minutes of inspection. This feat does not grant familiarity with the principles behind the device, just an operator’s familiarity with the controls and settings.

Normal: Characters cannot attempt unskilled control of a vehicle or operation of a complex device that requires specific skill training.

Special: Any additional skill requirements needed to operate a device still apply. Still, you face no penalties due to lack of skill (you can pilot vehicles that ordinarily cannot be piloted unskilled). An ordinary biplane pilot would be lost on the flight deck of Doctor Zorbo’s *Behemoth*-class air-dreadnought, but a Gadgeteer can at least use his Pilot skill.

Greased Lightning (Daring)

“Faster than a striking snake? Yeah, might’ve heard that a time or two.”

While you’re not capable of the bursts of blinding swiftness that some stalwarts display, your reflexes nonetheless operate at a higher level than those of most people. You can snatch insects out of the air, and ambushes never catch you off-guard.

Prerequisites: Daring template or Inspired character level 8th; initiative modifier +3.

Benefit: Treat any initiative roll result of 1–5 as a 6 instead. Also, you retain your Dexterity bonus to AC even if caught flat-footed or attacked by an unseen foe.

Indomitable Will (Daring)

“Mesmerism? Hypnosis? Telepathic mind-control powers from the Hollow Earth? Ha!”

Whether you’re incredibly disciplined or simply thick-skulled, most paranormal attempts to influence your mind fail — indeed, you may even be unaware that such attempts even occur. Even those of considerable mental strength meet resistance.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Wisdom 15.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus on your Will save to resist any mundane or Inspired attempts to alter, attack, communicate, control or simply probe your mind. This does not affect knacks that create illusions affecting your *perceptions*, only those which actually touch your thought processes. Also, mundane hypnotizing or brainwashing attempts against you require three times as long, regardless of eventual success.

Special: This feat cannot be turned off; it applies equally against a friendly telepathic contact as against an invasive psychic assault.

Instant Expert (Daring)

“I saw a guy do this once in Brisbane....”

You have the uncanny ability to recall any single act you’ve seen performed — once. This doesn’t allow you to repeat the deed with any degree of consistency, but it may allow you to reach for an Inspired level of performance in a field you otherwise know nothing about, at a moment when nothing less than the world’s best effort will suffice.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Wisdom 13 or initiative modifier +3.

Benefit: On a successful DC 12 Inspiration check, you gain a number of skill ranks equal to your Intuition facet in a single skill in which you have no ranks. This applies to one physical task — whether brief, such as an acrobatic flip, or extended, such as emergency airborne fuel line repairs — once per game session.

Jack of All Tongues (Daring)

“I learned this obscure dialect of Farsi during my last year in university — right after completing an independent study in Cantonese.”

You’re a refugee from the Tower of Babel, or so it would seem to anyone who speaks to you. Some consider you a freak of nature, while others just want to drag you along on their next Congo expedition.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Intelligence 13.

Benefit: You gain an additional bonus language. Further, each skill point you put into Speak Language gives you proficiency in two languages. You display no foreign accent when speaking any language you know — your pronunciation and idioms are perfect for the local culture.

Lie Detector (Daring)

“You think I’ll fall for that line? Try again, pal, and this time don’t bother trying to put one over on me.”

You may have a way of looking at people that makes untruths freeze in their mouths — or perhaps your ears burn whenever you hear a lie. However this feat works for you, it’s nigh-impossible to pull a fast one on you.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Wisdom 13.

Benefit: You succeed automatically in Sense Motive checks to detect lies told by an un-Inspired individual with no ranks in Bluff. You

gain a +6 bonus on Sense Motive checks to detect lies from an un-Inspired individual with at least 1 rank in Bluff, or against an Inspired individual with no ranks in Bluff. You gain no bonus to Sense Motive checks against an Inspired individual with at least 1 rank in Bluff.

Special: While you can tell if a lie is told using this feat, it does not reveal the explicit truth.

Master of Dissimulation (Daring)

“Snake-oil salesman”? How crude. I prefer ‘confidence man.’”

Your immense vocabulary and webs of double-talk bamboozle even the most astute listener. Even if you don’t know a thing about what you’re talking about, you can fake nearly any sort of professional credentials... as long as there’s no one present who can call your bluff.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Wisdom 13, Charisma 13.

Benefit: You gain a +10 bonus on a Bluff check to fake authority on a given subject. You could gain entry to a crime scene by claiming to be a detective and muttering about “preservation of evidence”; you could infiltrate a hospital by masquerading as a doctor called in to consult on the dreaded Bennett-Mullins Syndrome. Only those who have 5 or more ranks in a skill pertaining to the field you’re bluffing about (usually a Craft, Knowledge or Profession) who beat your Bluff result with a Sense Motive check can tell that you are not what you appear.

The thing that separates a Master of Dissimulation from an ordinary scam artist is her complete independence from physical guises (“I left my badge on my dresser, Johnnie...”). This feat functions regardless of your appearance. Even if you’ve just crawled out of the sewers, a straight posture and an arrogant tilt of the chin will convince just about anyone that you’re a high-class lawyer who was simply performing a “field investigation.”

This feat covers only verbal misdirection. You may fool even licensed physicians by spouting pseudo-medical gibberish, but this feat offers no skill in performing surgery (though you might back up your bluff if you have actual medical training...).

Navigation Hazard (Daring)

“Try and cut me off, will ya? Whoops! Who’d a thought a Bentley would flip just from hittin’ a pothole?”

You’re not prone to accidents yourself, but it seems that every driver around you is. These accidents (which never seem to impede your travels) are confined to minor fender-benders in normal traffic, but true catastrophes result whenever you’re involved in high-speed maneuvers. Minor brushes with lampposts send vehicles flying end-over-end, and subjects you’re trying to catch are hard-pressed to dodge the myriad pedestrians, autos and other obstacles in their paths.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Drive 4 ranks or Pilot 4 ranks.

Benefit: When driving or piloting a vehicle in which you have at least Drive 4 or Pilot 4 (as appropriate to the vehicle), any pursuers (or evaders) must make a Drive or Pilot check each round to avoid colliding with unexpected hazards. The hazards are appropriate to the circumstances — mailboxes and signposts when driving, buoys and rocks when boating, trees and telephone poles when flying. The GM determines the specific hazard, either by choice or random roll on the chart below. This chart also lists the DC of the check — and any damage from a collision.

1d6	Hazard Size	DC	Damage ¹
1–2	Small (tire, grocery cart)	5	2 dice
3–4	Medium (person, crate)	10	4 dice
5–6	Large (vehicle, elephant)	15	8 dice

¹ The specific damage die type depends on the vehicle’s velocity: d2 for alley speed; d4 for street speed; d8 for highway speed; d12 for all-out speed (see Chapter Nine for details).

One-Man Army (Daring)

“Three against one? That ain’t fair. Why don’t you find some more friends first?”

You’re never outnumbered — you just have ever-larger target selections. The more enemies you face, the happier you are. In fact, you prefer being assaulted by more than one or two foes!

Prerequisites: Daring template; base attack bonus +6.

Benefit: Flanking opponents do not get the standard +2 bonus on attack rolls against you. In addition, a flanking scoundrel must have a higher Inspiration score than you to make a sneak attack.

Also, if you have three or more adjacent opponents, you receive a bonus attack at your highest current attack bonus. This bonus attack must be aimed at an adjacent target that you have not yet attacked in the round. If there are no adjacent targets that you have not attacked already, you must direct it at the last subject you attacked.

Perfect Poise (Daring)

“I don’t mean to be rude, old boy, but I have an appointment at three. Is your maniacal ranting about this lovely death trap leading somewhere?”

You are the epitome of “suave and debonair” — never less than utterly composed and in control of yourself. You never panic at the threat of violence, nor in the face of the most excoriating insults. You aren’t *immune* to surprise (you can be ambushed as easily as the next person); you simply control your reactions better than most ordinary folks.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Wisdom 15.

Benefit: You are immune to being panicked unless it is induced by an Inspired ability. You never display any sign of discomfort, shock or surprise unless you choose to. You gain a +4 bonus on Diplomacy or Bluff in situations involving poise, grace or composure (GM’s discretion). This includes gambling that involves bluffing, such as poker.

You also never suffer from minor, embarrassing mishaps such as tripping, spilling your drink or getting splashed by a passing car. Also, your clothes almost never suffer damage or get dirty outside of combat. If they do become rumpled or soiled, a brief brushing-off restores them to near-pristine condition.

Resilient (Daring)

“Hospital? Nah; just give me a couple of raw steaks and a big glass of orange juice, and I’ll be fine.”

You’re not any less likely to be critically injured than anyone else, but you bounce back from even the gravest wounds or illnesses — short of death itself — in a matter of days.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Constitution 13; Endurance.



Benefit: You heal double the normal number of hit points per day — 2 hit points per level per day of rest, 4 hit points per level per day of bed rest or ordinary rest with doctor's care, 8 hit points per level per day of bed rest with doctor's care. If you do not take the minimum full night's rest and you don't suffer any hit point loss in the following day, you heal the standard 1 hit point per level.

Normal: Characters heal 1 hit point per level per day in which they take at least 8 hours of full rest and 2 hit points per level per day which is spent fully in bed rest. These amounts double under the care of a doctor who makes successful Heal checks.

Sea Dog (Daring)

"No one's ever survived those rapids, eh? They don't look so tricky to me."

You were born to stand at a boat's wheel, guiding the rudder as naturally as breathing.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Drive 4 ranks.

Benefit: This feat functions like the Barnstormer feat, except that it works with water vehicles rather than air vehicles.

Steely Gaze (Daring)

"You want to cross me? You look dumb, but I didn't think you were that dumb."

It's said that the eyes are the windows to the soul. This may well be true in your case, for one glimpse of your blazing orbs convinces

even the most hardened observer of your inner steel. Few have the backbone to resist backing down from your cobra-like stare.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Charisma 13; Intimidate 4 ranks.

Benefit: You succeed automatically at Intimidate checks against any un-Inspired character of lower level than you. You gain a +6 bonus on Intimidate checks against an un-Inspired character of equal or higher level than you, or against an Inspired character. You gain no bonus to Intimidate animals, vermin or constructs.

You may also daze an un-Inspired target with the sheer force of your gaze. A target with whom you make direct eye contact must make a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Charisma bonus). If the victim fails, he is considered dazed. You can use this expression of Steely Gaze once per day.

Trick Rider (Daring)

"Gotta ride across that square, covered by a dozen snipers? No problem."

You are a master equestrian; you are virtually unassailable on any riding beast.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Ride 4 ranks.

Benefit: This feat offers benefits to you and to any mount (horse, camel, elephant, etc.) that you ride.

Rider Benefits: You gain a bonus equal to your Intuition facet score on any riding maneuver checks. You get the benefit of the Mounted Combat feat while mounted.

If reduced to 0 hit points or lower while controlling a mount, you gain the benefit of the Diehard feat until the animal dies or stops moving.

Mount Benefits: The mount's top speed increases by 25%, and it also gains the benefit of the Diehard feat while you remain mounted.

Trick Shot (Daring)

"William Tell? A piker! I could have had that apple sliced and peeled before it hit the ground!"

You shine when attempting impossible shots. The more difficult the conditions under which you're shooting, the more skilled you become.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Weapon Focus or mercenary class feature Training Focus with the selected weapon.

Benefit: Choose one type of ranged weapon. When performing an unusual maneuver with this weapon, any penalty for target size, high winds, target movement, unsure footing, cover or virtually anything except visibility is halved (round down; any concealment miss chance remains the same).

Special: This feat may be purchased more than once. Its effects do not stack; instead, each time you take the feat, it applies to a new type of weapon.

Universally Deadly (Daring)

"No, I've never used a Chinese throwing star before..."
swwwTHUNK! *"Doesn't seem too difficult, though."*

Any weapon is deadly in your hands. You may have never seen a given weapon before, but you understand how to use it as soon as it's in your hand. You're more a prodigy than a savant — your talents are the product of precise aim and an intuitive feel of range, weight and speed.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Archaic Weapon Proficiency; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (any one); base attack bonus +11.

Benefit: You never suffer a nonproficiency penalty when wielding a weapon. However, Universally Deadly does not fill any prerequisites for other weapon feats.

Untouchable (Daring)

"That the best you can do?"

Through a combination of indomitable courage, swift reflexes and uncanny luck, you can face down gun-wielding maniacs with only your bare hands and have a better chance of surviving — and even winning — the fight than your gun-toting companions.

Prerequisites: Daring template; Dodge, Mobility.

Benefit: Whenever you begin combat and are *not* armed with a ranged weapon, you receive a bonus to your AC against all ranged attacks equal to your Destruction facet (minimum +1). This benefit does not apply if you toss your firearm to the ground once the fight starts, and it goes away once you pick up a ranged weapon in the course of the encounter.

Wheelman (Daring)

"Whoa! Don't worry, we don't need all four wheels to get away from these amateurs."

You're a speed demon — virtually unassailable in any ground vehicle!

Prerequisites: Daring template; Drive 4 ranks.

Benefit: This feat functions like the Barnstormer feat, except that it works with ground vehicles rather than air vehicles.

CHAPTER

INSPIRATION

SEVEN

An Inspired character gains a unique trait called Inspiration, the rating of which is determined by the template chosen, as indicated below (see “Inspired Templates” in Chapter Five for more details).

Template	Inspiration Score Equals...
Daring	Charisma bonus
Psychic	Intelligence bonus
Superhuman	Constitution bonus
This score gains a +1 bonus every three character levels thereafter.	

Inspiration measures a character’s heroic — or dastardly, in the case of villains — potential. Most daring characters view this as force of will or weird luck. Most psychic or superhuman characters know that they channel some form of energy (the premise of the Trinity Universe assumes that this is always telluric energy, but individual characters may make their own interpretations).

This chapter covers the several qualities that are derived from Inspiration: power points, Inspiration facets, knacks and dramatic editing. Note that some are not available to all Inspired characters.

An un-Inspired character — one who lacks the daring, psychic or superhuman template — has no Inspiration score and can access none of the following capabilities.

Inspiration Points

Power points are the “fuel” that drives an Inspired character. Your starting power points equal your character’s Inspiration score. You spend these points for any of the following effects. Unless otherwise noted, you can only spend one power point per round. (NPCs abide by the very same rules, except that villains benefit from performing villainous deeds.)

- **Activate Knack:** Many psi and quantum knacks require a power point expenditure to activate them. This doesn’t count toward the one-point-per-round restriction noted above, although you can only activate a single knack each round. (See “Chapter Eight: Knacks and Super-Science.”)

- **Dramatic Editing:** You can spend multiple power points to assert significant changes to the current scene in the game. (See “Dramatic Editing” later in this chapter.)

- **Cliffhanger:** Just like heroes in adventure serials in days gone by, you must sometimes push your ingenuity to the limits to escape certain death. A cliffhanger is a specially arranged, climactic use of dramatic editing.

- **Recharge Invention:** Your character can use his own power points as telluric energy to charge up an innovation (a special super-science invention that requires telluric energy to work). (See Chapter Eight for specifics on super-science.)

- **Sheer Heroism:** Once per day, you can spend a power point to gain a +4 bonus on a single action (spend the point prior to the roll). This applies to one task only, even if you perform multiple maneuvers in a round.

- **Hunch:** Luck is always on the hero’s side in pulp stories. By spending a power point, you can ask the GM for a useful hint or to point you in the best direction for the story. This isn’t character precognition, nor is it just “maybe you don’t want your character to open that door.” In return for spending a precious power point, the GM must give you essential information that helps motivate your character to move the story along. She might suggest a line of reasoning that reveals the enemy’s plan or simply point out that you’ve been chasing a red herring and that the heart of the story is back at the lab.

Gaining Inspiration Points

Power points are a useful, yet rare commodity. One of the best ways to gain more power points is by spending the ones you have wisely. That’s the key — *wisely!* Spending a power point on an exciting maneuver that adds to the fun of the game and furthers the story offers an excellent return on your investment. Blowing a power point every time you attack two-bit thugs is a waste of your points.

You start every adventure (but not every game session) with power points equal to your Inspiration score. These points will fluctuate from below to above that score in the course of the game as you spend and regain power points. Your total power points may exceed your Inspiration score. In fact, you may end an adventure with total points higher than your Inspiration score. There’s nothing wrong with that, per se, since your points re-set to equal your Inspiration score at the start of the next adventure. It does suggest, however, that the GM may need to make the story more dramatic to encourage you to spend more next time. **Adventure!** is a game of high excitement and amazing action, after all!

The following section outlines how you gain power points in the course of the game. As with spending power points, Inspired villains follow the same rules described here, except that they get power points for performing *villainous* acts instead of *heroic* ones. (It’s only fair, right?)

- **Work Hard, Play Hard:** You recover 1 power point after two consecutive days of rest and leisure activities appropriate to your established personality, preferences and habits. A millionaire play-

boy regains points by partying with all his energy, but an ascetic priest recovers points through meditation and reading scriptures. If under enforced rest where you cannot indulge in your preferred recreation — say, a hospital stay or ocean travel — recovering each point takes five days. You cannot recover points higher than your Inspiration score with this method.

- **Wild Success:** If you roll a natural 20 on a skill check but gain no additional benefit from such an amazing result — say when picking a lock or seducing someone — you receive 1 power point. This does not apply to combat situations, super-science research and development, knack use or sheer heroism (see above).

- **Heroic Entertainment:** When it comes down to it, **Adventure!** is a game. As such, it's meant to be entertaining. Accordingly, if you spend power points for an action that is appropriately heroic for your character and benefits someone besides your character himself — anything from dramatic editing to activating a knack — you recover instantly the power points that you spent, plus 1 additional point.

This may not happen more than once per game session for any given character. The GM should maintain a reasonable definition of “appropriately heroic” and may deny the benefit if it's clear that a player has calculated his character's efforts solely to scrounge up more power points.

- **Inspiring Acts:** Although similar to heroic entertainment, this involves *not* spending power points. The GM may reward you with 1 power point if she feels your character did something especially appropriate to his primary Inspiration facet — an entertaining bit of social interaction with a rival, an amazing piece of un-Inspired athletics or something similar.

This may not happen more than once per game session for any given character, and the same kind of action should not be rewarded from one session to the next. (You shouldn't try the same routine over and over just to scrounge points.) The GM is the sole arbiter of what deserves this benefit, and should be fair and consistent in her decisions.

Inspiration Facets

Inspired characters soar above the human norm in three areas, called “facets”: Intuition, Reflection and Destruction. Inspiration facets are secondary functions of your primary Inspiration score — much like saving throw modifiers are derived from ability scores. Facets, rated on a scale of 1 to 5 points, offer bonuses in certain situations and suggest how your character is most likely to react in a crisis.

Once your Inspiration score is determined (as noted above), allocate the same number of points among your three facets. By definition, the total score of your Inspiration facets is always equal to your Inspiration score. Each time your Inspiration score increases, you also raise one of your facets. Likewise, should your Inspiration score be reduced, you also lose the same amount from your highest facet score.

Intuition

The Intuition facet measures your capacity to manipulate fate subconsciously or to make surprising mental leaps. If you have a high

Intuition, you tend to leap before you look; you're spontaneous and dynamic — a doer, not a planner.

If you have 1 or more points in your Intuition facet, you gain the following advantages.

- **Enhanced Initiative:** You assess situations and react to them faster than others can. You gain a bonus on initiative checks equal to your Intuition facet.

- **Fast Thinker:** You have quick wits. Spend a power point to add a bonus equal to your Intuition score on any one check that involves an instant mental reaction. Examples include a Knowledge (current events) check to make the right answer on a radio quiz show; a Demolitions check to guess which wire to cut as the bomb's timer counts down; a Bluff check to improvise your next line when you've forgotten your script or to fast-talk a guard.

You cannot use this bonus for attack rolls in combat, to fake the right answer on a two-hour essay test, to guess which wire to cut when the bomb's timer has five hours left, to improvise an entire script the night before the show or to brainwash a prisoner.

Reflection

The Reflection facet measures your capacity for introspection, patience or extended, focused effort. If you have a high Reflection, you are calm and reliable, the group's steady backbone. You are comfortable with extended projects and working toward long-term goals.

If you have 1 or more points in your Reflection facet, you gain the following advantages.

- **Patience:** You have an extraordinary degree of patience. Add your Reflection score to any check that involves waiting for something to happen or to end. This includes resisting torture or pain, lying unmoving in ambush for hours on end, riding out the effects of a hallucinogen or maintaining a cool head when everyone else is fleeing in a panic.

- **Good Things Come:** You are well suited to extended endeavors. Spend a power point to add a bonus equal to your Reflection score on any check that deals specifically with an extended effort. This could involve several rolls over the course of a few hours, days or weeks (the bonus applies to only a single roll unless multiple power points are spent); or it may also be a single roll that resolves the success of several hours of intellectual or social work. Examples include negotiating with union organizers, performing an autopsy or super-science research.

Destruction

While Intuition and Reflection relate to *doing* things, Destruction focuses on *undoing* things. You aren't necessarily malicious or evil, just more inclined to break things down than to build them up. If you have a high Destruction facet, you are direct and unsubtle — though you can be quite cunning when pursuing destructive ends.

If you have 1 or more points in your Destruction facet, you gain the following advantages.

- **Destructive Strike:** Things tend to break when you hit them. Once per game session, you can add your Destruction score in d4s to the damage you inflict with a single successful attack (this may be decided after the attack succeeds, but before damage is rolled).

• **The Center Does Not Hold:** You are very adept at destabilizing people and concepts as well as objects. If you try to destroy a plan, ideal or other non-physical thing, spend a power point to add your Destruction score as a bonus on any one check related to that task. Examples include wrecking a marriage, destroying a political opponent's professional reputation, overthrowing a small third-world government or disproving a theory of electromagnetism.

Dramatic Editing

When circumstances seem darkest, the Inspired find an opportunity that lesser individuals miss. Whether it's discovering a lost scroll in a well-explored archaeological site or learning the hostile cannibal tribe worships a god whose name sounds *exactly* like yours, this uncanny luck is the one thing that, above all else, defines the heroes and villains of **Adventure!**. Awe-inspiring powers are all well and good, but fortune favors the Inspired.

The game mechanic that represents this is called *dramatic editing*. With dramatic editing, you can influence the story to give your character a surprise break, as often occurs in tales of pulp derring-do. You can spend power points to insert details specific to your character into the scene, *as long as the Game Master approves of it and it does not contradict anything that's already been established*.

Dramatic editing departs from the usual conventions of roleplaying, in which the player controls his character's actions in the game but cannot dictate how his character is acted upon. It does *not* allow you to supersede the GM's descriptions of the scene; instead, it lets you *supplement* them for purpose of making a more enjoyable and exciting story for everyone.

All Inspired adventurers, whether PCs or NPCs, may use dramatic editing (except in the case of the cliffhanger; see below). The GM is encouraged to have NPCs do so sparingly, though, since the deck is stacked in her favor by the nature of her role in directing the game.

Dramatic Editing Parameters

You spend power points each time you want to apply dramatic editing. How much you spend depends on what you want to accomplish (see "Cause and Effect," below). Regardless of your specific desire, all dramatic editing abides by the same overall parameters.

• **Believability:** The dramatic editing result must be something that could conceivably occur within the setting and the events of the story. This maintains suspension of disbelief and encourages everyone to think of dramatic editing opportunities that keep the proper tone for the game. Finding six sets of pristine jungle survival gear in the vine-covered ruins of a Mayan temple isn't believable. However, finding the gear in the decaying hulk of an Army Air Corps transport that crashed near the temple a decade ago *is* plausible (and could give rise to further plot ideas). Buying passage out of Hong Kong on a Soviet nuclear ballistic missile submarine is out of the question, since there *aren't* any Soviet nuclear subs in the pulp era. However, proposing a prototype German U-boat whose crew mutinied and turned privateer makes the trip far more likely.

• **Consistency:** The dramatic edit can not contradict anything established previously, nor can it overrule a check result that has occurred already *unless the dramatic editing is for the explicit purpose of saving a PC from certain death*. If the GM stated before that a supply locker is empty, you cannot use dramatic editing to say, "Hey, I found two Thompson guns and 12 pounds of gold coins in this supply locker!" However, if some palooka shoots your 3rd-level daring scholar for 75 points of damage, you may use dramatic editing to declare, "Fortunately, the bullet ricochets off my character's St. Christopher's medallion! He's knocked unconscious, but he's not dead! Whew!"

Along similar lines, you cannot use dramatic editing to contradict or negate another person's power point expenditure. This covers everything from powering a knack to other dramatic editing uses, and applies equally to other PCs and to NPCs.

• **Player — Not Character — Influence:** Dramatic editing is a function of *your* self motivation, not your *character's*. No character is ever aware that dramatic editing has just occurred. Power points power the dramatic edit, but your character does not activate this capability. The points are just a convenient rules measurement.

Dramatic editing is *not* a reality-altering power that exists within the Trinity Universe that characters wield, whether consciously or unconsciously. It is an *out-of-game* way to explain and facilitate the incredible surprises and amazing coincidences common to the pulp genre that occur *within* a game setting. Characters have no awareness that dice are rolled to determine the results of their actions, right? Dramatic editing presents a similar influence.

• **GM Override:** The GM is the ultimate authority in every game. She has the final say on what sorts of dramatic editing are appropriate. She may deny a given dramatic edit if it will ruin the entire plot, seems overly powerful or intrusive, or simply doesn't fit into the world of **Adventure!**. Any ponied-up power points are not lost if the GM refuses an edit, since they aren't actually spent.

You may provide clarification if the GM isn't clear on how a proposed dramatic edit could happen. To keep the pace of the game running smoothly, however, such modifications should be handled quickly and with decisive action. If the GM's final answer is "no," that's it. End of discussion.

**Table 7-1:
Dramatic Editing Scale**

Ip Cost	Dramatic Editing Effect
0 (free)	
0 (check)	Minor offscreen effect; minor extension
1	Minor onscreen effect
2	Major onscreen effect
3	Obvious continuity violation
Step ¹	Type of Influence
+1	Plot ramifications
-1	Plot complications
-1	Improved dramatic editing

¹ Step indicates how both the cost and scope may change depending on the specifics that you incorporate to the dramatic edit (see below).

Cause and Effect

This section outlines the costs to use and degree of influence possible with dramatic editing. A single dramatic edit may cost actual power points (pp) or it may just require a dramatic editing check (see below). Table 7-1: Dramatic Editing Scale shows the range of editing possible and any associated power point costs.

Regardless of plot complications or class-based cost reductions, no dramatic editing effect can cost fewer than 0 power points — in other words, reducing a dramatic edit to a negative final cost doesn't give you power points.

Dramatic Editing Checks

You must succeed at a dramatic editing check (1d20 + your character's Inspiration score) whenever the proposed dramatic edit falls under "0 (check)" in Table 7-1. The check is against DC 12. You may simply spend 1 power point instead of making a check.

Minor Offscreen Effect (0 pp + check)

Your edit does not have an immediate impact on the scene, but it will influence events within 15 minutes to an hour. That may be too late depending on the circumstances (like a vat filling with acid) but works just fine for less immediately deadly events (like a shipwreck).

Examples: *An airplane flying far overhead happens to spot your SOS; a firefighter 20 minutes away notices a column of smoke from the fire that endangers you.*

Minor Extension (0 pp + check)

Your edit expands on another player's dramatic editing coincidence, typically to benefit both of your characters. A minor extension cannot get too blatant — no fair turning the piece of shipwreck flotsam into a functional motorboat!

Examples: *That convenient vine dangles just a little lower down than previously thought; look, there's another parachute behind the one you just found in that cabinet!*

Minor Onscreen Effect (1 pp)

Your edit doesn't offer an easy solution to your character's situation all by itself, but it can provide breathing room or a fighting chance. A minor onscreen effect may include the unexpected arrival of NPCs who, while unable to rescue your character directly, can provide other sorts of aid. Alternatively, it may be a piece of (easily concealed) equipment that your character "forgot" that he'd had.

Examples: *You wriggle an arm free from the ropes tying you to the buzz saw; a large piece of wreckage from the shipwreck crests a wave nearby just as you begin to tire out.*

Major Onscreen Effect (2 pp)

Your edit provides an immediate, plausible solution in your character's favor to the current circumstance. A major onscreen effect can be just about anything that doesn't contradict the GM's summary of the situation, and may offer a benefit to your character's companions as well.



Dramatic Editing Example

Chris Barnett, square-jawed hero-at-large, finds himself in the Egyptian desert with only 10 bullets, 20 dollars, a ragged leather jacket and a few equally ragged companions. With their transportation destroyed by a bombardment from Doctor Zorbo's airborne battlecruiser, the expedition stands no chance of reaching the Golden Temple of Osiris before Zorbo claims the Sarcophagus of Eternity for himself. Indeed, their very prospects for survival look bleak!

"Wait," says Barnett's player as the characters are trying to construct a makeshift shelter. "I think Chris knows this stretch of desert."

The GM raises an eyebrow. "Oh? This better be good."

"It's like this, you see," the player says, grinning like a madman. "When Chris was in the French Foreign Legion, right after the Great War, the sergeant who trained him as a marksman was always talking about this girl he'd met when he was stationed in Egypt and how he wanted nothing more than to retire to her village. Anyway, when Chris mustered out, Sarge said to look him up if Chris was ever in the neighborhood. And unless I miss my guess, that neighborhood is about 25 miles that way."

The GM recalls that the character's background included a stint in the Foreign Legion, and a look at Barnett's character sheet reveals the character has an Ally who was never defined in detail. Chris's player gets the go-ahead to spend one power point for a minor offscreen effect. After a harsh day following Chris across the desert, the rest of the PCs witness a heartfelt reunion between two former Legionnaires.

Examples: *The plane's emergency supply locker has enough parachutes for your whole team; you spot a yard-wide ledge just below you that leads along the cliff to safety.*

Obvious Continuity Violation (3 pp)

Your edit directly contradicts the GM's description of the scene or is thoroughly beyond the bounds of plausibility. Applying an obvious continuity violation demands the GM's scrutiny, but it should be possible as long as it is creative and maintains the feel of the game and the genre.

Examples: *Oh, this is Dr. Smith's submersible car, you see; the assassin about to strike the killing blow is actually an old friend from grammar school; the flames lick at the spilled gasoline — but those barrels labeled "Petrol" were actually filled with water!*

Plot Ramification (+1 pp)

Your edit gives you a clue to solving a mystery that has plagued you, lands one of the villain's henchmen in jail or brings any character in the group an unexpected benefit. This extra cost also applies if you choose to solve the team's problem by making the life of an-

other player's character much harder (though injury, social inconvenience, great expense, etc.).

A plot ramification can influence your character's situation in the present scene, but it is meant to represent fortuitous events that occur perpendicular to current events. In other words, it doesn't generally aid in dealing with the *immediate* situation, but provides a useful benefit to the story afterward.

Minor things — losing property that the subject could purchase again with no reduction of Wealth bonus, a loss of cleanliness or basic human dignity — do not qualify as plot ramifications. You may certainly pile such things on, but the GM is within her rights to nix anything if it looks like you're messing with another player's character for out-of-game reasons (rather than to make the game more interesting). If both parties find the ramification entertaining, the GM should feel free to have it occur.

Plot Complication (–1 pp)

This is a circumstance during the scene that makes life harder for your character — he breaks his leg leaping to safety just as the car careens over the cliff; he escapes from certain death only to fall under the influence of a lesser enemy; his efforts to escape a death-trap give the villain enough time to make off with his significant other; and so on. A plot complication is not a trivial matter like breaking a nail or losing a pair of shoes. It should affect your character in some fashion for at least the next few encounters, next game session or even — always the best option — give rise to an ongoing subplot.

The reduced cost applies only if your *own* character suffers the complication. Making things complicated for other PCs qualifies as a plot ramification, above.

Dramatic Editing and Combat

Dramatic editing can certainly liven up an encounter — but it can also complicate things. As always, the GM may veto any proposed dramatic edit. Given the impact that it can have on combat, the GM may consider the following section an optional addition to the rest of the dramatic editing rules.

Complication Bonuses

You can spend a power point on dramatic editing for a wide range of results. You can add nearly any complication that you can think of to a combat scene — a taxicab speeds by, a police horse is spooked, a sudden downpour erupts, etc. By describing a coincidence that benefits you or inconveniences your opponent, you can use dramatic editing *after* making a roll, granting a +2 circumstance bonus on your choice of attack, saves, or skill or attribute check, or a +2 circumstance bonus to AC, for that round.

You can use minor onscreen effect to move characters around, essentially providing — or forcing — a bonus 5-foot step. You can do this to friendly or hostile characters, but a plot ramification penalty applies if you put a PC in the direct line of an attack. Conversely, you get a plot complication bonus if you edit *your* PC into the line of danger.

This sort of movement can be applied in one of two ways: Either you describe an event that causes a character to move in the designated direction, or it's a simple "clarification" that hand-waves the

entire affair with “oh, it turns out that they were farther apart than they thought.” Either one is acceptable if the GM permits it.

Simulating Feats

In some circumstances, you may use dramatic editing to simulate a feat temporarily — or short-circuit another character’s feat use for a short time. This is typically a minor onscreen effect with the plot ramification cost increase, which lasts a number of rounds equal to half your character’s Inspiration score (round down, minimum 1). Examples include moving briefly to a closed-in space that gives you a defensible position from which to use the equivalent of Combat Reflexes to attack anyone who goes by, or flinging a chair at a foe’s feet to gain momentarily gain the benefit of Improved Trip.

Counteracting an opponent’s abilities might work differently. Say a villain grabs a fallen minion’s pistol to execute a hostage. You might use dramatic editing to make it a foreign gun or an unusual model, temporarily negating the villain’s weapon proficiency with the pistol. The villain suffers a standard nonproficiency penalty until he takes a moment to familiarize himself with the weapon’s features.

Altering the Map

In a non-combat encounter, you can use dramatic editing to make minor additions or changes to the landscape. Any alterations must reasonably be expected to be there and cannot contradict something the GM has described. This is also possible in combat, albeit under more rigorous terms.

As a minor onscreen effect, you can detail a 10-foot-by-10-foot area of the combat map that the GM has not yet drawn or described in detail. (This may involve using a marker or props suitable for the map being used.) You might add an opening to an alleyway, put a parked car on a street, insert a fire hydrant and the plate glass window behind it, and so on.

If the map portion being modified is at least (100 ft. + 10 ft. per character level) distant from your character, such alterations are considered minor offscreen dramatic editing instead.

Improved Dramatic Editing

You gain an improved dramatic editing ability for your character upon reaching 4th level in a core class or 3rd level in a prestige class, as described below. This gives you a one “step” reduction on Table 7–1: Dramatic Editing in an area specific to that class, making dramatic editing in relevant scenes cheaper and easier. You can get improved dramatic editing multiple times as long as your character meets the prerequisites. The usual rules of dramatic editing apply in other circumstances.

Some of these abilities have a direct influence on combat. This can have strong effects on battles and character survival. Improved dramatic editing of this sort is arguably more powerful than the other forms listed below. Please be reasonable in such dramatic editing — and GMs, don’t be shy about hauling on the reins to stop dramatic editing abuse. Remember, the emphasis is to make the story more exciting for all, not to derail the plot.

Aristocracy

Prerequisites: Inspired; aristocrat level 4th.

Description: You gain greater control over the description of scenes of the aristocracy — situations involving characters of great wealth and influence. This might range from a dinner party to a polo match, or even go as far as the floor of the United States Senate or other halls of power.

Battle

Prerequisites: Inspired; warrior level 4th.

Description: You gain greater control over the description of scenes of battle — situations involving physical combat on any scale from a boxing match to a land war.

Chases

Prerequisites: Inspired; ace level 3rd.

Description: You gain greater control over the description of chase scenes — situations involving one character or group trying to escape from another. This can involve fleeing from crazed cultists, trying to catch a runaway train or escaping an exploding volcanic island.

Crime

Prerequisites: Inspired; scoundrel level 4th.

Description: You gain greater control over the description of scenes of crime — situations surrounding criminal activities, their planning and execution, and the immediate aftermath thereof. This could involve heisting jewels, “casing” a house for a robbery or escaping from the police.

Crowds

Prerequisites: Inspired; entertainer level 4th.

Description: You gain greater control over the description of scenes involving crowds — groups of 10 or more people gathered at random or for entertainment (a nightclub or concert audience, passersby on the street or even an angry mob). The GM decides whether a specific group qualifies as a “crowd” for this sort of dramatic editing.

Exploration

Prerequisites: Inspired; explorer level 3rd.

Description: You gain greater control over the description of scenes of the unknown — situations set in strange wilderness areas or other locales that are not well known to civilized people. This applies so long as your character travels with people who are not familiar with the local area, though your character need not be familiar with the area himself.

Infiltration

Prerequisites: Inspired; spy level 3rd.

Description: You gain control over an attempt to infiltrate an organization or its compound — either overt (pretending to be an invited guest to a dinner party or trying to join a group) or covert (breaking and entering, hiding in the bushes). You can use dramatic editing to create opportunities for your character to sneak past guards, overhear conversations that he can use immediately to bolster a cover identity, or provide a distraction that allows him to break away from a dinner party unobserved.

Inspired Planning

Prerequisites: Inspired; mastermind level 3rd.

Description: You gain greater control over the description of certain scenes — specifically, to account for omissions in a mastermind's dastardly plan that he *should* have considered but did not. This is subject to careful and fair adjudication — masterminds should not be allowed to edit their way out of glaring mistakes, but they should be permitted to say “I really would not have forgotten that.”

Invention

Prerequisites: Inspired; inventor level 3rd.

Description: You gain greater control over the description of scenes of invention — situations involving ordinary scientific creation, or super-scientific innovation and advancement. This can be used in just about any lab, in a scene involving a new prototype gadget, during the countdown to stop the Doomsday Device, and so on.

Negotiations

Prerequisites: Inspired; mercenary level 3rd.

Description: You gain greater control over the description of scenes involving negotiation — situations where two (or more) characters or groups are attempting to come to agreement regarding a specific point of contention. This often involves one party trying to get a favorable rate of payment for a given service, but this can also be used when negotiating for the release of hostages or for an equitable split of buried treasure.

The Occult

Prerequisites: Inspired; occultist level 3rd.

Description: You gain greater control over the description of scenes of magic and the occult — situations involving occult or magical practice, ritual or belief. This includes scenes dominated by other mystics or cultists who believe in magic.

Bear in mind that “magic” does not exist in the Trinity Universe as such. The characters may perceive — and the GM and players may describe — certain effects as magical, but it's all powered by telluric energy.

Science and Learning

Prerequisites: Inspired; scholar level 4th.

Description: You gain greater control over the description of scenes of learning and science — situations involving education, science and the trappings of each. This could be anything from a group of university professors debating a new discovery to a class of students researching a class project, or scenes taking place in a library or science lab.

Sleuthing

Prerequisites: Inspired; investigator level 4th.

Description: You gain greater control over the description of scenes of sleuthing — solving mysteries and discovering similarly important and hidden secrets. This may involve investigating a crime scene, interrogating a criminal thug or paging through newspaper archives in search of a missing clue.

Training Montage

Prerequisites: Inspired; disciple level 3rd.

Description: You gain greater control over scenes of training — situations wherein your character works to learn new or improve

existing physical skills, or prepare for some manner of confrontation. Such scenes are summarized in a training montage rather than played out in their entirety. This can be applied to any special events that happen during training (say if someone breaks into the gym), or as a flashback during a confrontation, when your character reveals a new combat maneuver for which his sworn enemy has not learned the defense.

Wilderness

Prerequisites: Inspired; barbarian lord level 3rd.

Description: You gain greater control over the description of scenes in the wilderness — situations taking place in tribal societies or where wild animals prowl. These scenes could be set deep in a state park, in the jungles of Borneo or in an ancient cavern deep underground.

The Cliffhanger

The cliffhanger is an old convention from the days of serial fiction. One episode ends with Our Hero dangling from a cliff (or other crisis), with no help in sight and another danger looming over him. The theory (quite a successful one) was that readers, listeners or filmgoers would return to see how the hero gets himself out of such a predicament. Dramatic editing allows you to integrate cliffhanger-style cut scenes into **Adventure!**

The cliffhanger follows the standard dramatic editing rules, but is distinct in its function and placement in the story. You normally use dramatic editing during the course of a story to save your character from a troubling and unforeseen event or to make your actions in the scene all the more exciting.

In contrast, the GM applies the cliffhanger at the end of a game session as a planned portion of the ongoing story. She leads events in the game to an exciting, large-scale, final set piece, meant to leave the players with mouths agape in amazement and clamoring to find out *what happens next?*

The cliffhanger should not end *every* session. It's tough enough for the GM to come up with an exciting session every week without forcing her to wrack her brains to create yet another inescapable death-trap to close out each one. Also, players will soon become jaded to the whole cliffhanger concept if their PCs face certain death every single game session. You don't want a cliffhanger reduced to a chance to spend points and roll dice rather than the pulse-pounding thrill ride it should be.

Like any other use of dramatic editing, the cliffhanger gives a fair amount of control over to the players. The GM should feel free to modify the rules to suit her tastes (or simply reject the rules altogether).

When Last We Left Our Heroes

The GM describes in a short, yet compelling, narrative the shocking surprise situation in which the characters find themselves, and *then* — That's it for this episode! See everyone next time!

Just like in the old serials, you're left to fret, wonder and thrill over just *what* will happen to your heroes! The distinction here is that *you're* the ones to decide.

Players are welcome to take the week or however long between sessions to think about what the PCs do to get out of the jam they're



in. At the start of the next game session, the GM recaps events. She presents the group with a pared-down (yet still exciting) description of the scene. This can be handled in much the same way that a moviegoer might describe a movie to his friends. If the GM doesn't trust her memory, she should take notes at the end of the session (or ask a fellow player to do so) to remind her what "just" happened.

The players then get a few moments for dramatic editing, spending their characters' power points to change enough of the current predicament to enable an heroic escape. Since the cliffhanger is an epic event, players are encouraged to spend power points more freely than normal. In contrast, NPCs *cannot* spend power points on dramatic editing during a cliffhanger. The cliffhanger is a chance for the PCs to shine.

Resolving the Cliffhanger

After the GM sets the scene, the players roll initiative. They each take turns describing their characters' escape from the predicament, going from the lowest initiative result to the highest. The first player modifies the scene based on how many power points he wants to spend, followed by each subsequent player until the last one with the highest initiative result. Each player may build on elements applied by previous players if he wants to and can do so plausibly. Each player's description of a portion may add to the larger whole, making it possible that each player's expenditure of 1 or 2 power points in this way might get the whole team out of a jam, rather than forcing a single player to spend 4 or 5 on his own. (Of course, there's

nothing wrong with a single character spending all those points for the benefit of the group if that's what the player wants to do.)

A character has a single round to act when resolving the cliffhanger, regardless of any power points spent. This action is resolved before the crisis comes to a head. While the action is typically a part of that player's dramatic edit within the scene, it doesn't *have* to be.

A character whose player does not spend power points can only act within the confines of the established scene. This may happen for a couple reasons — a character may lack sufficient power points to save himself, or the player may choose to not spend any. In this case, the character is at the mercy of the scene's flow. Since we're talking about a cliffhanger — a dramatic, life-threatening situation — the GM is within her rights to carry out the scene to its inevitable conclusion. It's unlikely the character will escape danger unscathed, and death is certainly a possibility.

Some GMs may think it rude to invite a player over only to kill his character off 15 minutes into the game session when the PC cannot escape a particularly cunning cliffhanger. On the other hand, a crafty player may decide "I'm not spending any power point since I know you won't *really* kill my character." A GM in such a predicament should never make clear whether disregarding the threat of a cliffhanger means a character will meet his doom. Killing such a character would not be out of the question! That is the drama of pulp, after all.

As a middle ground, the GM might choose to mangle the PC, making his adventuring life difficult but not impossible — perhaps reducing a given ability or abilities by a few points — for the next few

sessions of play. This should make it clear that cliffhangers are a real danger, without killing off PCs needlessly.

That Was Close!

The PCs should receive some kind of reward for surviving a cliffhanger, either through information or some tangible benefit. While there is a certain amount of fun to be had just in getting out of trouble in one piece, it may require spending many power points and should be worth something more than your typical dramatic edit. It's recommended that the GM hand out power points, as in any other situation where a PC performs a particularly exciting action that adds to the enjoyment of the game for everyone and to the story itself.

That's the key, of course. Leaping to safety in the nick of time may be a fine resolution for the character but not worthy of a power point reward. In contrast, flinging oneself at the swinging scythe and grabbing the flat of the blade at *just the right moment* — straining to hold it in place while the rest of the team uses those precious seconds to escape! Now *that* is a hazardous and heroic maneuver worthy of power points!

Once the cliffhanger is resolved, the GM takes back the reins of the game and starts the story rolling with that episode's adventure. Quite often events pick up where the cliffhanger ended, but the GM may also cut the scene and join the characters later; the decision is the GM's and should be whatever works best for the story.

Cliffhanger Example

Dr. Tenzing Smith, Ace Borgstrom, Lady Lead and El Mono Loco are racing down a steep dirt road in Smith's rented cargo truck, having just rescued Lady Lead's onetime-beau Jack Finnegan from the clutches of one of the insidious Ubiquitous Dragon's lieutenants. Lady Lead, Jack and El Mono Loco are in the closed and latched cargo area, while Smith and Borgstrom are in the truck's cab.

Suddenly, Smith discovers that the brakes aren't working; the brake line must have been cut! The truck hurtles down the dirt road toward the edge of a 100-foot cliff. The GM ends the session just as the truck shoots over the cliff's edge!

At the beginning of the next game session, the GM recaps the situation. Jack is Inspired, but as an NPC, he can't affect the cliffhanger's outcome with dramatic editing. Lady Lead gets the lowest initiative result; her player spends a power point and explains

that the rattling latch on the cargo area comes loose, swinging the door open. Lady Lead grabs Jack and leaps onto the hillside just in time, using her stalwart strength in her action. Lady Lead's player must make a Jump check, and succeeds — Rachel and Jack roll to safety as the truck hurtles to its doom!

Dr. Smith is up next and decides to blow his last power point on a minor onscreen effect — a tree with low overhanging branches scrapes by the truck, and he lunges out his door to grab hold of a branch. This is Dr. Smith's free action, requiring a Jump check to pull it off. The doctor succeeds and is safe, though dangling from a tree high above the Pacific Ocean!

Ace Borgstrom has no power points left, his player having spent them all in the climax of the previous session. He does not relish the idea of Ace taking a long fall into the shallow ocean, inside the truck or out, so he takes a plot complication playing off of Smith's coincidence — that huge tree branch sticks out the width of the truck and then some. When Borgstrom jumps for it, he realizes his treasured leather jacket — which contained his wallet stuffed with hundreds of dollars, his driver's and pilot's licenses and his trusty .45 — was still on the truck's seat! That loss cancels any power point cost, but Ace's player must still succeed at a Jump check, which he does.

El Mono Loco has plenty of power points, but is suffering a reduced Dexterity score from the poisoned attacks of the Ubiquitous Dragon's fiendish henchmen. His player can't afford to rely on making a skill check with such penalties, so he must whip up a pretty amazing coincidence. Spending 2 power points for a major onscreen effect, the player declares that the wind from the truck's fall rips the canvas top of the truck's cargo area — El Mono Loco grabs hold of opposite corners of the flapping canvas and uses it as a makeshift parachute!

Some GMs might charge El Mono Loco's player 3 power points for this stunt, since it pushes the bounds of plausibility. El Mono Loco's GM is amused enough by the player's ingenuity that she thought about giving him an extra power point as a reward, and decided to let it slide as a 2-point effort instead.

As the team dangles there, watching the truck plummet into the ocean, one of them notices a mysterious airplane flying toward a remote island, just at the horizon. Could it be the Ubiquitous Dragon's secret base? The team scrambles back up to safety to decide where to go next....

CHAPTER

KNACKS AND SUPER-SCIENCE

EIGHT

Knacks

Knacks are special abilities available to characters with the psychic or superhuman template — mesmerists and stalwarts, in the parlance of the Inspiration Age. Knacks are divided into two categories, psi and quantum, each linked to one of the two templates.

Only mesmerists can gain psi knacks, and only stalwarts can gain quantum knacks. Characters with the daring template may not take knacks. At the GM's discretion, certain psi knacks may also be available as quantum knacks, and vice versa. It isn't unreasonable for a stalwart to have a "*Z-ray vision*" that works in much the same way the psi knack *telluric resonance* does. If the GM allows such crossovers, the newly-derived knack should have a different name and a different in-game manifestation. Further, the GM should limit such crossovers to particularly appropriate knacks, rather than simply eliminating any boundary between the two templates' abilities.

Gaining Knacks

Psychic and superhuman characters get knacks in the same general way — they start with one 1st-level knack upon becoming Inspired, and learn a new knack every other character level thereafter. (So a character who becomes Inspired at 1st level gains one free 1st-level knack of the appropriate type immediately and can pick a new knack when he reaches 3rd level, 5th level and so on.)

You may choose a knack of any level available, as long as you always have fewer knacks of higher level than you have of lower level. See "Inspired Templates" in Chapter Five for specific details on purchasing knacks of different levels.

Using Knacks

You can manifest any knack that you know, as long as you succeed at any relevant check or spend the required power point cost. Unless stated otherwise, activating a knack is a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Knack Descriptions

Psi knacks function roughly equivalent to psionics as described in the *Psionics Handbook*. This isn't quite accurate conceptually, but it works well enough for purposes of gameplay. (See the d20 System version of **Trinity** for a more detailed coverage of psi powers in the Trinity Universe.) Quantum knacks don't have a specific equivalent, being neither psionic nor magical in nature. (See the d20 System version of **Aberrant** for further information on quantum powers in the Trinity Universe.)

Early 20th-century science hasn't detected a notable distinction between psi and quantum powers. In the Inspiration Age, both are categorized as "telluric energy" (also known as zero-point energy, Z-waves or pseudoaetheric waves). When you spend power points to activate knacks, it's understood in the context of the setting that you're drawing upon your own telluric energy reserves. (This does not include dramatic editing.)

A power or device that can detect telluric energy — such as *tel-luric resonance* or a Z-wave image resonator — may sense the presence of a psychic or superhuman subject. Such attempts gain a +4 bonus if the subject is manifesting a knack at the time.

Knacks use the following listing format.

Name: The name by which the knack is known generally.

Knack and Descriptors: The type of knack, whether psi or quantum. Any descriptors that apply are listed [in brackets]. Psi knacks list an aptitude (in parenthesis) after the type — biokinesis, clairsentience, electrokinesis, psychokinesis, telepathy, teleportation or vitakinesis. This has no direct bearing on **Adventure!**'s rules, but offers ease of comparison with **Trinity**.

Descriptors include acid, cold, compulsion, darkness, death, electricity, fear, fire, force, healing, language-dependent, light, mind-affecting, sonic and teleportation. Descriptors function as described in the *Player's Handbook* (see Chapter 10: Magic, "Spell Descriptions," [Descriptor]), except that compulsion is the equivalent of the Enchantment subschool.

Manifestation Time: The time required to manifest the knack.

Range: The maximum distance from you at which the knack can affect a target.

Targets or Targets/Effect/Area: The number of creatures, dimensions, volume, or weight that the knack affects.

Duration: How long the knack lasts. Some knacks are "constant," in which case they are always considered active. It's possible that a knack or super-science device might "turn off" a constant knack for a period of time, but never permanently.

Saving Throw: Whether a knack allows a saving throw, what type of saving throw it is, and the effect of a successful saving throw.

Power Resistance: Whether power resistance (PR) resists the knack. (If you use creatures from the *MM* or other magic-setting d20 sources, just convert spell resistance to power resistance.)

Power Points: The knack's cost to manifest.

Psi Knacks

The domain of those with the psychic template — otherwise known as mesmerists — psi knacks are paranormal powers that

manifest through the user's force of will. This often requires channeling Z-rays (represented by power points), which means that mesmerists register as sources of telluric energy.

Psi knacks are divided into three levels. A 1st-level psi knack is usually sensory in nature or has no discernable capacity to inflict injury on a healthy adult. A 2nd-level psi knack has measurable physical manifestations (temperature, pressure and so forth) or can affect a subject's mental processes enough for a psychiatrist to record a measurable behavioral change. A 3rd-level psi knack has the potential to cause tremendous injury or permanent psychological changes. These three levels are rules of thumb, used primarily to reflect the mood of the **Adventure!** setting.

1st-Level Psi Knacks

Unless noted otherwise, a 1st-level psi knack offers the target a Will save (DC 13 + your Intelligence bonus).

Brain Skimming

"Dissembling doesn't become you, madam. I can read you like an open book."

Psi (Telepathy) [Mind-affecting]

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: 10 ft.

Targets: One living creature

Duration: Concentration

Saving Throw: No (see text)

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 0

Description: You can read a target's surface thoughts to tell truth from lies or to find the answer to a question that the target is trying to avoid. Your readings may be colored by your own expectations or by the differences in the ways you and your subject perceive the world. The manner in which you receive the information depends on how you see your ability — it could be a fleeting vision, a ghostly whisper or a metallic tang on your tongue when a target lies.

Effect: You must engage the target in a conversation which must hit at least tangentially on the subject you want to know about. Specify the information that you're looking for and roll Sense Motive as indicated on the chart below. No amount of successes will offer up useful information if the target knows nothing about what you're digging for.

DC ¹	Information
8 + Will save	Nothing the target is concerned about hiding
10 + Will save	Target wishes to avoid discussing the subject
12 + Will save	Emotionally sensitive topic or oath-bound secret
15 + Will save	Target actively fears revelation of this information
18 + Will save	Secret will get target killed or ruin his life

¹ Add the number listed to the target's Will save modifier to determine your Sense Motive DC.

Command Voice

"Since I'm unarmed, why not toss your firearms over here — even things out, don't you know."

Psi (Telepathy) [Compulsion]

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Targets: One living creature/level, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart

Duration: 1 round

Saving Throw: Will negates

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 1

Description: When you put the full force of your mind behind your voice, people leap to obey without even considering what they're doing.

Effect: You can issue a short verbal command to a number of targets equal to your character level. Those who fail a Will save obey you to the best of their ability as directly as possible in 1 round, unless doing so would put them in direct danger of death or mutilation. Inspired targets receive a +2 bonus on the save.

Marked Man

"He can run all he wants. I'll find him when the time is right."

Psi (Clairsentience)

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: One creature or object

Duration: See text

Saving Throw: No (see text)

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 1

Description: You can "mark" an individual or object with a psychic signature. This gives you an innate sense of the target's distance and direction relative to you no matter where you are in the world. You gain no information on the target's condition or surroundings, however.

Effect: A successful touch from your hand puts a psychic marker on a target that lasts 1 week for every 2 points by which you exceed a Survival check against DC 13 (minimum 1 week, maximum 6 weeks). The link is broken if the target is slain or destroyed. You may maintain a number of simultaneous marks equal to your Reflection score.

Perfect Translation

"Actually, I believe he said five hundred dollars."

Psi (Telepathy) [Mind-affecting]

Manifestation Time: 1 free action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Concentration

Power Points: 0

Description: You can touch the parts of the conscious mind that control communication. With sufficient concentration, you can understand the meanings and concepts behind virtually any form of spoken or gesture-based communication.

Effect: You must be able to see or hear the subject without mechanical intervention — a radio broadcast or the like attenuates the thoughts behind the words too much for *perfect translation* to work. A Sense Motive check reveals the extent of your understanding, as indicated below.

This knack is for understanding, not conveying, information. Still, you can use body language and snippets of your conversational



partner's own words to convey general concepts (your end of a "basic conversation" can be upheld with a successful Diplomacy check against DC 15).

Perfect translation does allow you to use any other powers that influence the mind against targets who would otherwise not understand you.

DC	Level of Communication
10	Basic conversation ("Where is the bathroom?")
15	Fluent conversation ("I love the way that you have decorated the bathroom.")
20	Complex specialized conversation ("Epistemologically speaking, when we say 'bathroom' we are really referring to....")

Psychic Hand

"With the proper focus, I should be able to pull down that ladder like... so!"

Psi (Psychokinesis) [Force]

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: One invisible, mindless servant

Duration: Reflection score in rounds or 10 minutes/level (see text)

Saving Throw: None

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 0 or 1 (see text)

Description: You can manifest an invisible, mindless, shapeless telekinetic force for manipulation or defense. This effect is invisible unless you choose for it to become visible, in which case it appears as a ghostly shimmer.

Effect: On a successful DC 15 Concentration check, you can manifest a *psychic hand* to perform manipulation or defense tasks for a number of rounds equal to your Reflection score once per encounter. Alternately, you may spend one power point to manifest a *psychic hand* for 10 minutes/level. Switching between manipulation and defense is a standard action.

The *psychic hand* cannot attack in any way and cannot be killed. It dissipates if it takes 6 points of damage from area attacks (it cannot make saves) or if you try sending it beyond the knack's effective range.

Manipulation: The *psychic hand* has the basic ability to grab; it can push or pull things but lacks any fine control. It has an effective Strength score equal to half your Intelligence score (round down), with a +1 bonus to Strength for every two levels that you have (maximum +10 Strength bonus at 20th level). Its speed is 15 feet when unencumbered. It can't perform any task that requires a skill check higher than DC 10 or that requires a skill that can't be used untrained.

Defense: The *psychic hand* flattens into an invisible, mobile disk of force that you may position between yourself (or another subject) and any attackers. It offers a deflection bonus to AC equal to your Reflection score (minimum +1).

Scientific Prodigy

"Gentlemen, I've just had an epiphany!"

Psi (Telepathy) [Mind-affecting]

Manifestation Time: 1 minute

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Targets: Up to your Intelligence bonus + Reflection score in living sentient creatures

Duration: Special (see text)

Saving Throw: Will negates (see below)

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 1

Description: You draw psychically upon the knowledge and creativity of your colleagues and assistants to push back the boundaries of scientific theory. *Scientific prodigy* doesn't sift others' thoughts; instead, it acts as a kind of gestalt from which you draw conclusions. Even those with no formal scientific training may help, for you can draw on any related knowledge they may have. (Whether your research team gets any credit depends on your personal inclinations.)

Effect: *Scientific prodigy* draws upon assistants to enhance your super-science ability (see Super-Science, below), much like the aid another maneuver. On a successful check using the primary skill for the type of invention you're making (device, compound, organism) against DC 10, each assistant provides you with a +2 bonus on any subsequent super-science related checks you make for that specific R&D project.

Only telluric sensing can detect this knack in effect. Still, an unwilling assistant — perhaps forced or coerced to work — may make a Will save to block his mind from *scientific prodigy* for that encounter. A willing assistant does not make a save.

Telluric Resonance

"Hmmm. That fellow isn't quite what he seems."

Psi (Clairsentience)

Manifestation Time: 1 standard or 1 free action (see text)

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels) or Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level) (see text)

Targets: See text

Duration: 1 round

Saving Throw: None

Power Resistance: See text

Power Points: 0

Description: Your affinity to Z-rays goes beyond that of most psychics. You can sense the flow of telluric energy through other individuals and even through the very ether itself.

Effect: You can sense actively for Inspired individuals or detect passively when telluric energy is used.

Sense Inspired: On a successful DC 12 Spot check, you can confirm if a single psychic or superhuman target, or a super-science innovation is within close range, plus one additional target for every 2 points by which you exceed the DC. (So, a result of 17 detects three targets.) This is a standard action that may provoke an attack of opportunity.

Detect Telluric Energy: You may make a Spot check against DC 15 (modified by distance) when a knack or a super-science device that requires a power point expenditure is used within medium range.

Success gives you direction and distance to the spot where the manifestation occurred. This is a free action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Thermal Manipulation

"Huh. You'd think Antarctica would be colder. ... What?"

Psi (Psychokinesis) [Cold, Fire]

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal or close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target or Area: You, or radius equal to 1/2 Destruction score in ft.

Duration: Inspiration score + level in hours or instantaneous

Power Points: 1

Description: Temperatures are less threatening to you than normal — the Sahara at high noon is pleasantly balmy, while the coldest Russian winter may be a bit nippy. You can even extinguish small fires or melt ice with the power of your mind.

Effect: You can protect yourself against one temperature extreme or you can put out a fire or melt ice. Each end of the temperature scale requires a different mental focus, so you can only generate *thermal manipulation* for one extreme at a time.

Resist Elements: For a number of hours equal to your Inspiration score + character level, you gain the benefit of *endure elements* and energy resistance equal to your Destruction score against either cold or fire as with *resist energy* (choose when you manifest the knack). You cannot stack *thermal manipulation*, whether for the same temperature range or different temperature extremes.

Extinguish/Melt: You can extinguish a fire or melt ice up to close range in a radius of feet equal to half your Destruction score (minimum 1-foot radius). This does not work against fire or ice generated with telluric energy.

2nd-Level Psi Knacks

Unless noted otherwise, a 2nd-level psi knack offers subjects a Will save (DC 15 + your Int bonus).

Brainstorm

"Fall before the very power of my mind!"

Psi (Telepathy, Vitakinesis) [Mind-affecting]

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One living creature/4 levels

Duration: 1d4 rounds or 1 round (see text)

Saving Throw: Will partial

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 1

Description: In this direct mind-to-mind attack, you throw the full force of your will against the target's mind. Some victims have been known to seek retribution upon recovery, as the experience can be a profound violation of the psyche.

Effect: You choose whether the target is cowering (frozen in fear, unable to take actions, –2 penalty to AC and no Dexterity bonus) or frightened (must flee if possible, otherwise –2 penalty on attack rolls, saves, skill checks, ability checks) for 1d4 rounds. On a successful Will save, the target is shaken (–2 penalty on attack rolls, saves, skill checks, ability checks) for 1 round.

You can affect one additional target every four character levels, to a maximum of six targets at 20th level. Each target must be within your line of sight in close range.

Cloak of Dread

"Don't make me angry. It would go very badly for you."

Psi (Biokinesis, Telepathy, Vitakinesis) [Fear, Mind-affecting]

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 10 min./Destruction score

Power Points: 1

Description: Whether a physical impression or a focus of will, you can emanate an aura of palpable menace that causes others to shrink back in fear as their lizard hindbrains yammer about tigers in long black coats. Even animals flee in terror or attack in desperation, depending on their temperaments.

Effect: You receive a +4 bonus on all Intimidate checks, and all foes with the minion template (see Appendix Two) or animals avoid attacking you if possible. You gain an additional +1 bonus every four character levels after the knack is purchased (maximum +9 at 20th level). If attackers have no other target options, they are considered shaken (–2 penalty on attack rolls, saves, skill checks, ability checks) for each attack they make against you.

Conjure Fire

"Create fire with the power of your mind? Impossible!"

Psi (Psychokinesis) [Fire]

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: 25 ft. + 5 ft./level

Area: Line or small area (see text)

Duration: Instantaneous or 1 hour/level (see text)

Saving Throw: Reflex half

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 1

Description: You can excite molecules to create sudden intense heat, or simply to warm a room.

Effect: You can use *conjure fire* in two ways: direct application or ambient effect.

Direct Application: A fist-sized ball of flame rushes outward from you in a line. Any targets in that line suffer 1d6 points of fire damage for every two of your character levels (maximum 10d6 at 20th level). This instantaneous manifestation may affect targets just as a *fireball* does.

Ambient Effect: You can increase the ambient temperature of a large room, apartment or small home up to 20° F for 1 hour per character level. You can perform trivial ambient effects, like lighting a cigarette, without any power point expenditure on a successful DC 15 Concentration check.

Conjure Frost

Psi (Psychokinesis) [Cold]

Effect: This knack functions exactly as *conjure fire* with the following distinctions: The direct application manifests a sheet of freezing cold or a blast of ice shards created by sucking all the heat from the target area. The ambient effect decreases the ambient temperature of a large room,

apartment or small home up to 20° F for 1 hour per character level. Trivial ambient effects cover things like icing down a drink.

Conjure Lightning

Psi (Electrokinesis) [Electricity]

Effect: This knack functions exactly as *conjure fire* with the following distinctions: The direct application manifests an arc of electricity drawn from the Earth's ambient electromagnetic field. The ambient effect can power a small engine or similar electrical system for 1 hour per character level. Trivial ambient effects include things like sticking balloons to walls.

Evil Eye

"May your ancestors visit a curse upon you!"

Psi (Telepathy, Vitakinesis)

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One living creature

Duration: Destruction score in days or 1 day (see text)

Saving Throw: Will partial

Power Resistance: No

Power Points: 0 or 1 (see text)

Description: Those who use the *evil eye* range from occultists who believe that they inflict a psychosomatic blow to the subject's self-confidence, to mediums who claim to lay curses upon their victims.

Effect: The *evil eye* manifests with a successful ranged touch attack and lasts for a number of days equal to your Destruction score (minimum of 1 day). You must have eye contact and make some sort of sign — an arcane gesture, spitting in the target's direction or some similar act — and must also spend 1 power point if the target is Inspired.

A target who succeeds at a Will save suffers a –2 penalty on any attack rolls, saves, skill checks and ability checks for the next day. On a failed save, the target also suffers 1d4 points of temporary Wisdom damage.

If you confirm a critical with *evil eye* (threat range 20), you may apply one of the following results instead:

- The target suffers a total –6 penalty instead.
- The knack's duration changes from days to weeks.
- The target gets no save against the Wisdom damage.

Hypnotic Presence

"You are falling under my spell."

Psi (Biokinesis, Telepathy, Vitakinesis) [Compulsion, Language-dependent, Mind-affecting]

Manifestation Time: 1 round

Range: 25 ft.

Target: One living creature/2 levels

Duration: 10 min./Inspiration score

Saving Throw: Will negates

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 1

Description: Whether through use of pheromone emission, focus of will or some other means, you can draw others under your will. You can then extract answers to even the most probing questions, or implant commands that lie forgotten until the target finds himself carrying them out.

Effect: You must concentrate for one full round and make eye contact with the subject. If your *hypnotic presence* functions via some other means, you may have a different method of connecting with the target during the round of concentration — for instance, using pheromones may require that the target have normal respiration within your presence.

The target enters a hypnotic trance if she fails a Will save. While under a trance, the target must answer any questions posed to her with the literal truth as she knows it.

You can implant a post-hypnotic command with a successful DC 15 Bluff check. You can implant a number of commands equal to your Wisdom bonus. Each takes a full 10 minutes to implant, and fades from the target's subconscious after a number of days equal to your Reflection score (minimum 1). A command may not violate the target's self-preservation instincts or basic moral code, but anything else is fair game.

Inspirational Aura

"Once more unto the breach!"

Psi (Biokinesis, Telepathy, Vitakinesis) [compulsion, mind-affecting]

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Targets: Up to your Inspiration score in creatures (see text)

Duration: Charisma bonus + level in rounds

Saving Throw: Will partial

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 1

Description: You reinforce the psyches of your comrades and followers, giving them the wherewithal to tackle with gusto feats that might otherwise give them pause. Masters of this knack can convince their subordinates and allies to storm the very gates of Hell armed with nothing but buckets of ice water.

Effect: On a successful DC 13 Diplomacy check, you bestow upon your nearest ally a +2 morale bonus on attack rolls and saves. You can grant this bonus to the next-closest ally (PC or NPC) for every 2 points by which your roll exceeds the DC, up to a number equaling your Inspiration score.

You may also add your Reflection score as a bonus on Diplomacy checks you make for commands made to any character under the effects of *inspirational aura* — as long as the orders are of an appropriately heroic nature (the GM has the final say as to what qualifies as "heroic"). You cannot gain the morale bonus from *inspirational aura*, either through your own use or through another character's use of the knack.

Psychic Manipulation

"These... these ghostly hands appeared and plucked the necklace from my neck!"

Psi (Psychokinesis) [Force]

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: See text

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 1

Description: You manifest a pair of "spectral hands" that, although they cannot exert a large amount of force, are every bit as capable as your physical ones. They can pick a lock, fire a gun, mix a drink or slap an unwanted suitor. This psychic force is invisible unless you choose otherwise, in which case it manifests as ghostly hands or some other manipulating form.

Effect: You can use *psychic manipulation* exactly as you would your own hands; since you even gain a sense of touch through the "spectral fingers," you are limited only by being able to perceive what the "hands" touch. The manifestation has an effective Strength score of 2 (lift 20 pounds or drag 100 pounds) and a Dexterity score equal to yours. It has a speed of 30 feet when unencumbered.

The "hands" are proficient with any weapons you can use, but suffer any relevant penalties due to a low Strength score. They cannot be killed, but dissipate if taking 20 points of damage from area attacks (the effect may not make saves). *Psychic manipulation* dissipates if you send it beyond the knack's range.

Using *psychic manipulation* to perform a given task is a move action. At the GM's discretion, you can perform minor tasks (flipping light switches, mixing drinks, writing a note) on a successful DC 18 Concentration check rather than by spending a power point. (As a general rule, if it's interesting but doesn't have a direct tactical influence on the game, there's no need to spend power points.)

Phantom Hands

By manifesting *psychic hand* and *psychic manipulation* simultaneously, you gain an enhanced effect that combines telekinetic force with fine control!

Effect: Spend 1 power point to gain *phantom hands* a number of rounds equal to your Inspiration score. The *phantom hands* have Strength and Dexterity scores equal to your own, and have a speed of 60 feet unencumbered. They otherwise function per the rules for *psychic manipulation*.

3rd-Level Psi Knacks

Unless noted otherwise, a 3rd-level psi knack offers targets a Will save (DC 18 + your Intelligence bonus).

Cloud the Mind

"I could have sworn someone was standing there just a moment ago."

Psi (Telepathy) [Mind-affecting]

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Power Points: 1

Description: You cloak your very presence from lesser individuals, becoming but a passing shadow. This knack is telepathic, affecting the perceptions of living beings who might observe you directly. Mechanical sensors are unaffected, and photographs will reveal your presence when developed even if no observer remembers you being there.

Effect: Your Hide and Move Silently scores are doubled for the scene, and you can hide even in plain sight. You remain unseen to

casual observers unless you do something blatant, or if someone beats your Hide or Move Silently check with a higher Spot or Listen result (as appropriate).

The GM is the final arbiter of what is blatant, but a general guideline is “anything that has a direct or noisy effect upon the observer or the surrounding scenery.” Picking a lock isn’t obvious if it’s done out of direct sight, but kicking the door in is. Initiating combat always counts.

Mindhammer

“No physical barrier can withstand my psychic might!”

Psi (Psychokinesis) [Force]

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal or 50 ft. + 10 ft./level

Area: Burst (10-ft. radius + 5 ft./2 levels) or line

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Reflex half

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 1

Description: An invisible piston of force that can strike hard enough to splinter wood or shatter bone, this knack makes up in sheer destructive potential what it lacks in subtlety.

Effect: You emit an invisible telekinetic wallop in either a circular burst or a line; you may choose the effect with each manifestation. (See the *Player’s Handbook*, Chapter 10: Magic, “Spell Descriptions,” *Aiming a Spell* for specifics on bursts and lines). Each unobstructed target within the area of effect suffers 1d6 points of force damage for every two of your character levels (maximum 10d6 at 20th level).

The *mindhammer* also strikes each target as a Medium combatant performing Improved Overrun (the knack’s Strength is equal to your Strength + Destruction score). If a target is knocked prone, the knack effect hits any unobstructed target behind the first, continuing in this manner to the knack’s effect limit. You are not subject to the target’s retaliatory Strength check if the overrun does not knock him prone.

Psychic Control

“These aren’t the refugees you’re looking for.”

Psi (Telepathy, Vitakinesis) [Mind-affecting]

Manifestation Time: See text

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One living creature

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: See text

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 1

Description: Among the most feared psi powers, this knack allows you to twist the minds of others. This can make some people understandably nervous; governments and private groups alike may well take an unhealthy interest in you.

Effect: You decide the degree of intended memory change, as listed on the chart below (trivial, major, extensive). You must then focus on the target for a number of rounds equal to the desired check result listed, then make a ranged touch attack. If successful, you make a Concentration check opposing the target’s Will saving throw. Prior to the roll, either character adds any points in the

Reflection facet, and may gain an additional +2 bonus on the roll for each power point spent.

The amount by which you exceed the target’s result, if any, indicates the degree of change you can make to her mind. If this is less than you’d planned initially, the change has a correspondingly reduced intensity. You get no added benefit from getting higher than your planned result.

If the check results are equal, or if the target gets a higher result, you cannot make any change to her thoughts. If the target exceeds your check result by 10 or more, she is aware that someone tried to affect her mind in some way. The GM may keep secret the target’s Will save result, and not reveal the full level of success that you achieved. The GM also has final say on suitable modifications to the original intent.

You can also use *psychic control* to restore a subject’s memories that were changed by some other use of this knack; certain spies have been placed in deep cover using this very method.

Check Result

Exceeded by

Degree of Memory Change

1 or more

Trivial (target forgets her home address or your name)

5 or more

Major (target forgets where she works, or believes she was married to a man who never existed)

10 or more

Extensive or disastrous (target forgets to breathe or believes she was born in Atlantis five centuries ago)

Sleight of Will

“For my next trick, I shall make that gentleman’s monocle appear in my hand like... so!”

Psi (Teleportation) [Teleportation]

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One inanimate object of up to 2 x your Reflection score in lb.

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates (object)

Power Resistance: Yes (object)

Power Points: 1

Description: With this rare but potent knack, you can teleport a non-living object from one place to another with no visible effect. As yet, there are no recorded instances of a mesmerist being able to apportion living beings.

Effect: The object cannot weigh more than twice your Reflection score in pounds, and you must be able to sense it and its destination within the knack’s range. You can teleport the object with a successful ranged touch attack; the object’s AC is 10 + size modifier (Medium 0, Small –1, Tiny –2, Diminutive –4). If someone holds or is wearing the object, add the holder’s Dexterity bonus, if any — however, the holder may make a Will save to negate the attempt.

The object retains its physical and chemical properties, although you may change its orientation upon arrival. So, a falling object con-

tinues to fall, but you may choose for it to reappear falling *upward* (though gravity will soon reverse its course). You can use *slight of will* on a thrown object — although the thrower's attack bonus adds to its AC — but not on an object that moves too fast to track, such as a bullet. To target someone with a teleported object, you must make a ranged attack roll after succeeding in the apport.

On a critical hit, *slight of will* functions as a move action.

Synergy Loop

"You know what to do, my loyal minions!"

Psi (Telepathy) [Mind-affecting]

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)

Targets: See text

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw: No

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 1

Description: Whether through singular leadership, telepathic communication or some sort of hive consciousness, you can direct your compatriots to the most efficient outcome.

Effect: Make a Diplomacy check; the result indicates the number of compatriots you can link in the *synergy loop* (as indicated in the chart below), who may coordinate their actions without the need for communication. The subjects need not be in your immediate vicinity, but you must know exactly who you want to link with.

Each character in the *synergy loop* acts on the highest initiative result among them, and gains your Reflection score as a morale bonus on attacks and saves. You can coordinate with those in the loop, but you do not gain the initiative or Reflection score bonus.

Result	Number of Compatriots Affected
10	6
15	12
20	25
25	50
30	100

Touch of Life

"Dead? You are mistaken; the fall merely knocked the wind out of her for a few minutes."

Psi (Biokinesis, Vitakinesis) [Healing]

Manifestation Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will half (harmless)

Power Resistance: Yes (harmless)

Power Points: 1

Description: As long as even the barest spark of life remains in your subject, you can heal almost any injury with your very will.

Effect: On a successful DC 13 Heal check, you cure your Reflection score in d8s in points of damage +1 point per character level, or twice that amount in nonlethal damage. If you fail the Heal check but

do not roll a 1, the subject recovers no hit points but is stabilized and suffers no further blood loss or other worsening of condition. You may use *touch of life* on the same subject no more than (1 + her Constitution bonus) times within a single 24-hour span.

Quantum Knacks

Quantum knacks are powers displayed by those with the superhuman template — individuals known commonly as stalwarts. Generally, quantum knacks are incredible extensions of normal human capabilities, but some provide qualities that no "normal" human could possibly attain. Superhumans power quantum knacks by channeling Z-wave energy, and so register as sources of telluric energy.

Quantum knacks are divided into three categories. A 1st-level quantum knack represents a logical, if extreme, extension of human development. In theory, any gifted person could achieve comparable results with the right combination of genetics and training. A 2nd-level quantum knack is obviously superhuman, though still a direct extrapolation from the human baseline: The stalwart is just faster, smarter or stronger than any ordinary person could ever hope to be. A 3rd-level quantum knack places the stalwart outside the bounds of normalcy, manifesting highly irregular or unnerving capabilities that surpass the usual qualities of living beings.

1st-Level Quantum Knacks

A Single Bound

"Onward and upward!"

Quantum

Manifestation Time: N/A

Range: Self

Target: You

Duration: Constant

Power Points: 0

Description: Your legs are better than coiled steel springs! You can hurdle high walls or leap across a city street. Your physique may reflect this knack in some noticeable manner.

Effect: Gain a +10 bonus on all Jump checks, +1 additional point every other level (maximum +20 at 20th level). This knack has no effect on kick attacks or foot speed, but it does double your rate of speed on a bicycle.

Cool Hand

"Grab the gem out of that pit of scorpions? No problem."

Quantum

Manifestation Time: N/A

Range: Self

Target: You

Duration: Constant

Power Points: 0

Description: You're steady as a rock, even in the tightest situations. This is not necessarily mental composure — you may be as prone to panic as anyone. Instead, your body functions efficiently regardless of the stresses under which it's operating. You never get "the shakes," nor do you get seasick or shiver.

Effect: You suffer injury from detrimental physical effects — wounds, drugs, illness, temperature extremes, stress — but you are

immune to any Dexterity penalties from such conditions. You gain a +2 competence bonus on checks involving ultra-fine manipulation, such as lock picking or surgery (but *never* combat). Your rock-steady grip also doubles the effective range of all ranged weapons (firearms, bows, fire hoses, disintegrator rays) that you wield.

You also never show any physical effects from being intoxicated other than slurred speech. You remain poised right up until the point at which you pass out.

Heightened Senses

"Shhhh! Someone just unlocked the door downstairs!"

Quantum

Manifestation Time: N/A

Range: Self

Target: You

Duration: Constant

Power Points: 0

Description: You're a living bloodhound, telescope and microphone rolled into one. Acute senses can be a curse at times — bright flashes, loud noises and noxious smells can incapacitate you through sensory overload. Best to avoid big band concerts and Italian kitchens.

Effect: You gain the benefits of the Alertness feat. When you take a move action to aim a ranged attack, your visual acuity is such that your weapon's range increments double. Sensory overload effects are left to the GM's discretion, but should be dramatic and appropriate to the circumstances.

Mad Scientist

"You all laughed. You said it couldn't be done. Ha! Behold the product of my genius; behold my creation!"

Quantum

Manifestation Time: 1 round

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: See text

Power Points: 1

Description: Armed with only a notepad and your own formidable command of modern science, you push the frontiers of human achievement. Even the simplest schematics you design baffle the learned!

Effect: Your brain chemistry changes to enhance your super-scientific ability; this converts your final research and development time from days to hours. This likewise results in a shorter construction time, figured from the final R&D duration. (See "Super-Science," below, for details on invention.) Such rapid genius is not without its price, however. You rely so heavily on leaps of intuition and sudden bursts of creative mania that few can keep up. As a result, when using this knack, you gain no game mechanical benefit from having research assistants other than fellow superhumans.

The power point cost must be paid at the start of the R&D phase of invention, and is in addition to all other power points required by the super-science process.

Man for All Seasons

"Come along, gentlemen. It's only the Sahara. A little sun never hurt anyone!"



Quantum

Manifestation Time: N/A

Range: Self

Target: You

Duration: Constant

Power Points: 0

Description: You can endure the utmost extremes of climate without batting an eye or losing a drop of sweat. Whether it's a hike in Death Valley in a parka or a swimsuit-clad snowball fight in the Himalayas, you're equally comfortable.

Effect: You exist comfortably in conditions between -50°F and 140°F without suffering damage or having to make Fortitude saves. You are immune to heatstroke, hypothermia and similar ailments. You can survive for triple the usual time without water or food. You don't have any protection from fire or cold damage, nor are you protected against other environmental hazards such as smoke, lack of air, and so forth.

Powerlifter

"The safe is cemented into the wall?" Shhhraaaack! "There ya go."

Quantum

Manifestation Time: N/A

Range: Self

Target: You

Duration: Constant

Power Points: 0

Description: You win iron man competitions just by entering — your opponents take one look at the steel cables you call muscles and shrink away. While your casual strength may be no greater than that of anyone else with your build, your focused might is awesome to behold.

Effect: Add your Destruction score to your Strength score for all tasks involving brute strength other than attack and damage rolls. This includes lifting, encumbrance, Strength checks to open stuck or locked doors, and Strength checks to break an item with a single blow.

Sex Symbol

"Yowza!"

Quantum

Manifestation Time: N/A

Range: Self

Target: You

Duration: Constant

Power Points: 0

Description: You exude raw sexuality from every pore. A photograph of you can send teenagers of the appropriate sexual orientation into hormonal frenzies, while your actual presence inspires even the most staid and reserved adults to youthful pursuits. You're never lacking for companionship — in fact, your biggest problem may be getting an uninterrupted night's sleep...

Effect: Add your Intuition score to all Charisma-based checks relating to performing a seduction.

Superhuman Reflexes

"I've never seen anyone move so fast!"

Quantum

Manifestation Time: N/A

Range: Self



Target: You

Duration: Constant

Power Points: 0

Description: Your hands are faster than striking cobras. It may be possible to surprise you, but no Old West gunslinger could have ever out-drawn you.

Effect: You gain a bonus on initiative checks equal to (3 x your Intuition score). This stacks with Improved Initiative.

2nd-Level Quantum Knacks

Aetheric Vision

"I sense a powerful electrical charge emanating from that panel. Perhaps we should step back."

Quantum

Manifestation Time: 1 move action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 hour/level

Power Points: 1

Description: You transform the very structure of your eyes to perceive portions of the electromagnetic spectrum that are otherwise inaccessible to sight. You can see heat, infrared and ultraviolet radiation, and even magnetic fields or strong electrical charges. If you are of a mystic bent, you may consider these energies to be auras and ley lines. If you have advanced scientific training, glowing schematics may superimpose themselves over your normal vision.

Effect: You gain the ability to see in complete darkness as if it were full daylight up to (5 x your Inspiration score) feet. With a successful Craft (electronic) check against DC 12 (the skill may be used untrained in this case), you can track the path of active electrical circuits, even locating live wires inside walls. Other applications of this knack are left to the GM's discretion, but may include seeing a concealed assassin's body heat through a curtain or thin door, tracking an airplane by the atmospheric ionization it leaves or detecting radiation by its unnatural glow.

Scientists in the Inspiration Age don't know as much about the electromagnetic spectrum as modern physicists do. Accordingly, you may see what you *expect* to see rather than what science dictates you *should* see. You may also witness phenomena for which modern physics has no rational explanation....

Blazing Speed

"How did you fend off those three soldiers while entering the proper code to turn off the doomsday device?!"

Quantum

Manifestation Time: 1 move action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 round/2 levels

Power Points: 1

Description: When seconds count, you have twice as many as everyone else — at least from your perspective. You can supercharge your nerves to move at blinding speeds!

Effect: You gain the benefits of *haste* as described in Chapter 11 of the *Player's Handbook*, though with this knack's listed cost and duration.

Blindfighter

Wham! Wa-pow! "Gentlemen, it doesn't help to turn out the lights when you all breathe as loudly as overweight water buffalo."

Quantum

Manifestation Time: N/A

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Constant

Power Points: 0

Description: The phrase "blind as a bat" makes you chuckle. After all, bats never run into things. This knack may compensate for blindness or it may be the result of extensive training. Regardless, darkness holds few secrets for you.

Effect: You gain the blindsight quality with a range of (5 x your Inspiration score) in feet. In addition, you cannot be caught flat-footed. You cannot sense surface details such as color or texture.

Optimized Metabolism

"Almost 60? You can't be serious; you don't look a day over 30!"

Quantum

Manifestation Time: N/A

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Constant

Power Points: 0

Description: You may not live forever, but so far, so good. You get most of your energy from absorbing telluric radiation and other forms of pure energy. Since your body doesn't process anything it can't use, you're conveniently immune to many poisons.

Effect: You age 1 year for every (Constitution bonus x 10) years that pass once you reach maturity. You can hold your breath for five times as long as a normal human with the equivalent Constitution. You need only one meal a week, you suffer no damage from ingested poisons or allergic reactions, and you are immune to all known diseases. Alcohol and most other drugs have no effect on you whatsoever. Chemicals that inflict physical damage, such as acids, affect you normally.

Piledriver

"The guy wasn't human, boss — he punched through the brick wall and dragged me outside!"

Quantum

Manifestation Time: N/A

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Constant

Power Points: 0

Description: Some girls break hearts; others break laws. You prefer to break bones... and bricks... and the occasional steel girder. Whether it's from a special diet, cosmic radiation, years of meditation or an inexplicable telluric energy pattern in your bones, your kicks and punches often land with inhuman force.

Effect: Expand the threat range of any attack you make by an amount equal to your Destruction score (this stacks with other ef-

fects that expand an attack's threat range). Also, you can threaten a critical against targets that are not normally affected by critical hits (constructs, buildings, etc.).

Sun Tzu's Blessing

"If I were him, I'd make a diversion over there and bring my men in from the south — what's that alarm? Well, there you go!"

Quantum

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close

Target: You and allies equal to Inspiration score

Duration: Instantaneous

Power Points: 0

Description: The French call this the Touch of Napoleon, while Greeks hearken back to the glory of Belisarius. Whatever the label, the effects are the same: you have an intuitive flair for the geometry of battle. You can assess any tactical situation at a glance, and a moment's reflection tells you where best to exert pressure to break the enemy's forces. Beware hubris — knowing what orders to give is not the same as knowing *how* to give them....

Effect: When analyzing a battle's progress, developing a plan for an assault, finding the best way out of an ambush or performing any other military- or tactics-related analysis, make a DC 15 Knowledge (tactics) check adding your Reflection score as a bonus on the roll. If successful, you find the perfect strategic answer. In addition, you gain a +2 competence bonus for the encounter, and may extend that bonus to one ally in range per 3 points by which your result exceeds the DC (up to your Inspiration score in allies).

Touch of the Muses

"Another masterpiece? You flatter me. This is just something I whipped up before breakfast."

Quantum

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Constant

Power Points: 0

Description: The gods smile upon your artistic efforts — or maybe the Devil inspires you to greatness. Whatever the source, you can achieve a level of aesthetic creativity to which most people aspire in vain.

Effect: You gain a +2 bonus for each point in your Intuition score to apply on any Craft or Perform check involving a physical artistic effort (sculpting, painting, singing, choreography, etc.). This applies to physical expression; artistic efforts like writing or poetry don't count.

With the GM's help and approval, you may take a free background feat justified as a result of this knack, such as Mentor, Resources or Sanctum.

3rd-Level Quantum Knacks

Body of Bronze

"I must stop getting into gunfights. My wardrobe's taking a beating!"

Quantum

Manifestation Time: N/A

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Constant



Power Points: 0

Description: Your skin retains its normal consistency to a casual caress, but it's as strong as steel when it comes to resisting injury. You laugh at clubs and knives, and bullets are but as wasp stings. You might want to watch out for those antitank rifles, though....

Effect: You gain damage reduction equal to your Intuition or Reflection score, whichever is higher (e.g., a character with Intuition 1 and Reflection 3 gains DR 3/—). This goes up should the higher facet score increase also. *Body of bronze* applies only to physical attacks.

Indisputable Analysis

"Sherlock Holmes? An amateur."

Quantum

Manifestation Time: 1 minute

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Power Points: 1

Description: You adjust your senses to function in a breathtaking synergy of observation and deduction. Indeed, you have an ability not unlike Sherlock Holmes' capacity for extreme logical deduction — you can reach (almost always correct) conclusions from the barest scraps of physical evidence.

Effect: After spending at least 1 minute observing what you want to analyze — a crime scene, a mysterious box, etc. — you gain a bonus equal to (2 x your Reflection score) on any subsequent Listen, Search, Sense Motive or Spot checks that relate to the people, places and/or things that you're observing for the knack's duration. You may use *indisputable analysis* once per encounter on a given location.

Man of Many Faces

"I know I just left, but I forgot something in my room. Would you mind letting me back in?"

Quantum

Manifestation Time: 1 minute

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Concentration or 10 minutes/level

Power Points: 1

Description: You can change your physical features to look like someone else. With minimal effort you can become a bland "everyman," while more precise command can alter your features, voice, physical dimensions, garb, race and even gender!

Effect: After a minute of concentration, make a Disguise check. The DC depends on the degree of change desired, as noted on the chart below.

DC	Degree	Effect
12	Slight	Same basic appearance, but all distinguishing details vanish
15	Minor	Coloration and build changes
18	Significant	Complete change of facial features
20	Major	Full transformation, including voice and physical mannerisms
23	Extreme	Sex shift, extremes of age and size

If successful, your body adjusts to the change as desired for the duration of the knack. No makeup, disguise kit or change of clothes is required. It requires minimal concentration to maintain the change; if you are knocked unconscious or suffer more than half your hit points of damage in 1 round, your body reverts to its normal appearance.

If you try using a significant or lower change to impersonate someone, the GM may call for Bluff or Perform checks to see if you're sufficiently convincing. If the change is major or extreme, your proficiency is such that others assume any gaps in your performance are flaws of their own faulty perceptions or memories.

Reptilian Regeneration

"Damn; the grizzly bit my hand off! How inconvenient!"

Quantum

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: See text

Power Points: 1

Description: Thanks to this distinctly unnatural knack, you can endure injuries that would destroy any normal person — from knitting torn flesh to even re-growing missing pieces of yourself in mere minutes!

Effect: You enter a deep trance from which nothing short of physical damage can rouse you. You heal your level in hit points (up to your maximum) for each minute spent in the healing trance. You declare how long the trance will last, and are considered unconscious for the duration. If roused before it ends (by suffering at least 1 hit point of lethal or nonlethal damage), you must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save or be considered staggered for 1d4 rounds. You must be conscious to initiate *reptilian regeneration*.

Sensory Filtering

"We're looking for a man with a red tie? Give me a moment... there he is!"

Quantum

Manifestation Time: N/A or 1 standard action (see text)

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Constant or 1 minute/level (see text)

Power Points: 0 or 1 (see text)

Description: Some wives complain of husbands with selective hearing — they can hear baseball scores but not requests to mow the lawn. You really can tune out the din of a crowd to zero in on a single conversation! Not only that, you can refuse to see everything of a particular color, or ignore the flashes of a blinding strobe light.

Effect: This knack negates all Spot, Listen and Search penalties for environmental distractions such as noxious smells, deafening noises, blinding lights and the like. You are immune to sudden sensory shocks such as flash-blinding from a magnesium flare. *Sensory filtering* removes the danger of sensory overload to *heightened senses* if the two are used in conjunction.

By spending one power point, you can choose to isolate a single sensory impulse, blocking out all sound save for a single conversation or picking the smell of poison out of a dinner buffet.

Threat Awareness

“Look out; he’s about to—” Whack! “—ha! There; never mind.”

Quantum

Manifestation Time: N/A

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Constant

Power Points: 0

Description: Whether it’s an instinctive feel for body language or uncanny precognition, you know when someone is about to launch an attack — just in time to throw the first punch yourself! Be careful, though; “I knew she was going to shoot me” isn’t the best defense against charges of unprovoked murder.

Effect: You always know when a living target whose presence you’re aware of is about to make an offensive move against *anyone* in the immediate area. The target must be within line of sight — though you needn’t be looking at her! — and no farther away than (your Inspiration score x 5) yards. On a successful DC 18 Sense Motive check made as a free action, you know who the attacker and intended victim are; otherwise you know only the direction the attack is coming from and that someone nearby is in danger.

Regardless of whether the check is successful, you act in a surprise round before regular rounds begin (see the *Player’s Handbook*, Chapter 8: Combat, “Initiative,” *Surprise*). If others are present with *threat awareness*, make initiative checks as normal to determine who acts first in the surprise round, with a bonus on the check equal to your Intuition facet.

Threat awareness offers no defense against attackers you’re not aware of, or who are beyond this knack’s range. You must see, hear, and/or feel potential attackers to sense what they’re about to do. Likewise, you gain no advance warning regarding nonliving objects — automatons and land mines don’t have body language to read or presence to sense.

Super-Science

The science of tomorrow, brought to you today! Autogyros! Invisible security rays! Disintegration guns! Self-cleaning kitchens! Silk-steel! Anti-aging elixirs! Zeppelin sky-fortresses! Submersible yachts! Forty-eight tools in one!

The Inspiration Age is one in which men of steel walk the earth — sometimes literally! Thanks to the parahuman capacity for invention bestowed by Inspiration itself, certain institutions and individuals have produced devices that baffle the mind and appear to defy natural laws. Super-science is more than mere science — it’s Inspired! Drawing on the powers of their minds (and sometimes those of their assistants), Inspired scientists can leap years ahead of their colleagues, developing devices and compounds wholly unknown to conventional wisdom.

Inspired characters of all types enjoy the benefits of super-science, although some restrictions apply to certain character types. In some cases, a super-scientific device amplifies an adventurer’s natural capacity to manipulate telluric energy. Although all Inspired have this capability, psychic and superhuman characters have a greater capacity to create inventions than daring characters do. Regardless of the type of adventurer involved, creating super-scientific devices

demands incredible commitment. This is reflected in the rules by requiring a character to have the appropriate super-science feats — Invent Compound, Invent Device and Invent Organism — necessary to make the desired invention.

Botched Inventions

Super-scientific invention is a tricky thing, and different from many other skill-based tasks. With super-scientific invention, a roll of 20 does not always succeed, but a roll of 1 does always fail. If you roll a 1 but your total ranks and bonuses would otherwise have succeeded at the skill check, you simply fail. If you roll a 1 but your total ranks and bonuses are still not sufficient to succeed at the skill check, you suffer a botch. The effects of botching vary and are described throughout the rest of this chapter.

Invention Categories

“Invention” refers to any product of super-science. Chemical and medical experimentation play a part, but the vast majority of super-scientific development comes in the form of mechanical invention and gadgetry. Super-science *can* produce a better mouse or better cheese, but 98 percent of super-science is about the mousetrap itself. This is reflected in the three invention categories:

Name	Invention Category
Device	Mechanical apparatus
Compound	Chemical or drug
Organism	Animal or plant

Invention Types

Super-science divides inventions into two types: advancements and innovations.

• **Advancement:** A direct linear development of an existing concept — the better mousetrap, as it were. It doesn’t break the known laws of physics; it leaps a generation or two ahead of the current state of the art. The rules reflect this by adding options to existing technology. With the proper skill, any character can use an advancement indefinitely (or at least until it breaks down normally).

• **Innovation:** An innovation goes beyond mere physical improvement, channeling Z-waves to reproduce effects that only an Inspired mind can normally enact — in other words, it duplicates a knack’s effect. An innovation may include advancement options, but an advancement cannot emulate a knack. Any invention that has a knack effect is always considered an innovation.

Daring characters may construct advancements but cannot create innovations. From a setting standpoint, they’re not at the intellectual plateau necessary to derive truly innovative devices, just as normal folk don’t have the wherewithal to make advancements. Psychic and superhuman characters can create inventions of either type.

Maximum Inventions per Character

Any character, Inspired and otherwise, can own and use a number of advancements equal to his Wealth bonus. If your Wealth bonus drops lower than the total number of advancements you have, assume that the financial hit you’ve suffered means you no longer have access to all your fancy gadgetry. Pick or roll randomly to select a



number of advancements until your total available once more equals your Wealth bonus. Those advancements selected are unavailable until your Wealth bonus is restored.

An Inspired character can have a number of advancements and/or innovations equal to his Inspiration score. This includes daring characters — they cannot create innovations, but they can use them as easily as psychics and superhumans can.

These totals do *not* include any inventions purchased with the Gadget background feat. You may have as many gadgets as you like, so long as you purchase the feat (see below for more information).

Gadgets and Super-Science

Inventions purchased under the Gadget background feat are distinct from those created via the super-science rules. The distinction is not one of function but of importance to your character or the story. An invention is a marvelous creation, but it is not considered an intrinsic aspect of who you are. A gadget is a special, unique item, a defining feature of your capabilities, personality or motivation.

Example: *Cliff “The Rocketeer” Secord’s rocket pack is a gadget, while Tom Strong’s autogyro backpack is not. Both are inventions, but The Rocketeer wouldn’t be who he is without his jet pack, while specific equipment is incidental to defining Tom Strong’s character.*

Super-Science Creation

Before inventing anything, you must first have at least 5 skill ranks and the super-science feat appropriate to the intended creation. The

Inventions for Starting Characters

You can start the game with inventions if you don’t want to take the Gadget feat. Just follow the super-science rules to create a device, organism or compound. (If you do not have the necessary feats and skills to create super-science devices, the Gadget background is the only way your character can begin play with an invention.) The time required to design and build the invention is factored into your history, but the whole process is considered complete by the start of game play. Finally, you spend power points for the invention, as listed below. This is the only way in which you might begin a game with fewer power points than your Inspiration score. A starting character may have a total number of inventions equal to half her initial Inspiration score (round down).

Ip Cost	Advancement	Innovation
1	5 options	1st-level knack
2	10 options	2nd-level knack
3	15 options	3rd-level knack

skill is also called “primary” skill for purposes of inventing. (The complementary Craft or Heal skills will be used in the construction phase.)

Skill	Super-Science Feat	Benefit
Knowledge (technology)	Invent Device	Construct weapons, vehicles or other devices
Knowledge (physical sciences)	Invent Compound	Develop chemical compound
Knowledge (Earth and life sciences)	Invent Organism	Modify organic tissue, create living organism

You must also have some level of ability relating to the proposed invention’s use. This is either base attack bonus +1 or 1 rank in a specific skill. So, a pistol that uses electricity to fire projectiles requires a base attack bonus of +1; a miniature submersible requires 1 rank in Pilot; a set of automatic lock picks requires 1 rank in Open Locks; a remote-controlled motorcycle requires 1 rank in Drive; and so on.

The invention now goes through three distinct stages (regardless of whether it’s an advancement or an innovation): research and development, construction and use.

Step One: Research and Development

You won’t know if your invention is viable until you research and test it. Research and development (R&D) is often a long and arduous process, but you seldom need to roleplay it out. The time spent on researching information, designing schematics, performing tests and the like is considered “downtime” between encounters unless the GM decides to interject a dramatic event (enemy attack, lab accident, reappearance of an old flame). R&D involves two factors: time and options.

Design Time: Each design option has a standard R&D time, listed in days on Table 8–1: Design Options, Table 8–2: Compound Options and Table 8–3: Organism Options. The R&D time assumes that you spend 10 hours per day with no appreciable interruptions in a suitable facility.

Variables like multiple options, intensive lab time, using research assistants, spending power points and using knacks can modify the R&D time further. Each variable is covered below.

Design Options: The R&D column in each table shows the number of days you must spend in research and development on a single option for each invention category (device, compound, organism). An invention with options only is an advancement; an invention with both options and at least one knack effect is an innovation.

A given invention may have one or many options. The more options you want, the longer R&D takes and the more difficult your R&D check may become. You may apply a given option once unless it states explicitly that multiple levels are possible. The time listed is cumulative for all options and levels. For example, a single level one option requiring seven days has an initial one week R&D time; increasing that option to level three and adding a different level one option that takes 10 days shoots the initial R&D time to 31 days.

The options listed with each table are by no means definitive. While the most common advancements are to weapons or vehicles, virtually anything is fair game. Subject to GM approval, you should feel free to introduce new enhanced weirdness. The systems in this chapter (as with this

book as a whole) are meant to provide a streamlined, fun and easy to use framework by which you can give PCs neat things. The point is *not* to give you an excuse to make the most devastating creations imaginable, then run roughshod all over the bad guys. The GM shouldn’t hesitate to say a proposed invention is too powerful or simply is not suitable for the game.

The R&D Check

An R&D check determines if your research is successful, and whether it takes less than the standard time to accomplish. The R&D check is against a base DC 15 regardless of how many separate options you include in the design (unless noted otherwise). Each level beyond the first for the *same* option adds +2 to the check DC (cumulative). This applies even if you add one level in the initial design and enhance the invention with an additional level at a later date. After all, refining something gets trickier the further you go, no matter the time taken in between steps.

The total options, whether separate options or multiple levels of the same option, all add to the initial R&D time.

The R&D check requires the primary skill for the invention type: Knowledge (technology) for a device; Knowledge (physical sciences) for a compound; Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) for an organism. Success means you accomplish your research after the necessary time. You may reduce this time by 1 day for every 3 points by which your check result exceeds the final DC (to a minimum of 1 day). Certain R&D variables can further add to or take away from this time, as outlined in the sections that follow.

Failing the R&D check indicates some misstep along the way — in the experiments, in some aspect of your theory, etc. — but the basic idea remains sound. A botch reveals that the theorized invention is beyond your capacity to create (it might also involve some kind of lab accident, depending on the botch’s severity). You may attempt a new period of R&D after a failure, but you can never re-search the proposed invention again after a botch. Whatever the result, you’re committed to spending the time required in R&D.

Keep a note of the R&D check for each invention even after it’s completed. It makes it much easier to refer to when adding new options, rebuilding the invention, and the like.

R&D Variable: Lab Time

Spending all your time in R&D would put a serious crimp in your adventuring lifestyle. These rules assume you have 14 hours each day that you don’t spend in the lab — time spent eating, sleeping, socializing, investigating or attending to sundry other matters.

You *can* sequester yourself and do nothing else but pursue R&D. For every 3 days you’re “locked in the lab,” reduce the final R&D time by 1 day (to a minimum of 1 day). You do nothing but work and sleep — meals are haphazard affairs scarfed down while poring over data, you catch naps on a cot in the corner, and you forgo any outside socialization.

Conversely, if your work is interrupted for an appreciable time — running out of materiel or resources, leaving the lab (willingly or otherwise) to deal with other matters and so on — the countdown pauses until you can resume the research.

R&D Variable: Research Assistants

The Inspiration Age is a time of tremendous scientific excitement. Boundaries are being pushed in every direction, and many scientists

Table 8-1: Device Options

Personal Weapon Options

R&D	Option
7	+1 bonus on attack roll ³
3	+1 damage ³
3	+50% ammunition capacity ²
5	+50% range ⁴
10	Compact design: +5 to Spot DCs to notice the item when worn
7	Disguise true appearance (sword cane, umbrella pistol, etc.); +5 to Spot DCs to pierce the disguise
15	Change damage from lethal to nonlethal (or vice versa) with no penalty on attack roll

Vehicle Weapon Options

R&D	Option
10	+1 bonus on attack roll ³
5	+1 damage ³
5	+50% ammunition capacity ²
7	+50% range ⁴
10	Disguise true appearance (support beam, smokestack, etc.); +5 to Spot DCs to pierce the disguise

Vehicle Options

R&D	Option
1	+1 passenger ¹
2	+25% cargo capacity ¹
10	+25% speed (safe and max) ⁸
10	+1 maneuver ⁵
15	+2 hardness ³
10	Conceal existing armor (purchase DC equal to armor level)
1	Personal-scale weapons mount (e.g., machine gun) ¹
5	Vehicle-scale weapons mount (e.g., 3-inch cannon) ¹
1	Conceal existing personal-scale weapons mount
5	Conceal existing vehicle-scale weapons mount
10	Heavy industrial equipment (e.g. mining drill, crane)
2	Living quarters (barracks, 4 occupants) ¹
3	Living quarters (luxury, 1 occupant) ¹
20	Mobile laboratory ¹
20	Support facilities for one smaller vehicle (e.g., biplane hangar in a zeppelin) ¹
10	Improved fuel efficiency (2x normal) ⁵
50	Extra movement mode (e.g., submersible biplane or aero-car)

¹ The option allows multiple levels. This does not refine the basic design further, so the additional levels do not add to the R&D check DC. Also, the level limit depends on the vehicle. Due to vehicles' wide range of sizes, the GM must apply common sense. A motorcycle won't support the same range of modifications that a dirigible will — just try making four men live off the back of that cycle! It may be easiest to sketch proposed additions on a copy of a vehicle photograph, schematic or blueprint. If it looks implausible even for the pulp genre, it probably is.

² Two-level limit.

³ Three-level limit.

⁴ Four-level limit.

⁵ Five-level limit.

⁸ Eight-level limit.

will stop at nothing to be the first to break new ground. For every upstanding and ethical researcher, there is a diabolical scientist who will break laws and ethics to achieve his goal — including stealing designs and prototypes from fellow scientists! Most inventors guard

their research jealously, a great number of them working alone even though an extra pair of hands would help their work tremendously.

Inventors who are not quite so paranoid are willing to bring aboard skilled lab assistants. Yet even the most optimistic inventor under-

Table 8–2: Compound Options

R&D	Option
5	Ability enhancement drug (+2 for one encounter) ³
10	Reflex enhancement drug (+4 initiative for one encounter) ³
20	Acid (1d6 splash/ 1d10 immersion) ³
20	Advanced poison (Fort DC 15; 1d4 Str/2d4 Con)
25	Mind control drug (–4 penalty on victim's Will saving throw)
30	Silk-steel (clothes grant +4 AC, DR 2/—)
40	Superfuel (10x fuel efficiency, +25% speed) ²
60	Concentrated explosive (2d6 explosion in a 5-ft. radius) ²
60	Advanced alloy (1/2 weight for metal item)
60	Healing enhancement drug (gain fast healing 1 for 1 day)
270	Anti-aging drug (age 1 year per decade)

² Two-level limit.

³ Three-level limit.

Table 8–3: Organism Options

R&D	Option
20	Muscle implantation (+2 Strength) ³
40	Nerve tweaking (+2 Dexterity) ²
20	Structural reinforcement (+2 Constitution) ³
15	Sensory enhancement (+2 Wisdom) ³
90	Brain augmentation (+2 Intelligence) ²
5	Plastic surgery (new face, same Charisma)
10	Plastic surgery (+2 Charisma) ³
60	Pheromone implantation (+2 Charisma) ²
75	Lobotomatic behavioral modification (+2 Charisma) ²
20	Dermal thickening (+2 natural armor)
60	Subdermal chitin implantation (+3 natural armor, DR 1/—)
120	Exoskeletal transplantation (+4 natural armor, DR 2/—)
60	Minor animal transplant (surface, minimal connections — e.g., whiskers)
120	Intermediate animal transplant (surface, extensive connections — e.g., tail)
240	Major animal transplant (internal, extensive connections — e.g., claws)

² Two-level limit.

³ Three-level limit.

stands that the possibility of betrayal still exists. That new lab worker may have impressive credentials, but who's to say he's not spying for the sinister Machinatrix? Some inventors are willing to take the risk for the sake of science. If nothing else, sharing the workload helps speed things along. The trick is getting assistants trained in the fields the inventor needs. Offering a lucrative wage or having a project that would get even the most jaded researcher frothing at the mouth makes it easy to get good help.

Size Does Matter

Super-science allows for miniature versions of existing equipment or inventions. Such miniaturization may include anything from making a backpack version of an autogyro to making a wristwatch-sized ham radio. The invention still functions as normal; it's just smaller. The size chart below lists general sizes and matching examples. If you want to make a smaller version of a given item, pick the appropriate size and go down the chart until you reach the size you want. Each step down the chart adds 3 days to the initial R&D time and +2 to the R&D check DC.

As always, the GM may dictate an appropriate starting size for an invention and may restrict the degree to which it can be miniaturized — a modest-sized backpack flamethrower reduced to a lady's atomizer might be appropriate for some games but not others.

Size	Example
Colossal	Dirigible, cruise ship, brownstone
Gargantuan	Aeroplane, sailboat
Huge	Automobile, autogyro
Large	Motorcycle, phone booth
Medium	Steamer trunk, .50 machine gun
Small	Ham radio, briefcase, shotgun
Tiny	Pistol, pie tin
Diminutive	Clutch purse, bottle
Fine	Wristwatch, belt buckle, atomizer

A research assistant provides a benefit similar to the aid another maneuver for your R&D check, adding to your chance of success (and potentially reducing your R&D time). You gain a bonus for each research assistant as indicated on the chart below. These bonuses are cumulative. You can have a maximum number of non-Inspired research assistants equal to your (Charisma modifier + Reflection score), and a maximum number of Inspired research assistants equal to your Inspiration score. PCs who assist you do not count against either total.

Example: Say you're developing a new rapid-fire machine gun. A research assistant with 5 ranks in Knowledge (technology) and Advanced Firearms Proficiency gives you a +2 bonus on your R&D check. You gain an additional +1 bonus if she's also Inspired.

R&D Bonus	Research Assistant
+1	has 5 or more ranks in the appropriate skill
+1	has 5 or more ranks in one or more related skills, or a closely related feat
+1	is Inspired

R&D Variable: Power Points

Power points are essential when creating devices, organisms or compounds undreamed of by modern science. You must spend 1 power point each time you make an R&D attempt. Each additional power point you spend reduces the final R&D time by 3 days (to a minimum

of 1 day). You allocate any power points before you make the R&D roll; they are spent regardless of whether the research is ultimately successful — you may be brilliant, but you're not necessarily *correct* in your hypothesis.

R&D Variable: Knacks

The *scientific prodigy* and *mad scientist* knacks make an inventor even more exceptional. Each allows inventors to create inventions more easily and in less time than average. See each knack's description for details.

Reverse Engineering

At the GM's option, you can reverse-engineer an existing invention that you've found, purchased or stolen. The process is the same as designing from scratch, with the R&D time devoted to deconstructing the invention and determining what makes it tick.

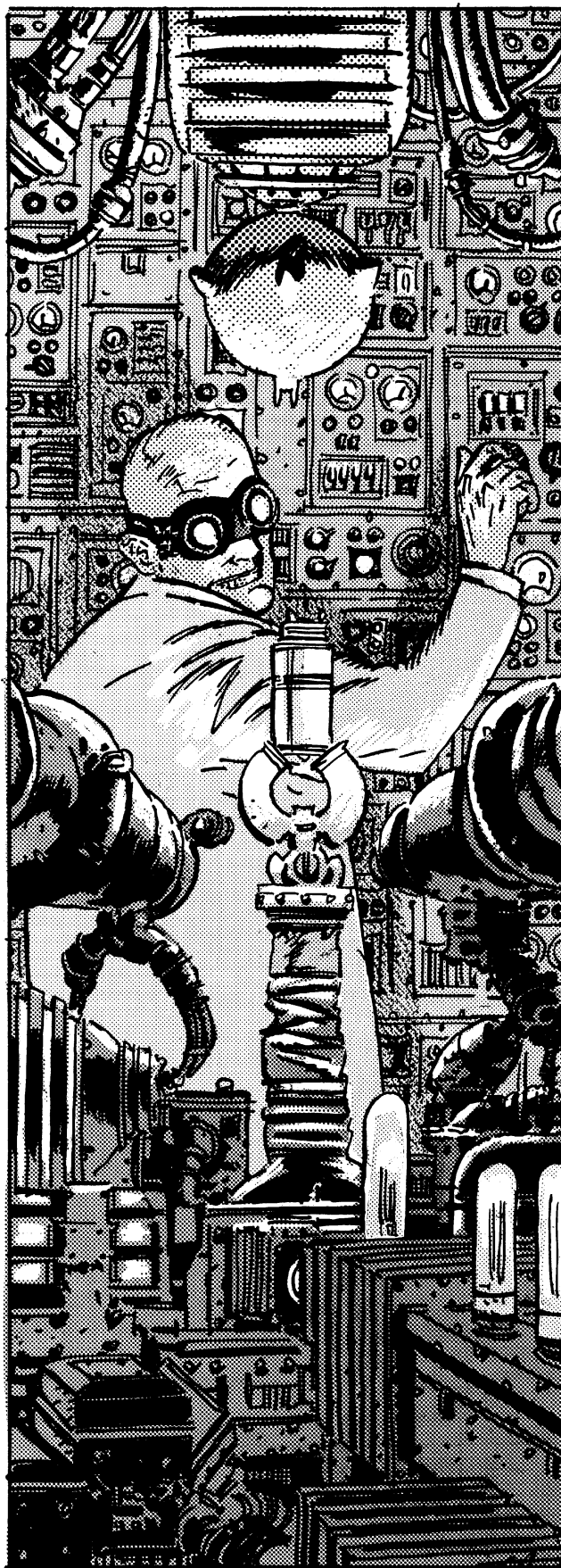
Step Two: Construction

Assuming R&D was successful, you must now build the invention. This requires four things: time, funding, facilities and a copy of the completed plans. Yes, this means that a rival can steal your only blueprints — or vice versa! Device construction is based on the appropriate practical skill: Craft (mechanical) for devices; Craft (chemical) or Craft (pharmaceutical) for compounds; or Heal for organisms. This check is made once, against the same DC as the R&D check. Success indicates construction begins as defined by the parameters below. Failure by 10 or less indicates some difficulty in moving from design to execution; this increases either the construction time or cost by one-quarter. Failure by more than 10 indicates some real problems in the process; both construction time and cost are increased by one-quarter — or the inventor can hit the drawing board again and start over. Assistants with the appropriate practical skills can help as outlined above.

• **Construction Time:** This is left to the GM's discretion but should reflect the complexity and size of the invention in question, as well as the amount of super-science that went into it. A handgun that fires shotgun shells will take less work than a heavy-duty, mineral-mining submarine. The chart below suggests construction times based on the total time spent on successful R&D.

R&D Time	Construction Time
1 to 5 days	4 hours
up to 10 days	8 hours
up to 15 days	12 hours
up to 20 days	1 day
up to 30 days	2 days
up to 60 days	2 weeks
up to 120 days	1 month
up to 180 days	2 to 3 months
up to 270 days	3 to 6 months
over 270 days	6 to 18 months

• **Funding:** Intricate super-science may require a great deal of funding — while some scientists can build their hardware out of spit and baling wire, most prefer to use freshly forged steel. The GM



is advised to set whatever financial requirements she sees fit, but getting funding should be an occasional plot point rather than a constant irritant (unless the inventor insists on devising expensive and unbalancing inventions constantly). In general, the higher your Wealth bonus, the less of an issue funding becomes. Super-scientific success can even lead to further Wealth bonus increases, if you market your finished product properly.

- **Facilities:** Most construction beyond personal equipment requires a dedicated facility — a garage workbench isn't sufficient for zeppelin manufacture. This is a common-sense ruling. Assume that vehicular construction requires a facility at least three times as large as the vehicle itself. Chemical super-science requires a functioning lab, and medical super-science must have a surgical theater.

Step Three: Field Testing

There's a running joke in the military that the most dangerous assignment isn't front-line infantry — it's assisting the munitions lab with R&D. The same holds true for those brave (or foolish) souls who help scientists expand the bounds of modern technology.

Advancements are typically more reliable than innovations and are easier to use. Anyone with the appropriate proficiency or skill can use an advancement: Personal Firearms Proficiency for a pistol advancement, Drive for automobile advancement, and so on.

Innovations are more complicated (tired of hearing that yet?). You must meet the invention's usability requirements (see "Innovative Super-Science," below). If you don't, you can't use it — period. Using an innovation is a standard action and expends 1 charge from it. Alternately, you can spend 1 of your own power points. You then roll the invention's skill check for its effect (see below). If you have the same knack that the invention produces, you may make the check based on your abilities instead.

Repairing Inventions

Nothing runs forever (except for a perpetual motion machine — but if anyone's built it, they're not talking). When an invention is damaged or suffers malfunction (due to attack, wear and tear, a botch, dramatic editing or a convenient plot point), any character with at least 8 ranks in the appropriate field of study may perform repairs. Un-Inspired characters suffer a cumulative -2 penalty for every two options an invention has, due to the enhanced design's complexity. An Inspired character with ranks in the Repair skill may also attempt repairs.

Rebuilding Inventions

A rebuild is a thorough repair — you disassemble and reassemble the invention from the ground up, cleaning every part and replacing anything that's wearing out. This requires a new construction check using the initial DC and requires the same power point expenditure, but it involves no further R&D time and takes only one-tenth the original construction time. The invention cannot be used while it's being rebuilt.

A successful rebuild restores an advancement to perfect working order, and starts an innovation's warranty afresh (see below). To maintain a sense of mystery about how well an invention functions, the GM may make the rebuild check and keep the results secret.

Super-Science Advancements

Advancements are improvements upon existing, early 20th-century technology. In most cases, this covers anything that's been developed up to present times — laser scopes, miniaturized bugging devices, refined fuel mixtures, synthetic drugs and so on. Still, the GM may declare that a proposed real-world breakthrough is too potent to be an advancement and require that the invention be an innovation instead.

Personal Weapons

Guns are obvious subjects of advancement, but other weapons such as crossbows and melee weapons qualify as well. Firearm advancements often incorporate improvements that a modern-day gunsmith would recognize. Improved accuracy can come from ported barrels, ergonomic grips or even gyroscopic recoil compensation spheres. Increased damage can be reflected in better ammunition or more efficient use of the chemical energy released by existing ammunition. Increased ammo capacity and range and reduced size are just factors of a more efficient, streamlined and refined mechanical design.

Melee weapon advancements are masterworks that Muramasa or Wyrcon would envy. They conform to the wielder's hand like an extension of his body, and their cutting edges and striking surfaces are honed and shaped to deliver more energy than would seem possible for something of the weapon's size and weight. It's amazing what you can accomplish by improving on the basics of the lever.

A single device may include no more than 6 total personal weapon advancement options.

Vehicle Weapons

Generally, vehicle weapon advancements are just like firearm advancements: more "modern," in an early 21st-century sense. While they don't incorporate electronic targeting, some may have very sophisticated mechanical sighting aids.

A single device may include no more than 6 total vehicle weapon advancement options.

Vehicles

Aeroplanes, steam trains and touring automobiles! As with the previous categories, such advancements are improvements upon the vehicles of the time.

The total number of vehicle options possible in a single invention depends on its size. A one- or two-person conveyance can have up to 10 vehicle advancement options; a 12-passenger invention can have up to 20 vehicle advancement options; anything larger can have up to 30 vehicle advancement options.

Chemistry

Better living through chemistry! Advancements in this field are as varied as you can conceive. Many accomplishments are pharmaceutical in nature, though chemistry advancements can find uses in construction or destruction. It is possible to mass-produce compound advancements.

A note to the wily GM: Drug advancements may well have unexpected side-effects. Look at a list of possible problems that modern

antibiotics can generate, and go from there — particularly if someone botches during the R&D stage.

A single compound may include no more than 3 total chemistry advancement options.

Medical Experimentation

Many aspects of modern medicine that we take for granted were largely unknown eight decades ago. Inspired doctors may sidestep the limits of their un-Inspired contemporaries, particularly when performing physical alterations to subjects. Such practice is usually the tool of demented villains — no respectable physician would perform chitin transplants on unwilling soldiers! — but some heroes may find it worth the medical risks and social costs to gain an extra edge in the fights of their lives.

Each super-surgery subject is different, and thus a given procedure must be planned separately for each individual recipient. Although the R&D time remains the same, the medical procedure's duration differs from the construction times described above. To keep things simple, performing a super-surgery procedure requires 1 hour for every day of R&D, with a minimum of 4 hours. The surgery must be performed in one stretch — it's impossible to split up a single super-scientific surgical procedure. A lead surgeon (who must have the Surgery feat and at least 8 ranks in Heal) must attend at all times. Particularly long operations may require multiple teams of doctors.

The patient is reduced to 0 hit points and is considered staggered after regaining consciousness. He must then heal naturally (a knack or a super-drug may speed his recuperation). Botches during surgery tend to be fatal — botches during R&D, on the other hand, may result in operations that go just fine, but with consequences that don't turn out as anticipated! Dr. Moreau, anyone?

Caution: Side-effects may result! Even with a successful operation, adding chitin plating or a prehensile tail can cause compensatory limitations. Armor may reduce your speed, a tail may make most seats painful and confining, and any alteration that makes you obviously more than human may hamper social interactions. Every two obvious, non-human options impose a –2 penalty on your Charisma checks and Charisma-based checks, except for Intimidate checks when using options intended to inspire fear or loathing.

A single organism may have no more than 10 total medical advancement options.

Super-Science Innovations

An innovation is the product of hypothetical science. It does not exist in our real world currently. It may include any options from Tables 8–1, 8–2 and 8–3; however, an innovation's main function is to channel Z-waves to produce an effect similar to those that knacks generate. Put another way, innovations duplicate knack effects.

All innovations have the following traits, each of which influences the initial R&D time and the R&D check DC.

Effect

This is the daring feat or knack equivalent that the invention produces. The R&D time and R&D check modifiers are listed below. An innovation may also duplicate a daring feat, which is considered a



by [signature]

2nd-level knack for super-science purposes (including power point expenditures).

A knack or daring feat that costs no power points to use and/or functions constantly changes when it becomes an innovation effect. When powered from an invention, the effect requires 1 power point to activate and lasts the inventor's Inspiration score x 10 minutes.

A given innovation may have multiple options, but it can only produce one knack effect. Gadgets are the only exception to this rule.

Knack	R&D Time	R&D Modifier
1st-level	30 days	—
2nd-level	60 days	+2 to the DC
3rd-level	90 days	+4 to the DC

Skill Rank

This score is used instead of your own skill when using the innovation's effect. (You may substitute your own skill only if you have the same knack.)

An innovation has a base skill rank equal to half your Inspiration score (round down). Increase the R&D time by 3 days for every 2 additional ranks, to a maximum of your Inspiration score. You can increase the skill rank further — add 5 additional days and +2 to the R&D check DC for each additional +1 added, up to (1.5 x your Inspiration score).

Options

This covers any options the innovation might have, available from Tables 8–1 through 8–3. Add modifiers as appropriate to those set

Pushing the Envelope

At its most straightforward, an innovation can duplicate the capabilities of any daring feat or knack (except Gadgeteer, *scientific prodigy* and *mad scientist*). That doesn't mean you can't also come up with new effects. With the GM's input, feel free to design new innovation effects. It's a simple enough procedure on the surface: Decide on an interesting effect, determine the appropriate power level, then refer to "Effect" to find the R&D time needed and the R&D check DC involved in creating the invention.

It can be difficult to decide whether an effect should be 1st- or 2nd-level. Unfortunately, we don't have the room to provide an extensive listing of effect choices. It falls to you and the GM to agree upon an effect's capabilities and level. The GM has final say as to whether something is excessively (or inadequately) powerful. Likewise, she may suggest alternatives if the proposed power simply doesn't fit the rules or genre of **Adventure!**. The GM may also flat-out disallow anything that you can't justify in terms of super-science. Converting powers should be a route to nifty effects and plot complications, not an excuse for building an über-powered mind-control/disin-tegration ray.

already by the effect and skill rank to determine the final R&D time and check DC. An innovation may have up to 10 options or the number listed for the invention type, whichever is lower. Options do not require telluric energy to operate (see "Powering Innovations," below).

Operation

Inventions don't always have standardized controls — indeed, they're often too esoteric for a regular person to comprehend. You automatically know how to use any innovation that you create. Opening the innovation to use by others makes it more versatile, but adds to the initial R&D check DC as noted below. The additional DC modifiers are not cumulative.

R&D Modifier	Usable by...
+2 to the DC	Inventor's template (psychic or superhuman)
+4 to the DC	Any Inspired (daring, psychic, superhuman)
+8 to the DC	Any character ¹

¹The device also requires a telluric energy source (see below).

Durability

Each innovation has the minimum hardness, hit points and break DC (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 9: Adventuring, "Exploration," *Breaking and Entering*). You can improve upon this durability; doing so incurs an additional +2 to the initial R&D DC for each durability category that you raise from minimum to maximum.

Innovation Size	Hardness		Hit Points		Break DC	
	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.
Fine, Diminutive	0	2	1	3	10	15
Tiny	1	3	2	6	10	15
Small	3	5	3	9	12	18
Medium	5	8	5	15	15	20
Large	5	10	10	30	15	22
Huge	8	15	15	45	20	30
Gargantuan	8	15	20	60	30	40
Colossal	10	20	30	90	50	58

Warranty

An innovation has a base life expectancy, after which point it grows increasingly unreliable — a hallmark of super-science. For every point by which your construction check result exceeds the check's DC (as set during R&D), the invention is guaranteed to last 1 week. After that, the invention has a week of unreliable functionality left. It then fails at an appropriate dramatic moment during the unreliable period (GM's discretion). You can increase the innovation's reliable period by giving the invention an overhaul before its standard functionality expires (see "Rebuilding Inventions," above).

You may ensure that an invention has an "unlimited" warranty — that it *always* runs smoothly (barring targeted damage or outright destruction, of course) — by reducing your Inspiration score by 1 point during construction or during a rebuild. This reduction is permanent and may only be restored through level advancement. (If applied to an invention made during character creation, the limit on your number of starting inventions is based on your Inspiration score *before* this innovation was made.)

Charges

An innovation can store a number of telluric energy charges equal to half your Inspiration score (round down, minimum 1). Add +2 to the R&D check DC for every two charges added, up to a total (1.5 x your Inspiration score).

Each charge is the equivalent of a power point, and is spent to power the innovation's effect. An innovation only recovers charges if you spend power points or by transfer them from a telluric energy source (see below) — 1 point for 1 charge, in either case.

After all its charges are used, an innovation has 1 reserve charge left — the last bit of telluric energy that keeps it in working condition. If you expend the reserve charge, the innovation succeeds automatically and at maximum effect. However, it breaks immediately afterward and cannot be repaired — interior wiring melts to slag, delicate components fuse and so on. The inventor may construct a new one as long as he retains the schematics.

Telluric Energy Sources

A telluric energy source, or cell, absorbs the ambient pseudoaetheric radiation flowing through the universe, and can be used as a power source. Artificial and natural cells are available (see below), though both are extremely rare. Size and mass are dependent on storage capacity, as listed below.

To “tap” a cell, attach a pair of shielded cables between the innovation and the cell's terminals. Once hooked up, the cell takes a few minutes to warm up — more or less for dramatic effect at the GM's discretion. It can then be used to power or recharge an innovation by spending a point from the battery.

Charges	Weight	Size Equivalent
1	1/5 lb.	Modern D cell
2	1 lb.	Modern soda can
5	5 lb.	Gallon paint can
10	20 lb.	5-gallon bucket
25	500 lb.	55-gallon drum
50	2 tons	Small car
75	5 tons	Large truck
100	20 tons	Small house

Recharging Telluric Energy Sources

Cells are much sought after by those who create and use innovations. Even if they were easy to mass-produce — which they aren't — they would never find widespread use due to one major factor: Once the stored energy is spent, only a new infusion of telluric energy recharges them. An unused cell draws upon ambient Z-rays, regaining 1 charge every 24 hours until it reaches its capacity. A cell does not lose charges if moved; it simply remains in its current state.

Siphoning power points also recharges a cell. This requires hooking an Inspired character to a telluric capture innovation — typically a large, ominous-looking chair with lots of wires and tubes coming out of it. A set of electrodes attaches to the character's forehead, and shielded power cables run into the capture device. The character controlling the capture device regulates how much of the donor's power points are transferred. The rate of exchange depends on who's in the chair, as indicated

below. There is no known way a character can siphon power points from a telluric cell. To date, all such attempts have ended messily.

Charge

Restored¹ Character Type

3 Inventor of the telluric capture device

2 Inspired of same template as inventor

1 Inspired of different template than inventor

¹ For each power point the donor expends. If an Inspired character has no power points left, or if an un-Inspired character is in the chair, the invention leeches away his very life energy — 1 point of Constitution drain per charge!

Dixon Batteries

Professor Benjamin Franklin Dixon developed the telluric-ionic power cell: a crystalline lattice suspended in a metallic ion solution, housed inside an aluminum casing. Dixon distributed the knowledge necessary for the cells' creation to the adventuring community after his ex-wife, Hephaestia Geary-Wexler, absconded with the blueprints following one of their infrequent attempts at reconciliation.

Constructed properly, the so-called “telion cell” or “Dixon battery” can store limited quantities of Z-wave energy. Making even a small battery is an expensive proposition, due primarily to the scarcity of materials needed for the lattice. Making a 5-charge power cell requires a Wealth check against DC 18; a 25-charge battery requires a Wealth check against DC 25; a 50-charge cell requires a Wealth check against DC 33. Larger telion cells are beyond the financial capacity of any private individual.

Once the proper materials are assembled, making a Dixon battery is no more difficult than any other super-science procedure. It requires no R&D so long as the inventor has a complete and accurate copy of Professor Dixon's schematics. Construction time requires 4 hours of work per charge desired (multiple personnel may split the work). A freshly-made Dixon battery is “flat,” lacking any etheric juice, but may be charged as noted above.

Telluric Energy Crystals

The Z-wave cascade from the Hammersmith event flowed through living tissue and inanimate forms alike. The former became Inspired; the latter were transformed in their own way. Some areas gave rise to hidden lands, while others became infused with the *potential* for Inspiration, if you will. Concentrated telluric energy later dissipated from most substances; only crystals seemed to have the right structure to retain Z-wave energy for any length of time. Certain precious stones and crystals store telluric energy even years after the seminal event, awaiting only their discovery and use by the Inspired. Refined crystals can be used like a Dixon battery or other telluric energy source, though they are quite rare — due not only to physical scarcity but also because they are typically found in or near the hard-to-find hidden lands.

Raw crystals must be shaped to accommodate an attachment to an appropriate conducting cable, typically by carving knobs around which to wrap the cables or holes to act as sockets. If done incorrectly, flaws can form in the crystal, allowing stored telluric energy to dissipate at the rate of 1 charge roughly every 24 hours. Further, the flawed crystal will not recharge.

CHAPTER

ADVENTURING

NINE

This chapter covers a few additional rules to aid in playing classic pulp action stories.

Stunt Bonus

Few things are less exciting in a roleplaying game than hearing a 15-minute exchange of: “I try to punch him. I got a 19.” “You hit, roll damage.” “Five points.” “Okay, who’s up next?”

Descriptions of bold action make the game more real and far more enjoyable: “I duck under the thug’s punch, then lead with my fist as I lunge up to sock him in the jaw!” “Your blow catches the goon by surprise! He smashes into a pool cue rack, falling amid a clatter of wooden cues.”

There’s a reason why the Indiana Jones films and Jackie Chan’s movies are so much fun. Okay, there are lots of reasons, but a big part of it is that the fights are dramatic set pieces that range all over, using exciting stunts and incorporating all manner of props to make for an incredible ballet of mayhem.

To encourage these kinds of cinematic stunts and clever tricks in your **Adventure!** game, a GM may apply a circumstance bonus to reward a well-described and appropriate stunt performed as part of your action. This may be purely a dramatic maneuver — such as feinting right, then left, only to bring a knee up into the guy’s crotch — or it may incorporate some aspect of the scenery — such as ducking behind a half-open door to avoid a blow, then slamming the door into your foe.

For that action, the GM may apply between a +1 to +3 circumstance bonus either on your attack roll or to your Armor Class (never both at once). In the sorts of pulp action stories and films that **Adventure!** simulates, fists and guns are balanced more evenly than in real life. The stunt bonus is meant to encourage that style of combat, so the bonus should apply less often to firefights than to fist fights.

The GM is never *required* to provide this bonus, and should feel free not to apply it if you describe the same stunt over and over or come up with a routine inappropriate to the scene just to get a bonus. The goal is to reward cleverness and contributions to the game.

Wealth

The Wealth bonus reflects your buying power — a composite of income, credit rating and savings — and serves as the basis of your Wealth check for purchasing equipment and services. Your starting Wealth bonus is +0 plus:

- 2d4
- Wealth bonus from starting class
- Wealth bonus from relevant feats

- +1 for having 1–4 ranks in the Profession skill

The Wealth bonus fluctuates over the course of play, decreasing as you purchase expensive items and increasing as you gain levels. The bonus can never fall below +0 and has no upper limit (see the range below). With Wealth bonus +0, you cannot purchase any object or service that has purchase DC 10 or higher, nor can you take 10 or take 20 on a Wealth check.

Wealth Bonus	Financial Condition
+0	Impoverished or in debt
+1 to +4	Struggling
+5 to +10	Middle class
+11 to +15	Affluent
+16 to +20	Wealthy
+21 to +30	Rich
+31 or higher	Very rich

Making Purchases

Make a Wealth check (1d20 + your current Wealth bonus) against the purchase DC of the object or service in question to buy it successfully. You succeed automatically if your Wealth bonus is at least equal to the purchase DC. Buying a less common object or service (at the GM’s discretion) takes a number of hours equal to its purchase DC, reflecting the time needed to locate the wanted materials and close the deal.

On a failed roll, you can’t afford the item or service at the time. You can retry after spending an additional number of hours shopping equal to the purchase DC.

After a successful acquisition with a purchase DC higher than your current Wealth bonus, or if the purchase DC is 15 or higher, your Wealth bonus goes down. Your bonus stays the same if you fail the purchase check.

One other character who makes a successful aid another attempt can give you a +2 bonus on your Wealth check. That character then reduces his Wealth bonus by –1, however.

Purchase DC Is...	Wealth Bonus Decrease
15+	1 point
1–10 points higher than current Wealth bonus	1 point
11–15 points higher than current Wealth bonus	1d6 points
16+ points higher than current Wealth bonus	2d6 points

Regaining Wealth

Every time you gain a new level, make a Profession check (or a Wisdom check if you have no ranks in the skill); DC = your current Wealth bonus. On a successful result, raise your current Wealth bonus by 1, +1 for every 5 points by which the check result exceeds the DC.

Riches found or items discovered in the course of gameplay that are sold increase your Wealth bonus, as determined by the GM.

Selling Stuff

To sell something, you must first determine its sale value. Assuming the object is undamaged and in working condition, its sale value equals the original purchase DC – 3.

You gain a +1 Wealth bonus if the object goes for a sale value greater than your current Wealth bonus, or if the object's sales value is 15 or higher. You cannot sell objects legally that are reported as stolen. Illegal sale often requires dealing with a black market, and reduces the sale value by –3.

Equipment

A wide variety of everyday equipment is available to characters of the mid-1920s. A short summary of such equipment can be found below.

Melee and Missile Weapons

When a fist isn't enough, an adventurer can often find a knife, ax handle, or other handy implement to create the appropriate amount of mayhem. See Table 7–5: Weapons in the *Player's Handbook* for a list of simple,

martial and exotic melee and missile weapons. (Note: the Archaic Weapon Proficiency feat covers both simple and martial weapons.)

Ranged Weapons

The Inspiration Age isn't the modern age, replete with high-power ammunition; there are tales of gangsters and cops surviving a frightening number of gunshot wounds. Most handguns use low-powered .38 or 9mm Parabellum ammo. See Table 9–1: Ranged Weapons for representative firearms. Weapon listings include the following information.

Damage: Firearms inflict ballistic damage. Unless noted otherwise, each weapon threatens a critical on a 20 and deals double damage on a confirmed critical.

Range Increment: Attacks at less than this distance are not penalized for range, but each full increment applies a cumulative –2 penalty on the attack roll. Ranged weapons have a maximum of 10 range increments.

Rate of Fire — 1: Use once per round; must then reload or replace.

Rate of Fire — Si (Single Shot): Must operate the action to load a new round between each shot. This allows only one shot per attack, regardless of abilities that might allow more than one shot per attack.

Rate of Fire — Sa (Semiautomatic): Fires one shot per attack, but can make multiple shots in rapid succession if you have abilities that allow more than one shot per attack.

Rate of Fire — A (Automatic): Fires a burst or stream of shots with a single squeeze of the trigger. Can be set on autofire or used with feats that take advantage of automatic fire.

Magazine: Box magazines can be removed and reloaded separately from the weapon; cylinders (cyl.) and internal (int.) magazines are



part of the weapon and must be reloaded by hand; linked magazines are bullets chained together with small metal clips, forming a belt.

Size: Weapon size categories are as follows: A Small or smaller weapon is a light, one-handed weapon. A Medium or smaller weapon can be used one- or two-handed. A Large weapon requires two hands. A Huge weapon requires two hands and a bipod or other mount.

Weight: The weapon's weight when loaded.

Purchase DC: The base purchase DC to acquire the weapon.

Personal and Advanced Firearms

- **Automatic:** A clip-loaded handgun, more costly than a revolver but increasingly popular on both sides of the law. There were few "heavy" calibers until the .45 ACP cartridge proved itself, and most were Colt knock-offs.

- **Machine gun (light), submachine gun:** A portable weapon capable of firing a great many bullets in rapid succession.

- **Revolver:** A simple firearm that stores several rounds in a revolving cylinder. As the trigger is pulled, the cylinder revolves to bring the next bullet in line with the barrel.

- **Rifle:** Most hunting rifles are knock-offs of older military designs or are military surplus. The notable exceptions are single-shot big game rifles such as elephant and buffalo guns. The WWII era sees a proliferation of semi-automatic rifles and a greater distinction between "hunting" and "military" rifles.

- **Shotgun:** This was the heyday of everything from double-barreled 10-gauges to "trench guns," 12-gauge semi-automatic shotguns with extended 8-round magazines.

Heavy Weaponry

Heavy weapons are used mostly in military situations; authorities may not approve of "the ceaseless war against crime" as a suitable reason for their use on the street. The GM may restrict heavy weapons purchases to official military or black market channels (if the latter, add +4 to the purchase DC).

- **Artillery:** Tank armament, mortars and field pieces such as howitzers.

- **Flamethrower:** A backpack tank of napalm and a rifle-like nozzle for focusing the spray. The flame is very difficult to extinguish until it burns itself out.

- **Grenade launcher:** A rifle-like device capable of firing grenades much further than the human arm can throw them. Damage depends on grenade type.

- **Machine gun (heavy):** A selection of often vehicle-mounted, belt-fed machine guns emerged during the Great War, based on the design put forth by Hiram Maxim.

Explosives

Table 9–2: Explosives lists grenades and other explosives. These show information noted above, as well as the following specifications.

Damage: The damage dealt to all within the explosive's burst radius. For a Molotov cocktail, only a direct hit inflicts full damage; targets within the burst radius take 1 point of fire damage.

Burst Radius: The area the explosive affects.

Damage Type: Damage is classified according to type: energy (of a specific type) or slashing. All explosives but a Molotov cocktail threaten a critical on a 20 and deal double damage on a confirmed critical.

Reflex DC: Any creature caught within the burst radius may make a Reflex save against the listed DC for half damage.

Range Increment: Explosives with no range increment must be set in place before being detonated.

- **Dynamite:** Additional sticks within the first stick's burst radius may also be set off. Each additional stick increases the damage by +1d6 (maximum 10d6) and the burst radius by 5 feet (maximum 20 feet).

On a successful Demolitions check, you can increase the damage or the burst radius by 50% (your choice) by wiring together several sticks of dynamite (DC 10 + 1 per stick).

If you light dynamite by fuse, the fuse length dictates how soon it explodes. Using a move action, you can cut it to detonate in the same round, or to detonate in several minutes.

- **Grenade, fragmentation:** A small explosive device that detonates shrapnel in all directions.

- **Grenade, smoke:** Smoke fills the coverage area, obscuring all sight and giving total concealment to anyone within. Smoke grenades are also used as signal devices, with smoke coming in various colors.

- **Grenade, tear gas:** A cloud of irritant causes a target's eyes to fill with tears; a DC 15 Fortitude save is required to avoid being nauseated. This lasts for 1d6 rounds after leaving the cloud. If successful, a save is required each round a target remains in the cloud. Wearing a gas mask negates the effect. A wet cloth held over the eyes, nose and mouth provides a +2 bonus on the Fortitude save.

- **Molotov cocktail:** You can make this improvised weapon with a DC 10 Craft (chemical) check or DC 15 Intelligence check. It detonates in 2 rounds or on impact with a solid object, whichever comes first. A target that takes a direct hit suffers an additional 1d6 points of fire damage in the following round and risks catching on fire.

Armor

Due to early 20th-century technology, armor is bulky and obvious and attracts attention except on the battlefield (and maybe even then). See Table 9–3: Armor and Table 7–6 in the *Player's Handbook* for types of armor.

AC Bonus: The armor's protective value, added to your Armor Class.

Nonprof. Bonus: The maximum AC bonus you can apply if you're wearing armor that you're not proficient in.

Max. Dex Bonus: The maximum Dexterity bonus you can apply to your AC when wearing the armor.

Armor Penalty: This penalty applies to checks involving Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Swim and Tumble.

Speed: Your speed while in this armor.

Weight: The armor's weight.

Purchase DC: The base purchase DC to acquire the armor.

- **Flak jacket:** Military gear intended to protect the wearer from explosives.

- **Reinforced:** The exception to "bulky and obvious," including protective fibers such as leather, concealed thin armor sheets and the like. Tailoring the outfit adds to the cost, depending on how stylish the wearer wants to appear.

- **Riot gear:** Favored by the police and private armies dealing with rioters, mutineers, dissidents and the like.

Table 9–1: Ranged Weapons

Weapon	Damage	Range Increment	Rate of Fire	Magazine	Size	Weight	Purchase DC
Handguns (Personal Firearms Proficiency feat)							
Automatic, light (Luger P08 9mm, Mauser c/96 “Broomhandle” 9mm, Walther Model PP 7.65mm)	2d4	30 ft.	Sa	Box 7	Tiny	2 lb.	15
Automatic, heavy (Colt M1911 .45)	2d6	30 ft.	Sa	Box 7	Small	3 lb.	16
Revolver, light (Colt New Line Pocket Model .22, Smith & Wesson Safety Hammerless .38)	2d4	20 ft.	Sa	Cyl. 6	Tiny	1 lb.	14
Revolver, heavy (Colt M1873 “Peacemaker” .45, Smith & Wesson Frontier .44–40, Webley Mk I .455)	2d6	30 ft.	Sa	Cyl. 6	Small	3 lb.	14
Longarms (Personal Firearms Proficiency feat)							
Rifle (M1 Garand .30–06 8-shot magazine, Winchester 1873 .44–40 17-shot lever-action)	2d10	80 ft.	Sa	Int. varies	Large	8 lb.	15
Rifle, bolt-action (Springfield M1903 .30–06 5-shot bolt-action, Lee–Enfield Mk III .303 10-shot bolt-action)	2d10	90 ft.	Si	Int. varies	Large	8 lb.	15
Shotgun, 12-gauge (Browning Auto–5 4-round magazine, Winchester M1912 5-round pump-action)	2d8	30 ft.	Si	Varies	Large	9 lb.	16
Shotgun, 10-gauge (Winchester M1887 lever-action)	2d10	30 ft.	Sa	Int. 5	Large	11 lb.	16
Machine Guns, Light (Advanced Firearms Proficiency feat)							
Machine gun, light (Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) M1918 .30–30 20-round magazine, MG34 7.92mm linked)	2d8	40 ft.	Sa, A	Varies	Large	8 lb.	20
Submachine gun, 9mm (MP38 “Schmeisser” 9mm)	2d4	50 ft.	Sa, A	Box 32	Large	7 lb.	19
Submachine gun, .45 (M1 Thompson .45 20-round magazine or 50-round drum)	2d6	40 ft.	Sa, A	Box varies	Large	7 lb.	19
Heavy Weapons (Exotic Firearms Proficiency feat [Artillery, Flamethrowers, Machine Guns])³							
Artillery	10d6 ¹	150 ft.	1	1 int.	Large	Varies	24
Flamethrower	2d8 ²	20 ft.	Si	Int. 10	Huge	20 lb.	19
Grenade launcher	Varies ³	70 ft.	1	1 int.	Large	7 lb.	20
Machine gun, heavy (Lewis Aircraft MG .30 M1918 50-round drum, Maxim Automatic MG .303 50-round magazine, Vickers MG .30 50-round magazine)	2d10	100 ft.	A	Varies	Huge	22 lb.	20

¹ An artillery shell explodes like a grenade, dealing its damage to all targets within a 10-foot radius (DC 18 Reflex save for half). The shell has a shaped charge to penetrate armor, ignoring up to 10 points of hardness if it strikes a vehicle, building or object. This applies only to the target struck, not to other objects within the burst radius.

² Apply damage as fire damage. Also, the napalm burns another 1d10 rounds, inflicting an additional 1d6 points of fire damage each round.

³ Using a grenade launcher without penalty requires the Personal Firearms Proficiency feat; you then make a ranged attack against a specific 5-foot square (instead of targeting a person or creature).

Equipment Fashions

Until the mid-’20s, styles for men are much as before the Great War. Daytime wear is a simple suit, usually gray or black, with a shirt in a basic color such as blue-gray, peach or putty. Ties generally have small geometric designs. The black bowler hat is standard headgear, although the felt fedora finds increasing popularity as fashions

head into the 1930s. Patent leather shoes become popular early in the ’20s, in two-tone combinations such as white and tan for day wear, black for evening occasions. The tail coat and top hat are standard for evening dress, worn over a starched white shirt and pleated collar or bow tie.

The biggest change to women’s fashions after the Great War is the passing of the corset, replaced by undergarments allowing more freedom of movement — still horrifying by early 21st-century stan-

Table 9–2: Explosives

Weapon	Damage	Damage Type	Burst Radius	Reflex DC	Range Increment	Size	Weight	Purchase DC
Grenades and Explosives								
Dynamite	2d6	Concussion	5 ft.	15	10 ft.	Tiny	1 lb.	12 ¹
Grenade, fragmentation	4d6	Slashing	20 ft.	15	10 ft.	Tiny	1 lb.	15 ²
Grenade, smoke ³	—	—	See text	—	10 ft.	Small	2 lb.	10 ²
Grenade, tear gas ³	See text	—	See text	—	10 ft.	Small	2 lb.	12 ²
Molotov cocktail	1d6	Fire	5	—	10 ft.	Small	1 lb.	6 ⁴

¹The purchase DC is for a box of 12.

²The purchase DC is for a box of 6.

³A cloud fills the four squares around it on the round it is thrown. This spreads to all squares within 10 feet on the next round, and to all squares within 15 feet on the third round. It disperses after 10 rounds, though a moderate wind (11+ mph) disperses it in 4 rounds and a strong wind (21+ mph) disperses it in 1 round.

⁴The purchase DC is for the weapon’s components.

dards, but it *is* progress. Working and at-home women favor modest, unrevealing styles but in a widening variety of natural and synthetic fabrics.

Laborers wear whatever’s necessary for the job. Denim trousers and sturdy shirts, often worn with a tie and leather shoes or boots, are standard for working men. Denim, wool and flannel, cut long and unrevealing in dresses and trousers, are all common for working women.

By 1925, baggy trousers (invented at Oxford for slipping on over trendy knickers frowned upon by the administration) become the current trend. Soft and flexible tweed catches on for coats and trousers, lending an ambience of gentility to this industrial age.

For women with the money and interest, waistlines fall toward the hips. In 1925, shift-style dresses lacking any waistline become fashionable. Dress and suit bodices begin the decade loose and become straighter and closer-fitting toward the ’30s. Hemlines rise in 1928 and Paris designers begin a series of quick changes that continue until WWII breaks out.

Buttons are the universal fasteners until zippers start winning widespread attention in the mid-’20s. Cotton and wool are the most common fabrics of the time. The upper classes favor silk, while the lower classes embrace rayon, marketed as “synthetic silk.”

London is the center of men’s fashion until after World War II, with London design and London tailoring being the last word at any given moment. Paris is the center for women’s fashion innovation; New York unveils styles affordable by the masses.

Purchase DCs: You can get working clothes at purchase DC 5; a simple suit or dress can be had for purchase DC 8, with a more stylish outfit going for purchase DC 12. Custom tailoring and/or a trendy style bumps up the purchase DC by +2 or more.

We’d love to list various equipment, but given the sheer number of options available and the limited space in this book, you’re best served doing a search online or checking out an old Sears-Roebuck catalog. Otherwise, the GM can ask for a quick Wealth check to see if you have (or can pick up) a given piece of mundane equipment as the situation arises.

Drugs and Chemicals

Villains in pulp stories inflict this chemical or that concoction on heroes — and heroes relax or experiment with a wide variety of exotic substances. This section covers some mind- and body-altering substances.

A great many things are legal in the 1920s that later decades will see banned. Public disparagement of certain drugs is more common, but outright prohibition or even serious restrictions are rare. The US effort to ban hard liquor is an expensive and visible failure, and unrepresentative of public attitudes of the time. Most people in all social strata regard drug abuse as a moral failing to be addressed with persuasion and shame rather than as a crime to be punished by law.

When subject to a drug, you make two Fortitude saving throws against its DC — the first right after encountering the drug, the

Table 9–3: Armor

Armor	AC Bonus	Nonprof. Bonus	Max. Dex Bonus	Armor Penalty	Speed	Weight	Purchase DC
<i>Light Armor</i>							
Reinforced	+2	+1	+8	–0	30	4 lb.	12+
<i>Medium Armor</i>							
Flak jacket	+5	+2	+4	–4	30	10 lb.	16
<i>Heavy Armor</i>							
Riot gear	+8	+3	+1	–6	20	25 lb.	20

second 1 minute later. If successful, you're subject to a reduced effect. On a failure, you suffer the drug's full effect (if you fail both, double the full effect). A successful Heal check against the drug's DC makes you subject only to the reduced effect. Unless noted otherwise, each drug's effects wear off after 1d3+1 hours.

In the following descriptions, "Vector" indicates the common means by which the chemical is delivered. Ingested drugs are eaten, drunk and otherwise consumed; injected drugs are administered with a hypodermic or other needle; inhaled drugs are breathed in with the local air.

• **Alcohol:** This encompasses everything from bootleg booze filled with toxic byproducts and random debris to the finest vintages of wine and champagne.

Vector: Ingested (DC 11).

Reduced Effect: Mildly intoxicated. You suffer a -1 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

Full Effect: Intoxicated. You can neither run nor charge, and suffer a -2 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

• **Amphetamines and Cocaine:** Highly addictive stimulants, popular at all levels of society despite efforts at regulation or control. Abuse does attract criticism, but no social stigma attaches to moderate use except in puritanical communities.

Vector: Inhaled or swallowed (DC 17).

Reduced Effect: Mildly excited. You gain a +1 bonus on Strength checks and on skill checks involving concentration, but suffer a -2 penalty to your effective Dexterity score.

Full Effect: Agitated. You gain a +2 bonus on Strength checks and suffer a -4 penalty to your effective Dexterity score.

• **Opium and Depressants:** These drugs relax the user. A lot. Some people find that they remove barriers to contemplation and artistic insight, making the drugs common among tormented visionaries. More mundane applications include the treatment of chronic insomnia.

Vector: Swallowed or injected (DC 13).

Reduced Effect: Mildly sedated. You suffer a -1 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

Full Effect: Sedated. You can neither run nor charge, and suffer a -4 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

• **Hallucinogens:** The subject's perceptions may alter, ranging from mild (fluctuating light levels) through moderate (heightening emotional states) to severe (terrifying monsters).

Vector: Contact, inhaled or injected (DC 15).

Reduced Effect: Mildly disoriented. You suffer a -1 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

Full Effect: Hallucinating. The actual effect depends on the hallucinogen, and can include vertigo, sapping of will, magnifying phobias, full-on hallucinations and so on. Specifics are up to the GM, but all involve sensory distortion to some degree and should, at a minimum, apply a -4 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

Vehicles

Most of the time, transportation from cars to camels exists to get the PCs from one locale to the next. Measure off time and distance,

and there you are, ready for the next dramatic moment. Sometimes, the journey itself is the adventure, and sometimes the vehicle plays an important part once the characters get to where they're going. The *Player's Handbook* covers the basics of travel by horse and wagon; the following material provides a basic framework for vehicle travel, chases and combat.

The Costs of Travel

Maintaining a vehicle is an ongoing expense; for simplicity's sake, handle it as a monthly Wealth check (purchase DC 7). Actual repairs — say, due to damage — require a Repair check once each day. The check result indicates the amount of damage repaired and the cost to make the repair. If you pay someone else to repair the vehicle, add +5 to the purchase DC for the Wealth check.

Repair Check	Damage Fixed ¹	Purchase DC
Up to 9	2d4 (1)	15
10–14	2d6 (2)	18
15–19	3d6 (3)	21
20–24	4d6 (4)	24
25–29	5d6 (5)	27
30–34	6d6 (6)	31
Every +5	+1d6 (+1)	+5

¹ The number in parenthesis is the amount of the vehicle's handling modifier repaired that day (if its handling was reduced by damage).

Public transportation ranges from inexpensive to positively outrageous, depending on where you're going and what you're taking to get there.

Transportation	Purchase DC
Local public (streetcar, subway, bus)	1
Train (regional, short distance up to 100 miles)	2
Train (regional, long distance)	4
Sea passage (steerage)	2
Sea passage (second class)	6
Sea passage (first class)	13
Air fare (short distance up to 250 miles)	6
Air fare (long distance)	11

Vehicle Types

Vehicles have a simple set of statistics that define everything from how well they handle to how tough they are, as noted in Table 9–4. General vehicle categories are covered below.

Crew: The standard number of crew. Only one person is needed to drive in most cases; other crew members serve as gunners or copilots.

Pas. (Passengers): The number of passengers (in addition to the crew) the vehicle is designed to carry. Passenger vehicles with unused passenger space can carry an additional 100 pounds of cargo per slot.

Cargo (Cargo Capacity): The amount of cargo the vehicle is designed to carry. Passengers may occupy cargo space, but this is often a cramped, uncomfortable, and even unsafe experience. One additional passenger can be carried for each 250 pounds of unused cargo capacity.

Init. (Initiative): The modifier added to the driver's or pilot's initiative check when operating the vehicle.

Hand. (Handling): The modifier applied to any Drive or Pilot checks attempted with the vehicle.

Speed: The distance the vehicle can move in 1 round.

MPH: The vehicle's cruising and maximum speed, separated by a slash.

AC (Armor Class): The vehicle's Armor Class.

Hard. (Hardness): The vehicle's hardness. Subtract this number from any damage dealt to the vehicle.

HP (Hit Points): The vehicle's full normal hit points.

Size: Vehicle size categories are defined differently from the size categories for weapons and other objects.

• **Aeroplane, Fixed-Wing:** Heavier-than-air flight is just a few decades old. Few people have ever flown in a plane, but many see barnstormers and mail planes and the like. "Flying boats" also come and go from major ports — wildly impractical, but glamorous in the extreme.

• **Aeroplane, Rotary-Wing:** The precursor to the helicopter, the autogyro has an un-powered, helicopter-like rotor providing lift and a standard, front-mounted powered propeller pulling the craft forward. It's a flexible craft for the time, being able to hover and re-

quiring but a few tens of yards for landings and takeoff — perfect for stowing in an urban hideaway as well as at an airport.

• **Automobile:** Though bulky, awkward and inefficient by 21st-century standards, cars by Inspiration Age standards are sleek, sophisticated machines. Autos from the turn of the 20th century are old news, fit only for tinkering kids and hicks who don't know anything about style. A basic sedan is an expensive proposition, the limousines favored by corporate presidents and gangsters much more so.

• **Blimp:** Airships without rigid frames are blimps: Nothing more than huge gas bags, held together by elaborate systems of ropes and cords. They can't carry as much and aren't as easy to control as dirigibles, but they are cheaper. A few colonial administrations in jungle or other hazardous terrains have even experimented with regular cargo service by blimp (with mixed results at best).

• **Dirigible:** Lighter-than-air craft with rigid frames, dirigibles — also called zeppelins — are the most well-developed form of air travel. Passenger lines link cities in southern Germany and its environs, and a few routes also operate within the United States. Less profitable ventures can be found wherever a business or government sponsor wants the prestige and is prepared to pay the bills — nothing is quite as impressive as a gleaming hull, hundreds of yards long, cruising through the air with nary a sound. The daring and wealthy include dirigible trips as part of their social whirl, while adventure-minded explorers, scientists and others sometimes base their operations out of well-equipped zeppelins. Dirigibles with passenger service have one crew member for every two to five passengers (this is luxury service).

Table 9-4: Vehicles

Vehicle	Crew	Pas.	Cargo	Init.	Hand.	Speed	MPH	AC	Hard.	HP	Size	Purchase DC
<i>Ground Vehicles</i>												
Automobile (old model)	1	2	100 lb.	-3	-2	400 ft.	40/80	8	5	26	L	19
Automobile (new model)	1	4	200 lb.	-2	+0	500 ft.	50/100	8	5	35	L	25
Motorcycle	1	1	100 lb.	0	+2	500 ft.	50/100	9	5	20	M	18
Truck, pick-up	1	2	1000 lb.	-3	-1	450 ft.	45/90	6	5	38	L	23
Truck, panel	1	2	3000 lb.	-4	-4	400 ft.	40/80	6	5	54	H	28
<i>Air Vehicles</i>												
Aeroplane, passenger	2	20	2 tons	-4	-4	1,500 ft.	150/300	6	5	68	G	45
Aeroplane, cargo	2	4	15 tons	-4	-4	1,200 ft.	120/240	6	5	74	G	39
Autogyro	1	2	25 lb.	-2	-4	500 ft.	50/100	6	5	25	G	37
Dirigible, small	15	50	5 tons	-4	-4	500 ft.	50/100	2	4	30	C	34
Dirigible, large	30-50	250-500	700 tons	-4	-4	700 ft.	70/140	2	4	70	C	47
Blimp, small	2	10	1 ton	-4	-4	300 ft.	30/60	2	3	16	C	25
Blimp, large	10	100	60 tons	-4	-4	400 ft.	40/80	2	3	40	C	30
<i>Water Vehicles</i>												
Cargo ship	20	20	3600 tons	-4	-12	80 ft.	8/16	2	5	280	C	48
Luxury liner	50-70	400-800	1000 tons	-4	-8	100 ft.	10/20	2	5	250	C	56
Speedboat	1	5	500 lb.	-2	-2	150 ft.	15/30	9	7	25	L	28
Tramp steamer	10	10	2000 tons	-4	-10	80 ft.	8/16	6	5	100	G	31

- **Motorcycle:** Fit only for the adventurous — and ones with expense accounts at that — many motorcycles are unreliable and costly, though certain models such as the Indian Scout have proven surprisingly robust. Some big city couriers use them, but this is as much about showing off as it is a matter of practicality.

- **Steamship:** Ships bridge the oceans; thanks to the Panama Canal and other great engineering works, no port on Earth is more than a few weeks from any other for someone prepared to pay the costs in fuel and operating expenses. Tramp steamers and the seedy end of commercial hauling form virtual nations unto themselves, prominent luxury lines are matters of national pride, and navies are often proof of whether a nation is truly a force others must reckon with. Cargo ships have crews twice as large as their passenger capacity or more, while passenger ships have about one crew member for every five to ten passengers.

- **Train:** Rail lines are the commercial backbone of the **Adventure!** world. They link interior cities and ports in every continent. Both passenger and commercial lines are (generally) reliable and affordable. Most people needing to get from one city to another overland look first at train timetables; no other mode of long-range transport is as common. Most cities have streetcar, trolley and subway lines running through major neighborhoods, and often into surrounding suburbs and small towns.

- **Truck:** Wherever train lines don't go, trucks carry cargo. They're seldom stylish, but they get the job done. More than one enterprising adventurer has found that a great deal of equipment too bulky to haul into a basement hideout works just fine in a properly reinforced truck.

Pursuit

Much of vehicular combat revolves around some form of pursuit. AEG's *Spycraft* has excellent, intuitive chase rules that are incorporated here to make chases and pursuit in **Adventure!** as dramatic as the rest of the game.

Vehicle pursuit is abstract intentionally. This makes it easy to allow chases to erupt at any point, and leaves room for you to elaborate on maneuvers, successes and failures as you see fit. The rules focus on landbound vehicular pursuit, but you can extrapolate them for anything from foot chases to air pursuit.

Starting Pursuit

During a chase, one vehicle — the pursuer — is assumed to be trying to catch the other — the target. The distance between vehicles during pursuit is called the lead. This is measured in lengths, adjustable units determined by the vehicles involved in the chase. Unless noted otherwise, one length equals 10 feet.

Either the pursuer or the target initiates a chase in most cases, which also determines the lead (see below). If there is no clear initiator, both sides roll initiative and the highest result is considered to have started pursuit.

Initiates Pursuit	Initial Lead (typical)
Pursuer	2d6+3 (50–150 feet)
Target	2d6+8 (100–200 feet)

The lead may never be less than 0 or greater than 30. If any maneuver result would put the lead past one of these limits, adjust the lead to the closest appropriate number.

The pursuer wants to decrease the lead enough to perform a finishing maneuver and catch the target, while the target wants to increase the lead enough to get away with his own finishing move. Pursuit continues until either one performs a successful finishing maneuver, a crash occurs, or one of the vehicles is disabled.

Pursuit Speed

Vehicle speeds are in miles per hour (mph), determined by terrain at the start of pursuit (see "Terrain," below). Speed changes throughout pursuit according to the maneuvers that each driver selects (see "Pursuit Steps," below). Whenever the pursuit speed exceeds one or more vehicles' maximum speed, those vehicles take 2 points of damage (reduced to 1 if the driver has the relevant daring feat for the type of pursuit — Barnstormer, Sea Dog, Trick Rider or Wheelman). This damage bypasses hardness.

Pursuit Steps

1. Choose Maneuvers

Each driver chooses a maneuver secretly from those available to him (see "Maneuvers," below).

2. Maneuver Checks

Drivers reveal their maneuvers and make any resulting changes to the chase speed. Each then makes an opposed maneuver check with his respective vehicle skill, including any modifiers from vehicle handling, terrain speed bonus, maneuvers, feats or vehicle damage.

If one driver succeeds, his maneuver's effects are applied during the next step. If neither succeeds or if the results are a tie, the chase continues, ignoring all maneuver effects except for speed. If both drivers succeed, the GM applies the maneuver effect from the higher result.

3. Resolve Maneuvers and Adjust Lead

Apply the winning driver's maneuver to the chase and adjust the number of lengths between vehicles as necessary.

4. Obstacles

Obstacles may crop up during a chase — say an overturned truck or a washed-out road for ground chases, a dirigible or a fireworks display for air chases, a low bridge or a whale for water chases, or a crowd or a locked door for foot chases. Obstacles are intended as spice, not the main focus of pursuit, with frequency dependent on the terrain (see "Terrain"). The GM may decide not to apply random obstacle rolls if the drivers are keeping things dynamic.

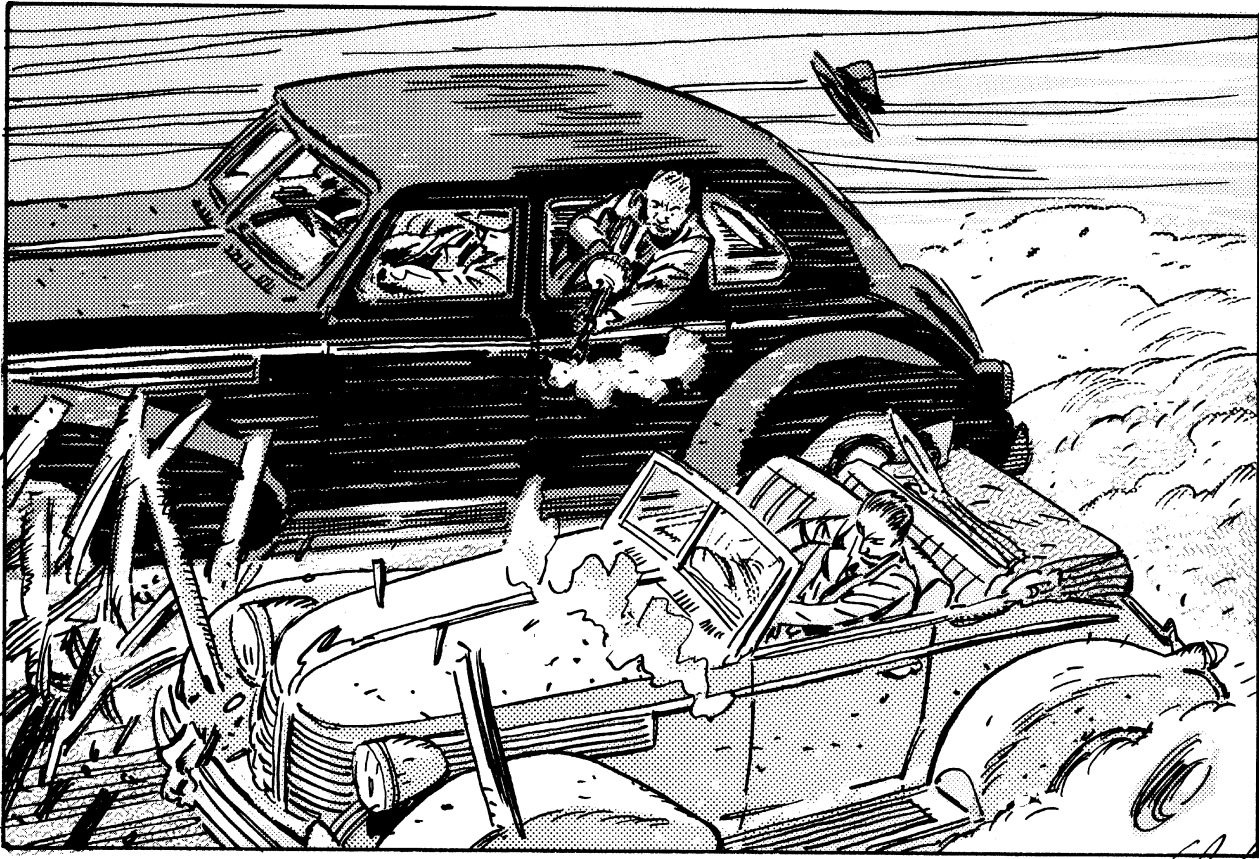
If an obstacle is encountered, the target and then the pursuer makes an obstacle check. This may be a Reflex save or a vehicle skill check, as appropriate, against the obstacle's DC. The GM may further apply up to a +2 bonus or a –2 penalty depending on the circumstance. On a failed roll, the driver must make a crash check (see below).

5. Other Actions

Whether pursuit has ended due to a finishing maneuver or not, the drivers and passengers now perform any actions open to them. See "Vehicle Combat" for differences from normal combat.

6. Resolve Damage, Make Crash Checks

Apply any damage inflicted to each vehicle (see "Vehicle Damage"), and see if the driver must make a crash check (see below). This occurs if unsuccessful maneuver calls for one, if the vehicle has suffered enough damage to require one, or if a tire bursts.



Terrain

Terrain falls into three basic categories: open, close and tight. Each applies certain conditions to a chase, including how often obstacles can crop up and the average DC for any checks made in that terrain.

• **Open Terrain:** Easy to traverse, with only slight changes in elevation and few imposing obstacles (see examples below). A vehicle suffering a crash on open terrain usually overruns what it hits with little or no damage, unless the obstacle is too big or too solid for the vehicle to go over or through it.

Pursuit Speed: Begin at three-quarters of the fastest vehicle's maximum mph (round down). The vehicle with highest maximum mph receives a +2 speed modifier on all maneuver checks. If only one vehicle is considered to be in open terrain (either due to two or more terrain types, feats or mixed vehicle types), that vehicle receives the +2 speed bonus.

Obstacle Chance: 1 on a d10.

Obstacle DC: 12.

Terrain Type	Open Terrain Example
Ground	Empty highways, racetracks, salt flats.
Water	Lakes, empty marinas, open seas with fair to excellent weather.
Air	Clear skies at 1,000 ft. or higher.
On foot	Wide, flat plains and large paved areas with few structures, fences or obstructions.

• **Close Terrain:** Close terrain is generally narrow and filled with things to run into, sideswipe and burst through (see examples below). Vehicles are often still going fast enough to overrun most obstacles in these conditions.

Pursuit Speed: Begin at one-half of the fastest vehicle's maximum mph (round down).

Obstacle Chance: 1 on a d6.

Obstacle DC: 18.

Terrain Type	Close Terrain Example
Ground	City streets, winding dirt roads.
Water	Narrow rivers with many rocks, busy docks, choppy seas.
Air	Cloudy mountaintops, fields with occasional power lines, light to medium rain.
On foot	Narrow alleys and open areas with many obstructions (stairways, hospital corridors).

• **Tight Terrain:** The most dangerous of all terrain, this is filled with sharp drops and large, dense obstacles (see examples below). Tight terrain is unstable; drivers should be prepared for anything.

Pursuit Speed: Begin at one-quarter of the fastest vehicle's maximum mph (round down). If pursuer and target are both in tight terrain, the driver whose vehicle has the highest handling gains an additional +1 speed bonus on all maneuver checks.

Obstacle Chance: 1 on a d4.

Obstacle DC: 24.

Terrain Type	Tight Terrain Example
Ground	Congested highways, steep downhill inclines, battlegrounds, debris-riddled areas.
Water	Whitewater rapids, crowded marinas.
Air	Ground level (<i>under</i> obstacles!), antenna clusters, bad weather.
On foot	Staircases, corridors, indoor parking garages, hedge mazes.

Maneuvers

Since pursuit is left abstract, the distance covered and specific locations of each vehicle are left to your imagination. What's important is the lead — the distance between pursuer and target at any given time. Many maneuvers require a certain minimum or maximum lead, so make sure to update the lead at the start of each round.

Maneuvers are split into pursuer and target categories. They focus on ground vehicle pursuit, but apply with few changes to air, water and foot chases.

Air Pursuit: "Driver" becomes "pilot" and maneuvers are based on the Pilot skill. Air collisions can easily be fatal, and most pursuits end with one of the vehicles being forced down by damage.

Water Pursuit: Terrain depends on the weather and the room the boats have to maneuver; otherwise, techniques are similar to ground pursuit. (Underwater pursuit uses the Pilot skill in place of Drive for maneuvers.)

Foot Pursuit: This may involve pedestrians or riding animals — for obstacle checks use Balance, Jump or Tumble as appropriate for the former, and Ride for the latter. Lengths are standard 5-foot-squares.

Maneuver Descriptions

Each maneuver has a general description that you can modify to fit the particulars of each pursuit. Refer to Table 9–5 for maneuver modifiers. Remember that each driver may choose his maneuver secretly to surprise his opponent.

Finishing: A finishing maneuver has prerequisites that must be met before it can be attempted, but ends the chase if performed successfully.

Daring: These maneuvers stress the vehicle to the limit. Characters with the Barnstormer, Sea Dog, Trick Rider or Wheelman feats (as relevant to the type of pursuit) can perform them more reliably and with less damage to their vehicles. Maneuvers marked "Daring Only" are so extreme that only those with the relevant feat may attempt them.

Lead: The minimum or maximum distance required between pursuer and target to perform the maneuver.

Speed: Some maneuvers may modify the current pursuit speed. If both pursuer and target choose maneuvers that alter the speed, only the highest modifier (positive or negative) applies.

Success: The maneuver's effect, applied when a driver who chooses it wins the opposed maneuver check for the pursuit round.

Special: Any additional information relevant about the maneuver.

Air Equivalent: The term used for the maneuver in an air pursuit.

Pursuer Maneuvers

All pursuer maneuvers are geared toward slowing down or catching the target.

Box In [Finishing, Daring Only]

It takes skill to trap an opponent with minimal damage, but sometimes it's essential to take the target intact.

Lead: 5 lengths or less.

Success: The pursuer wins the chase, forcing the target into a corner from which there is nowhere to run.

Crowd [Finishing]

Crowding, or "tailgating," involves getting up against the target's backside to force him into a crash. This option is safer for the pursuer than ramming, but is less likely to work.

Lead: 2 lengths or less.

Success: The pursuer wins the chase. If the pursuer's maneuver check result exceeds the target's by 5 or more, the target collides with an obstacle (a tree, storefront, debris). The target is assumed to have failed a crash check, and the pursuer comes to a safe stop.

Air Equivalent: Force down.

Cut Off [Finishing, Daring]

The pursuer surges forward and pulls in front of the target, with the pursuer's own vehicle becoming a barrier to cut off the target.

Table 9–5: Pursuit Maneuvers									
Target Maneuvers	Pursuer Maneuvers								
	Box In	Crowd	Cut Off	Gun It	Herd	Jockey	Ram	Redline	Shortcut
Barnstorm	—	—	—	–6/0	—	—	—	–8/0	0/–6
Bootleg Reverse	0/–6	0/–4	–8/0	0/–6	0/0	0/–2	–4/0	–4/0	–6/0
Hairpin Turn	—	—	—	0/–4	—	—	—	–2/0	0/–4
Lure	0/–4	–4/0	0/–4	–2/0	–2/0	0/0	0/–2	0/–2	0/–6
Pull Ahead	–6/0	0/–4	–2/0	0/0	–6/0	–2/0	–2/0	0/–4	0/–4
Set Up	–2/0	–4/0	0/–4	0/–4	0/–2	–2/0	0/–4	0/0	–4/0
Stunt	—	—	—	–2/0	—	—	—	–4/0	0/–2
Vanish	—	—	—	0/–4	—	—	—	0/–6	–4/0
Zig-Zag	–2/0	0/–6	–2/0	–6/0	0/–6	0/–2	–4/0	–2/0	0/0

Cross-reference the pursuer and target maneuvers chosen to find the modifier for each vehicle for the round. Apply the modifier before the slash to the pursuer's maneuver check, and the modifier after the slash to the target's maneuver check.

Lead: 0 lengths.

Speed: Reduce the pursuit speed by one-third (round down) this round.

Success: The pursuer wins the chase, cutting off the target. If the target fails his maneuver check, he collides with the pursuer's vehicle with no crash check rolled (see "Vehicle Damage"). The pursuer may make a Jump check to leap from a stationary vehicle and avoid crash damage.

Air Equivalent: Collision.

Gun It

The pursuer tries to catch up in a straightforward manner by putting on a brief burst of speed.

Lead: Any distance.

Speed: Increase the pursuit speed by one-quarter (round down) this round.

Success: Reduce the lead by a number of lengths equal to the difference between maneuver check results.

Herd

By keeping the pressure on and cutting off the target's options, the pursuer uses strategy and brute force to drive the target into dangerous situations.

Lead: 10 lengths or less.

Success: Reduce the lead by 1 length. Each driver must make a crash check, but the target's DC is increased by the difference between the maneuver check results.

Special: If the pursuer's maneuver check result exceeds the target's by 5 or more, the pursuer may shift the terrain by one step at the end of the round (open or tight becomes close, and vice versa); this also reduces or increases each driver's crash check DC by 5.

Jockey

The pursuer matches the target's movements, forcing the vehicles' relative speeds down to almost zero and stabilizing the chase so that others in the vehicle can attack.

Lead: 10 lengths or less.

Success: Reduce the lead by 1 length. The driver and all passengers in the pursuer vehicle gain the benefit of the aid another maneuver for that round (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 8: Combat, "Special Attacks," *Aid Another*).

Ram [Finishing]

The pursuer speeds up and slams into the target, forcing him off the road, into the ground, or onto the shore (as appropriate). It's dirty, but it gets the job done faster than crowding.

Lead: 5 lengths or less.

Success: The pursuer wins the chase, colliding with the target. Both are assumed to have failed a crash check; the vehicles come to a stop after resolving the collision.

Redline [Daring]

The pursuer guns it, but then maintains the vehicle's top speed. This isn't good for the vehicle, as the engine literally burns up in the process.

Feat: Any distance.

Speed: Increase the pursuit speed by one-third (round down) this round.

Success: Reduce the lead by a number of lengths equal to twice the difference between maneuver check results. The pursuer's en-

gine suffers 4 points of damage (2 points for daring characters with the requisite feat).

Shortcut

Though useful for catching up with the target, a shortcut often involves losing line of sight and can result in a nasty spill for the pursuer.

Lead: Any distance.

Speed: Reduce the lead by a number of lengths equal to twice the difference between maneuver check results. The pursuer must also make a crash check.

Air Equivalent: Intercept.

Target Maneuvers

All target maneuvers are geared toward escaping the pursuer.

Barnstorm [Finishing, Daring]

Though associated with planes, any vehicle may "barnstorm" — a car could storm a warehouse, while a boat may storm the wreckage of a burning oil tanker.

Lead: 25 lengths or more.

Success: The target wins the chase, barreling through a cluttered area. Both drivers must make crash checks, and the target's vehicle suffers 10 points of damage regardless of hardness. A daring character with the relevant feat may reduce this damage by the difference between maneuver check results.

Bootleg Reverse [Daring]

When the pursuer gets close, the target brakes and turns hard to one side to slew around — pointing suddenly in the opposite direction!

Lead: 10 lengths or less.

Speed: Reduce the pursuit speed by one-quarter (round down) this round.

Success: Increase the lead by a number of lengths equal to twice the difference between maneuver check results. The target's tires suffer 4 points of damage (2 points for daring characters with the requisite feat).

Air Equivalent: Roll-out.

Hairpin Turn [Finishing]

The target leads the pursuer at high speed around blind curves until one falls out of the race. This involves longer and far sharper turns than the zig-zag maneuver, resulting in a greater chance of a crash.

Lead: 20 lengths or more.

Speed: Reduce the pursuit speed by one-third (round down) this round.

Success: The target wins the chase, taking one or more turns that the pursuer can't manage. Both drivers must also make crash checks.

Air Equivalent: Veer off.

Lure

The target controls the direction of pursuit, leading the pursuer into all kinds of trouble.

Lead: Any distance.

Success: Increase the lead by 1 length. Each driver must make a crash check, but the pursuer's DC is increased by the difference between the maneuver check results.

Special: If the target's maneuver check result exceeds the pursuer's

by 4 or more, she may reverse the vehicles' positions, becoming the pursuer until the end of the round (this lets the target use any forward-mounted weapons on the pursuer).

If the target's maneuver check result exceeds the pursuer's by 5 or more, the target may shift the terrain by one step at the end of the round (open or tight becomes close, and vice versa); this also reduces or increases each driver's crash check DC by 5.

Pull Ahead

A straightforward maneuver, where the target tries to get as far ahead of the pursuer as possible.

Lead: Any distance.

Speed: Increase the pursuit speed by one-quarter (round down) this round.

Success: Increase the lead by a number of lengths equal to the difference between maneuver check results.

Set Up

Instead of running, the target leads the pursuer on a merry chase — usually to the tune of gunfire.

Lead: 10 lengths or less.

Success: Increase the lead by 1 length. The driver and all passengers in the target vehicle gain the benefit of the aid another maneuver for that round (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 8: Combat, "Special Attacks," *Aid Another*).

Also, if the target's maneuver check result exceeds the pursuer's by 4 or more, she may reverse the vehicles' positions, becoming the pursuer until the end of the round.

Stunt [Finishing, Daring Only]

This is a finishing maneuver that's just short of suicidal — leaping a car across a rising toll bridge, skipping a boat across a pier, exploding a convenient line of oil drums, and the like.

Lead: 20 lengths or more.

Success: The target wins the chase, performing a stunt that the pursuer can't manage. If the target's maneuver check result exceeds the pursuer's by 5 or more, the pursuer must make a crash check.

Vanish [Finishing]

The target leaves all pursuit choking on her dust in a display of driving virtuosity and pure velocity.

Lead: 30 lengths.

Speed: Increase the pursuit speed by one-third (round down) this round.

Success: The target wins the chase.

Zig-Zag

The target clips obstacles, terrain and even other vehicles in an attempt to send them into the pursuer's path. This also increases the chance that the target may actually collide with, rather than merely sideswipe, an obstacle.

Lead: Any distance.

Success: Increase the lead by a number of lengths equal to twice the difference between maneuver check results. The target must also make a crash check.

Air Equivalent: Break right/left.

Vehicle Combat

Vehicle combat differs in some ways from what's described in Chapter 8 of the *Player's Handbook*. Rather than list actions that

you can or cannot perform in a vehicle, this section covers general modifiers and leaves specifics to your feel of what's appropriate to the game. For instance, a charge doesn't work in most instances, but you could make a leaping charge from the top of one careening panel truck to another. When in doubt, use common sense.

• **Passenger Actions:** A passenger in a moving vehicle suffers a —2 penalty on any attack roll. Move actions are possible, but the GM may require a Balance check. A Jump check is required to leap from a moving vehicle, with a Tumble check applied as appropriate.

• **Driver Actions:** In addition to the maneuver options covered above, the driver of a moving vehicle may take one standard action each round. Doing so applies a —4 penalty on his next maneuver check, however.

• **Vehicle Speed:** The faster a vehicle goes, the harder it is to attack accurately. All characters suffer an additional —2 penalty on attack rolls for every 50 mph the vehicle is traveling (round down).

• **Melee Attacks in a Vehicle:** You can only make a melee attack if the lead is 0 lengths and/or if the attacker is in or on the same vehicle as his target.

• **Falling From a Vehicle:** Falling from a moving vehicle inflicts 1d6 points of damage for every 10 mph of the vehicle's current speed above 10 mph (round down). A successful Jump or Tumble check reduces this damage by 1d6.

Attacking Vehicles

Attacks during pursuit are assumed to hit an opposing vehicle unless you confirm a critical hit or the driver tries to ram bystanders (see below). A vehicle's Armor Class rating is equal to its listed Armor Class plus the driver's Dexterity modifier, if any. Remember to subtract the vehicle's hardness from any damage applied (except if noted otherwise).

Characters in vehicles may fire hand weapons — pistols, shotguns, etc. — in any direction. This may first require shooting out their own vehicle's window, hanging onto the side of the vehicle or some other move.

Most vehicle weapons fire only in a forward arc, giving the pursuer a distinct advantage in many cases. The target can use the lure or set up maneuvers to turn the tables for a round, and can even become the pursuer in a new chase if the original pursuer ever breaks off the chase.

Critical Hits Against Vehicles

When you confirm a critical against a vehicle, roll on the appropriate section of Table 9–6. The following entries note special results in addition to the critical hit damage rolled. Bear in mind that some maneuvers may apply damage to the vehicle.

• **Engine:** Do not subtract hardness from the critical hit damage. Also, the vehicle loses a cumulative 10% of its top speed with each engine critical suffered. Thus, a vehicle that suffers three critical hits to its engine loses 30% of its top speed.

• **Flaps:** Apply the same rules as for tires, including taking damage from a bootleg reverse/roll-out maneuver.

• **Holed:** The watercraft is damaged below the waterline and is taking on water. This mirrors the effects of the "steering" critical hit.

• **Steering:** Every 10% of the vehicle's maximum hit points that the critical hit inflicts (round down) reduces the vehicle's handling by —

Table 9–6: Vehicle Critical Hit Locations

Enclosed Ground Vehicle (auto, truck, van)		Open Ground Vehicle (motorcycle, convertible)		Water Vehicle (speedboat, submersible)		Air Vehicle (aeroplane, dirigible)	
d10	Group/Location	d10	Group/Location	d10	Group/Location	d10	Group/Location
1	Engine	1	Engine	1–2	Engine	1–3	Engine
2–3	Steering	2–3	Steering	3–5	Holed	4–6	Steering
4–7	Tires	4–6	Tires/Holed	6–7	Weapon	7	Flaps
8–9	Weapon	7	Weapon	8–10	Window	8–9	Weapon
10	Window	8–10	Window			10	Window

1. So, a vehicle with 35 hit points loses 1 point from its handling modifier for every 3 points of critical hit damage it suffers.

- **Tires:** A normal tire can take 5 hit points of damage before being rendered useless. When a tire bursts, the driver must make a crash check. The driver suffers a –2 cumulative penalty for each tire that blows (if the vehicle has 9 or fewer tires), or for every two tires that burst (if it has 10 or more), to a maximum –10 penalty. If all the tires are blown, or if the vehicle has no tires, the critical hit strikes the steering instead.

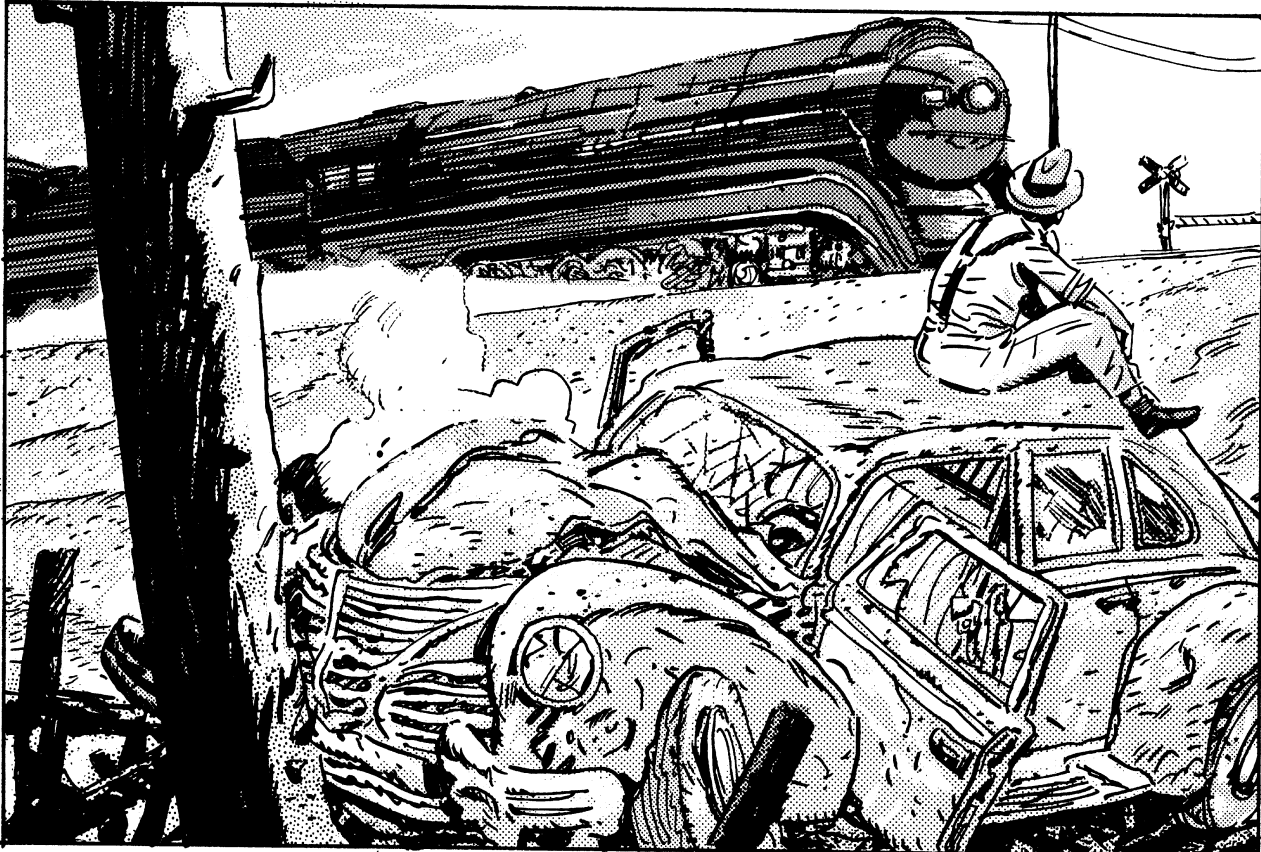
- **Weapon:** Apply damage to one of the vehicle’s mounted weapons (see the *Player’s Handbook*, Chapter 9: Adventuring, “Exploration,” *Breaking and Entering* for details on smashing an object). The attack may strike one of the vehicle’s communications or sensor systems instead, at the GM’s discretion. If the target has no mounted weapons or equipment, the critical hit strikes the tires instead.

- **Window:** The attack smashes through a window or other “soft spot.” Select one of the occupants at random or determine the most likely target in the line of fire; that character is hit if his flat-footed Armor Class is less than or equal to the critical’s confirming result. If the attack misses, repeat the process for any occupants in line behind him. If there are none, the attack passes through the vehicle harmlessly.

Bystanders

The driver can use her Drive skill to attack bystanders with a vehicle, applying any relevant attack modifiers. On a successful hit, the vehicle inflicts 1d6 points of damage for every 10 mph of its current speed. Critical hits are applied as normal.

Bystanders can target vehicles and their occupants as well, following the rules above.



Vehicle Damage

A vehicle is in one of four conditions after suffering damage:

Operational: A moving vehicle with at least half its maximum hit points operates normally.

Crippled: A moving vehicle reduced to less than half its hit point total loses -5 points from its handling modifier. The driver must also make an immediate crash check with a +5 DC.

Disabled: A moving vehicle reduced to 0 hit points or lower stalls and comes to a halt. The driver must also make an immediate crash check with a +10 DC.

Destroyed: A moving vehicle that suffers more than twice its hit point total is destroyed. It rolls, skids or plummets to a halt and then explodes as per a base failed crash check. The vehicle's occupants may try to escape as with a crash (DC 20 + 2 for every full 25 mph of speed).

Crash Checks

Crash checks are required in the following circumstances:

- The vehicle's tire bursts.
- The driver makes a critical failure on a maneuver check.
- A successful maneuver calls for a crash check.
- The vehicle suffers damage that calls for a crash check.

This is rolled like a maneuver check against DC 15 for ground and water vehicles, DC 10 for air and submersible vehicles. You make only one crash check in a round even if more than one is called for; just apply +5 to the DC for every additional check required. Other modifiers may also apply, as indicated below.

DC Modifier	Circumstance
-5	Open terrain
0	Close terrain
+5	Tight terrain
+2	Per full 25 mph of speed

On a failed check, the vehicle crashes into an obstacle (or the other vehicle, if the maneuver calls for it). The vehicle and the obstacle (and any occupants) suffer base crash damage of 1d6 per 10 mph of vehicle speed, +1 for each point by which the driver failed his crash check. Each occupant may make a Jump or Tumble check to suffer half damage from the crash (DC equal to the failed crash check).

An air vehicle may stall out instead if there is no hard terrain or other obstacle to collide with logically. The pilot may restart the vehicle with a single successful Repair check (DC equal to the crash check). Aerial crash damage is 1d10 per 30 mph of vehicle speed, and is considered a rough landing rather than a cataclysmic collision. On a critical failure of the crash check, the air vehicle comes in for a hard crash and suffers the standard 1d6 per 10 mph points of damage.

After the crash is resolved, roll d%. If the result is higher than the speed that the vehicle was traveling (in mph) at the time of the crash, it remains upright. The vehicle still runs as long as it has 1 hit point left.

With a failed crash check on foot, the character takes a spill, collides with a wall, etc. He suffers 1d6 points of damage and has a -4 penalty on his next maneuver check. Double the damage for a character on an animal mount or bicycle.

CHAPTER

ROLEPLAYING

TEN

This chapter discusses aspects of roleplaying on both sides — player and GM — and offers suggestions that may improve your game. Much of the discussion covers details of pulp genre conventions and ways to make your **Adventure!** series more like the pulp stories that inspired it.

The Inspiration Age

In the broad sweep of things, the Inspiration Age is very much like our own early 20th century. There will still be a Great Depression, and a Second World War looms on the distant horizon. Our world had plenty of explorers and adventurers — from Amelia Earhart to Perry and Amundsen and beyond — but none of them experienced quite the kind of larger-than-life exploits that your team is sure to undergo. That doesn't mean that players and GMs can't use the real world to their advantage. Real world people, places and events can serve as character inspirations and can add to the excitement of any game.

Historical Characters

Appendix Two lists historical highlights and individuals on the national stage. You can search the Internet or hit your local library for newspapers of the day for more along these lines.

PCs could encounter any historical individuals or, at least, wade through the aftermath of their activities. Having PCs rub elbows with

famous historical figures can be lots of fun. It helps ground the characters and gives a better sense of world events. Chiang Kai-shek is sure to run afoul of the Ubiquitous Dragon (or perhaps the two are allies); Ghandi's protests against British Imperial rule in India may reach the attention of visiting heroes in search of ancient ruins; Lindy might be a friend or rival to any hero with a bent toward aviation; and so on.

The PCs' actions can create minor changes to the setting's NPCs. **Adventure!** isn't a time-travel game; Continuity Police won't get on your case if Lang makes a few changes to *Metropolis* after seeing a PC's thermal ram in action. Still, handle historical figures with care. A GM probably doesn't want some wise guy springing Hitler early. Players should avoid using out-of-game knowledge to disrupt the setting. If anyone persists in playing cutesy historical tricks with the campaign, the GM can have him just be *wrong*. Remember, although similar, the Trinity Universe is *not* our world. Maybe it's *Heisenberg's* cat and the *Schrödinger* uncertainty principle. It's a game, after all, not a pseudo-historical exercise.

Real Places and Historical Events

While a certain amount of historical flexibility must slide into every **Adventure!** episode, a GM should be able to wrap her own stories around the places and events of the world at large. Real places are easy to research, and they're fun to use. The players and the GM alike can grab old maps and guidebooks for notes and significant places. With a little advance planning, a GM can provide actual headlines from the *Tribune* and photos of the Lakefront for a visit to 1924 Chicago. The GM could even have the names of actual businesses on hand for when the characters want to go shopping or find a restaurant.

If the GM prefers not to have "real" history disrupted by PC actions, steer the group away from important historical junctures. An adventuring team deep in the Congo in October 1929 will have little influence on Wall Street and the Stock Market Crash (though *it* may well have an impact on *them* when they return to civilization). It's possible the GM and players don't give a fig about real history. There's not a thing wrong with that attitude. It's your game; the only thing worth consideration is you and your fellow players' sense of fun.

Inventing Places

Some earlier sections reference places that never were, and you're encouraged to invent more hidden lands. These might be forbidden island monarchies, tribal nations in the heart of Africa or South America, brooding Eastern European principalities and many more beside. You should avoid getting downright silly — don't drop a 100-mile diameter island in the middle of Lake Superior and pretend it's been there all along — but in moderation, it can be fun. Players should feel free to jump in, too. If a character's origin is great but

Real Research

Since this book has a limited amount of space, we focus on writing about those things in **Adventure!** that differ from the real world. This book is chock-full of exciting story hooks, but so is our reality. You can find all manner of reference material for your **Adventure!** game in a library or on the Internet.

Example: *Grady, one of Adventure!'s playtest GMs, started his series with a story revolving around an exhibit in Chicago's Museum of Natural History. After running "museum," "natural history" and "chicago," through an Internet search engine, he found the homepage of the Field Museum. After telling its librarian that he was working on a story set in 1924, the librarian agreed to fax him contemporary floor plans of the museum. Inspired by his success with the Field Museum, Grady checked with the American Museum of Natural History in New York and got the same friendly assistance! Instant realism, just add water.*

doesn't *quite* match historical reality, the player might suggest an invented place as the character's homeland. The GM has veto power, but inventing a new place or modifying a real one may be just as reasonable as asking the player to change the character's history.

Invaders from Mars!

Adventure! is set on the surface of Earth, with occasional excursions just below the planet's surface, under the sea and a few thousand feet into the air. Other than creatures altered by the mysterious effects of Hammersmith's experiment, the only sentient inhabitants of the planet are humans. But what about Bug-Eyed Monsters from Another World?

First, **Trinity** is set in **Adventure!**'s future. In **Trinity**, humanity discovers at least four alien races. One is not a technologically adept species, but it would take little tweaking for any of the other three to encounter Earth in the 1920s. A good GM should play up the technological differences between the aliens and humans, while not focusing on high-tech gadgetry. It would suffice to know that the aliens travel around in "flying saucers" and shoot "ray guns" and so on.

As a second option, you might say that Z-waves propagated to nearby planets after sweeping over the Earth. Telluric energy seems little affected by physical distance, after all. The barren and infertile deserts of Mars are no less likely to sprout crystalline cities inhabited by little green men than a limestone cavern 200 feet under the Earth's surface is to become the hidden home of the Mole People. And 21st-century scientific knowledge shouldn't get in the way of a rollicking good early 20th-century game.

The Rest of the Trinity Universe

The Storyteller versions of the Trinity Universe — the shared setting of **Trinity**, **Aberrant** and **Adventure!** — have hundreds of thousands of words in print in addition to the new d20 core books. You don't need any of it. The only thing you really need is this book (and the *Player's Handbook*). Even then, don't take any of it as biblical canon. If a GM reads something in **Adventure!** that just doesn't fit with her conception of the game, she should take a minute and figure out what the implications of throwing that thing out will be. If doing so doesn't appear to cause further problems, she should feel free to toss it. This goes double for material from **Trinity** and **Aberrant**. Those two games are only *possible* futures for **Adventure!**. No GM or player should feel constrained by material found in those two games when it comes to their 1920s exploits.

Pulp

What Pulp Is

In the uncertain days from the end of the Great War to the end of the Great Depression, pulp adventure fiction wrote of ordinary folks' worries and interests boldly and without the moral ambiguity that

was the tone of the day. Morally gray characters did exist, but in the end, it was obvious that the Shadow was on the side of right and justice and Fu Manchu was not. These heroes didn't have everyday worries about work or school and family; they were playboy adventurers whose wives no red-blooded woman could resist.

Pulps were often political; the pervasiveness of gangsters, the woman's role in society and America's role in the postwar world were all important elements. Some pulps got preachy (a trait you may want to avoid), but many managed to make a good point about the world without being overbearing. Crime in all its forms is an important element also. Most pulp heroes were dedicated to righting wrongs and solving mysteries. Many fought gangsters and rumrunners; at other times, they encountered crime of a less organized nature or super-criminals in the form of characters such as Fu Manchu. "Super" doesn't refer to superhuman abilities; these were criminals without peer, masterminds with world-spanning empires who demanded absolute loyalty from their followers.

Air travel was still a relative novelty. Amelia Earhart hasn't disappeared yet, and the *Hindenburg* tragedy doesn't occur for some time. Piloting was an interesting and awe-inspiring vocation, and plenty of people believed that everyone would have a personal airplane someday.

Horror and worldwide adventure often went hand-in-hand in pulp stories. Heroes who found themselves in uncharted parts of the world often faced unspeakable mysteries of savage people. While you don't want your game to resemble the works of H.P. Lovecraft too closely — other roleplaying games do this very well — lending a bit of horror to your team's exploits through strange parts of the world is a useful tactic.

What Pulp Is Not

- **Noir:** As popularized in late-1940s American film and in the works of writers from Raymond Chandler to James Ellroy, noir is a dark genre. It focuses on the underside of American society, on desperation and pessimism. Noir fiction shares its roots and era with pulp action, but the two genres are distinct. The primary difference is one of tone, not setting.

Pulp-adventure protagonists aren't always ever-cheerful, but most lack the desperate edge that characterizes the noir hero. The noir protagonist is rarely a hero in the classic sense; he is a man of contradiction and moral gray areas. Also, pulp characters are more often found in groups, while a noir hero often works alone.

A climactic pulp battle might involve meaty heroic fists visiting villainous chins; a climactic noir battle might end with a single, regrettable gunshot on a dark waterfront. Pulp action is not a pessimistic place: Characters and stories in **Adventure!** look toward a bright horizon, rather than tugging their fedoras down and staring at the sidewalk as it begins to rain.

- **Camp:** Often represented by simplistic character development, slapstick and hackneyed dialogue, camp is the polar opposite of noir. (You could even say that pulp falls between the two.) Camp grew from the same sources as pulp and noir; again, the distinction is a matter of tone rather than setting. Characters in camp are meant to be blatantly over-the-top; they spout cheesy speeches and spend as much time striking poses as they do taking action.

Compared to pulp, camp is pure fluff escapism. Both allow for — even encourage — extreme efforts, but heroes and villains in camp are



little more than two-dimensional stereotypes, and no one ever really gets hurt. There's little chance of a campy character suffering any lasting harm in a gun battle or from falling 15 stories. In pulp, the danger of injury and death is still very real. Both genres encourage larger-than-life action, but pulp does so by remaining rooted in realism.

- **Four-Color Superheroics:** Although some pulp adventures are chronicled in comic-book format, this isn't the same as modern four-color superheroics. The *Æon Society* should never be confused with the *X-Men*. The difference is partly one of tone, but is mostly a difference in scale. A modern superhero can hoist a battleship without breaking a sweat; a pulp strongman can probably lift the back end of a car with effort. Pulp fistfights end with sore jaws and unconsciousness, some broken furniture and maybe a shattered window. Superheroic battles trash city blocks.

To over-generalize (and risk offending some comic-book fans), superheroes solve problems with clever applications of their powers; pulp heroes solve problems with ingenuity and fortitude.

Genre and Period Conventions

Action

Action is rewarded in the pulp-adventure genre. PCs who take decisive action when faced with a crisis should not have the rug yanked out from under them — unless the action is colossally stu-

pid (a certain amount of foolhardy stupidity isn't necessarily a bad thing). Never doubt that going out and finding trouble is preferable to hanging around and waiting for it to come to you. To that end, players and GMs should bear the following things in mind:

Keep ambushes rare and light. Players should never worry that the team will be wiped out as it searches for the bad guys. Ambushes can and should happen, but as evidence of a particular scoundrel's wickedness rather than as part of every villain's MO. Similarly, players shouldn't resort to ambushes and assassination. Stealth has its place, but shooting the enemy in the back isn't very heroic.

Danger shouldn't always come to the heroes. Having goons break in and shoot up the heroes' headquarters may keep the plot moving, but that can lead players to thinking that the plot will drop in their laps if they just wait long enough. The game should maintain a certain level of urgency, something to which players and GMs alike can contribute. Characters should *want* to go out and face the world. The pulp genre is about *action*, not *reaction*.

Attempt (and reward) zany stunts. If the team decides that parachuting in is the best way into Dr. Nefarious's mountaintop lair, the villain shouldn't have absurdly precise antiaircraft batteries (unless the PCs *know* he has them). The GM can have antiaircraft batteries, but they shouldn't be so accurate as to end the adventure before things get going. Such details should add danger and risk, not decimate the team. Unless the PCs' plan is indescribably stupid, the GM should let them take a shot. (If nothing else, there's always dramatic editing.)

Discrimination

We do not condone discrimination, but it was unfortunately common in the beginning of the previous century. Blacks, foreigners and anyone not a Protestant Christian risk discrimination of some kind. Women have just gotten the vote in the United States, but they're still considered second-class citizens in most of the country and the rest of the world. The Ku Klux Klan is active and quite popular in the United States in the early 20th century. Hitler's Third Reich is a dark seed, and its fruits will cast a shadow over the world in a few years.

Remember that heroes are extraordinary people. Social barriers that might hold back others are still obstacles, but far from insurmountable to a hero. A young woman might become a Golden Gloves champ; a black man might graduate at the top of his class from MIT.

Players and GMs should bear social obstacles in mind without taking them to offensive levels. A team consisting of a black man and a white woman traveling across the deep South in 1924 will receive unwanted attention, but risking an in-game lynching is not always an appropriate plot choice. The GM can create more open xenophobia in foreign lands, where the heroes are the only Westerners to be found.

Everyone playing the game should be willing to tap the social environment of the early 20th century to build tension among the PCs, but it should never act as a bludgeon. Always limit *any* discrimination to the game scenario. If a player becomes confused as to the focus, it's time to take a break and reassess how things are being handled.

Science

A campaign focusing on the exploits of Inspired scientists can be fun, but be sure to let the players know the focus ahead of time. Even if they are not the focus, scientific wonders still offer great plot options. Inventions can require strange components that need whole stories to acquire, or lead to unexpected consequences after they are finished. The GM should throw the occasional bone to any Inspired scientist characters — mysterious gadgets and unknown technology are their bread and butter, and players will appreciate the opportunity to exercise their characters' abilities. Don't overuse Inspired science, though.

Players should attempt to keep their characters' inventions balanced. The GM may veto an invention that she feels is unreasonable. If a new device doesn't give the GM at least as many plot hooks as it gives benefits to the PCs, it's not a good addition to the game. The player may help with the decision by suggesting a proposed invention's plot ramifications.

Apply this likewise to inventions the bad guys use. A floating dreadnought with a dozen electro-cannons and weather-control antennae may serve as a great dramatic final set piece — from the PCs' climactic confrontation with the villain to their harried escape as the ship plummets toward the ground. But the GM should be prepared to face the consequences if the players think up some amazing plan and not only save the dreadnought but start using it as their own base!

The Adventuring Team

Pulp adventures often revolve around teams — Doc Savage and his associates are a great example, even if the good Doc is a wee bit

more capable than his companions. What every character has is a shtick, something unique that he can do that the others can't. It's true that Doc Savage could do everything his team could, but he can't be everywhere at once.

The potential variety available — both superhuman and mundane — for **Adventure!** PCs is broad enough that a team need not have much overlap.

Creating a Team

Before you create your character, you and the other players should discuss what sort of team you all want. The GM should also discuss what sort of campaign she expects to run. With the preliminary decisions out of the way, you all then decide who will fill what role and work to give the characters complimentary traits. This isn't necessary, but it makes the game more fun in the long run.

Although the PCs aren't two-dimensional superheroes, they are larger than life. A world-class chemist, the best lawyer in the United States and the finest mechanical engineer on three continents are the rule, not the exception.

Character Overlap

Be careful about characters with similar fortes. If they overlap too closely, one player may be left with little to do — especially if the other PC is more competent in the area in question. In such a situation, it's best to work out key ways in which the respective concepts differ.

Example: *Two players decide on similar characters — Bryan creates John Quinn, Private Investigator and Dan creates Calvin Burroughs, Investigative Reporter. Each character's focus is on investigation and digging up dirt and facts.*

The GM asks Bryan and Dan what distinguishes the PCs from each other. Bryan decides that John Quinn knows the streets and the people who live on them. He can hook up with a beat cop or a Mob stool pigeon who has the dirt he needs. Through his clients, he knows people who have other connections and may get favors from them if needed.

Dan explains that Calvin Burroughs is big on high-society doings and gossip. He knows where all the big parties happen and who's who in the social register. Calvin's not all fluff, though. After all, he's broken some big-time stories thanks to his own connections.

This works well — Calvin can use his contacts to get into places and meet people whom John can't get close to, but John has a better idea of what's going on down in the streets.

Team Focus

Are the PCs members of an archeological team, seeking out lost treasures in forgotten cities in the world's trackless wastes? Do they fight those criminals who see themselves as above the law and thus above reproach?

The decision about what the team does and why it exists influences heavily the roles available — roles expressed in the different core and prestige classes listed in Chapter Five. Possibilities include:

- **Dealers of Justice:** The PCs band together out of a common desire to fight crime and injustice across the globe, or perhaps, just in their home town. These are "mystery men" of the classic sort, and overlap is less likely to cause trouble than with other types of

teams. The PCs should be connected with whatever circles they travel through, whether as friends or enemies.

PC conflicts can derive from methodology. Two characters may disagree on whether it's appropriate to operate "outside the law" when dealing with enemies who act above the law. Such conflicts can be fun if they don't bog the game down. Interpersonal conflicts happen in pulps, but the heroes put aside personal squabbles when it came time to get down to business.

Jake "Danger Ace" Stefokowski and Annabelle Lee Newfield are examples of dealers of justice within the Æon Society.

- **Dilettantes:** The well-to-do may look for excitement in an otherwise boring life — whether financing an anti-piracy expedition in the South Pacific, looking for lost cities, or some other pursuit. In fact, they could investigate a smuggling ring in one story and go on an expedition to the Nile's source for the next. They likely start sheltered, unaware of the depth of the risks they're taking. The course of the campaign might lead to personal growth and awareness of the greater world — amid pulse-pounding and blood-curdling action sequences!

Though in many ways a dilettante, Maxwell Mercer falls into several categories — investigator, researcher, even two-fisted dispenser of manly justice. Consider the possibility of PCs who fit into two or more roles — the polymath is a valid pulp archetype.

- **Researchers of the Unknown:** Science in **Adventure!** is painted in broad strokes, using exciting colors. A researcher team may explore Antarctica or the deepest jungles of South America. PCs could

include reporters, pilots, archaeologists, bodyguards and scientists of just about any specialty. Characters who can enter and survive (and thrive in) the hidden lands are certainly desirable in such a team.

Those who explore other directions — those who attempt to understand the secrets of the atom or the birth of stars — work just as well. Any scientist who makes headway in such areas will be concerned about unscrupulous criminals or demagogues who wish to use the technology for their own benefit.

The Æon Society's Professor Dixon, Safari Jack Tallon and Doctor Primoris are examples of very different researchers of the unknown.

- **Sleuths:** Whether they work for a government, a newspaper or as private citizens, sleuths often get in the weirdest kinds of trouble. Characters designed for a team of sleuths should cover a broad variety of fields to maximize the team's ability to dig up and use information. Simply getting that information is likely to stir up some hornets' nests, which means the team will also need to be able to defend themselves when necessary.

Sarah Gettel and Whitley Styles are two different examples of sleuths.

- **Social Reformers:** Antagonists — whether heartless villains or misguided souls — can unfold schemes that lead to all sorts of social problems. Such issues cannot be solved with gunplay and a few fistfights. Physical conflict may occur in the course of the story, but the heart of the matter involves dealing with larger matters, philosophies and ideals that can't be taken down with a sock to the jaw.

Social reformers look for ways to combat the root cause, not just the visible symptoms. Characters who engage in social reform start



at a level villains often neglect. They get into the gears of society and throw sand where needed, spying on villainous organizations or even infiltrating them to better understand them. For example, people tend to get into crime because they're otherwise economically disadvantaged. What happens to an army of henchmen and thugs when honest work is more profitable? In a similar vein, the social reformer can work from within a villain's organization, spreading disinformation and confusion to render the villain ineffectual. This isn't to say that the PCs can't or won't fight when necessary, but they look for ways to stack the deck against opponents before they do.

Super-science also has a place for this type of character — it offers tremendous possibilities for diagnosing and solving social problems.

The Ensemble Cast

Sometimes players can't make every game. In such cases, the GM may play the absent player's PC or give it to someone else to play. This is seldom desirable, since this may result in an absent player's PC having "died heroically saving the group from certain doom" or simply behaving in an inconsistent manner. You can work around this a few different ways.

- **Personality Profile:** Each player writes a short personality description for his PC — enough to give basics on how the character would behave. If inconsistencies are unavoidable, perhaps that could be worked into the story — "Dr. Mesmero's Mind Control Ray pushed him to do that!" or "You're right; your character wouldn't ever do that. It appears that he wasn't even there; the Chameleon impersonated him!"

- **Character Stable:** A stable of characters can have two tiers; primary characters specific to players who can make every session, and a secondary supporting cast for players who know they won't make each game. The secondary tier can include allies, contacts, followers or mentors from primary characters' background feats. As above, each should have a brief personality description. Keep in mind that "secondary" doesn't have to mean "inferior." For an ensemble game, the GM should keep primary and secondary characters on a relatively even footing, so that the former don't lord it over the rest.

An ensemble game can make cliffhangers tricky, though not impossible. Say a player misses the next game after a cliffhanger where the team falls from a zeppelin above the jungle. The other characters continue on their mission, while their comrade's fate is a mystery. The GM then has the lost PC find his way back to civilization in time to show up for the player's next appearance.

Just *how* the PC gets back can be covered in anything from simple "blue-booking" to full roleplay. The GM might offer up a few hundred experience points if the player writes a brief narrative of his exploit and/or has his character relate his daring adventure in the next session. Alternatively, the GM might develop an entire episode around the PC, with the other players taking on brief roles as secondary characters for the duration.

Leaping into Action!

A well-created team can offer helpful plot hooks to give the GM scads of ideas for stories. Some examples follow.

- **Shared History:** You can all outline historical issues that the PCs want to follow up on — whether a common "shadowy enemy" or a shared experience in the past. This is a big part of pulp teams —

even if the PCs haven't spent a lot of time together, having elements of history in common can be a unifying force. It's harder to deal with a coherent series if every character has a different archenemy upon whom he's sworn undying vengeance.

Leaving "blank spots" to fill in later is also valid. Some players are more comfortable adding to character history — or letting the GM do so — during play rather than mapping it all out before the first session.

- **Connections:** It's often easier to have a group with a reason to know/like/trust one another than to grab a random sampling of folks. Having so many exceptional people know each other can be chalked up to coincidence — a common theme in pulp serials. Consider that the two most influential people in the Trinity Universe, Maxwell Mercer and Michael Donighal, knew each other for years before they were both changed by the Hammersmith event.

The PCs don't have to be old friends or long-lost pals. They might be former enemies who band together against a threat greater than that they see in each other. They could all be siblings raised apart from civilization and trained to save the world. They might even have worked for one or more villains in the past, and have united to stop their evil ways.

In the End

The more you bring to your character and to the team as a whole, the more fun the experience is for everyone. Also, keep in mind that it doesn't have to be perfect right off the bat. Character creation can be an ongoing process — a character's history, or the team's, need not be set in stone with the first session. What if, five sessions in, the players start "reminiscing" in-character about something their characters did before the game even started? That can be great stuff that the GM can pull into play later. Use the characters — and their team — to add depth and texture to the game world.

GM: The Doc Savage Problem

An **Adventure!** series bears similarities to pulp stories and movies, but it must diverge in one important area. Many of the best films and tales revolve around a single hero and his sidekicks. Consider again the stories of Doc Savage. The good doctor's friends are all accomplished scientists, fighters and technicians, but the stories are *about* Doc Savage. (The same could be said of the Shadow, the Phantom or almost any other pulp character.) This is fine for pulp serial fiction; it's not so fun as a series for **Adventure!**. Players who get stuck running bit parts are likely to get bored with their limited roles.

Unless you run a one-on-one game, *never* put all the important plot elements in one character's hands. Spread around information and emotional impact. Maybe only Ace Borgstrom can stop Doctor Nefarious's insidious scheme. But instead of kidnapping Ace's girlfriend Stacy, have Doctor Nefarious hypnotize Jane Rocket's scientist fiancé Earl to help with his dastardly plan.

Even worse is if the GM makes an NPC the focus! Players hate this, and rightly so. They didn't schlep over to your apartment to listen to you tell them how your NPC, Dex Caster, saves their bacon. Players want to play out the adventures; they want *their* PCs to save the world. If the PCs aren't at the center of your campaign, either rethink your GMing style or go into fiction writing.

The GM's Toolkit

The rest of this chapter has tips for the GM on running **Adventure!** games. Players can read it; just know that the information is focused for GM use.

Theme

Each Trinity Universe game represents one of three thematic aspects. **Adventure!** represents Hope, **Aberrant** represents Sacrifice, and **Trinity** represents Unity.

Hope can take on many forms. Overall, **Adventure!** endeavors to make the future as good as it can be for all. Scientists make new discoveries every day, and dreams of advanced technology — whether high-powered radio transmitters or transcontinental telegraphy — are becoming reality. Advances in life sciences are no less dramatic. The secrets of radioactivity and the atom itself soon make themselves known, ushering in a new era of wealth and prosperity.

This perspective is tricky to cultivate in a roleplaying game. You know that the optimism of this era will lead to the Great Depression and the Second World War — and eventually to the Aberrant War and subsequent Exodus in the Trinity Universe. The *characters* do not know that, though. It is important that the PCs operate in ignorance of the future.

Mood

“Rollicking” may be too strong a word to describe **Adventure!**'s mood, but it gets across certain ideas. The game is meant to be action oriented and optimistic: Heroes discover some fiendish plot and defeat the villain. This doesn't necessarily mean the game is simplistic. Characters, motivations and plots in **Adventure!** can be as complex as those in any other genre. Just note that the overall tone is not one of a haunted nightmare world, nor a dark parody of modern media over-saturation: The PCs live in a brightly colored reflection of a simpler day. Absent should be the story in which the PCs discover a world-girdling conspiracy that they cannot defeat or displace. Concentrate instead on menaces that the heroes can take worthwhile action against. Victory is never assured, but with strong arms and stout hearts, the heroes have every chance of carrying the day.

Plot

Regardless of whether you're putting together a single evening's entertainment or planning a multi-layered epic, it's not going to be much fun if you don't come up with a good plot. Few GMs can improvise stories successfully. You must make *some* plans, regardless of what you intend. There are nine-and-sixty ways to create stories, to paraphrase Kipling, and every one of them is right. Below are some strategies that GMs new to **Adventure!** may find useful.

- **Story Plotting:** Decide on a series of events to take place in a given game session or series of sessions. You might want to run the PCs through particular “set pieces” — complex scenes with a lot of things going on — or you might generate challenges that are well-suited to certain PCs. The PCs then move from scene to scene, learning facts about the events surrounding them and about themselves, and take action as they see fit.

This is how we experience most motion pictures and books. It gives you more control over the events in your game, but players

may feel bound by the storyline. If you are dead set on a scene in which our heroes must fight through 25 axe-wielding robot Viking warriors to reach the secret turbo-rocket in the villain's lair, there isn't much room for the PCs to find another way in or to plan a way around the confrontation.

- **Back Story Plotting:** Work out a timeline of events and plan the NPCs' probable reactions to PC actions. If the team chooses to sit around and not take action, the events in the timeline go off without a hitch. No timeline survives contact with PCs, but it gives a solid working outline with room to improvise.

With this method, the PCs' actions can make a difference. The downside is the planning itself — not only working out a feasible plan but also reworking it on the fly. Think about the ways that PCs can poke at your scheme and be ready to improvise along the way. Also be prepared if players miss a clue, or get off-track early on and fail to see the main plot thread at all.

Event Paths

Often the best solution is to combine plotting methods in “event paths.” Plot out a general storyline, then work out events that occur in the background to produce the visible plot. This gives you both a general plan and something to reach for when the PCs do something unexpected... which is about the only thing you can ever guarantee that they *will* do.

If possible, write these up as a series of simple declarative statements. For example:

- The Pharaoh's hired goons rob Presley's Jewelry Store and take their goods to the Simmons Warehouse on River Street.
- The Pharaoh's hired goons steal the Queens of Egypt Exhibit from the Museum of Ancient History and take their goods to the Simmons Warehouse on River Street.
- A riverboat arrives at the docks on River Street; the goons load their stolen wares onto it under the watchful eye of the Pharaoh's lieutenant, the Red Razor.

Then present simple questions and answers for each: What happens if our heroes interrupt the goons? Will they fight to the death or run away? If the goons are defeated, what information will they reveal? If one escapes and brings word to his villainous master, how will subsequent plans change? What happens if the thugs manage to defeat the heroes? The answers may also inspire new events for the list — “*The goons dump the heroes' unconscious bodies into the river*” or “*The Red Razor sends snitches to gather dirt on the PCs*.”

You may find that multiple events lead to later ones. This simplifies your planning, as you only have to work out the details for “*The Red Razor sends snitches to gather dirt on the team*” one time, even if several different events might trigger it.

You may find it useful to arrange the path chronologically — say, events that must precede others go on the left and later consequences go on the right, then draw arrows from one event to its consequence.

Flexibility

You must plan out what the PCs need to learn and make sure that they get it at the appropriate moments. You may have to change details to fit their actions as a result, all without them knowing that you've adjusted anything.

If they don't know that they must bump into old Professor Bradley at the five-and-dime and hear him expound about the dangers of the test-firing the Army plans for its new cobalt rifles, you can't get annoyed when they go to the movies instead. Maybe they run into Professor Bradley at the movies, or while walking home afterward. Or just use a different hook. A PC with contacts in the service might run into an old Army friend who mentions problems with the cobalt rifles. A keen-eyed flier might notice dust and activity in the direction of the Army's testing grounds. Or — perhaps the best option of all — drop subtle clues that something's afoot outside of town and leave it to the PCs to determine how they approach the story.

Be flexible with action sequences, too. Say the PCs must reach the airfield with the *Skull of Quetzal* before their flight leaves. Colonel Santiago's fanatical minions will do anything to stop them, so you've worked out a frenzied rush through the streets of Mexico City — an ambush in the marketplace, explosions, maniacs jumping from rooftops onto the group's truck and so on. And then the PCs bypass it all by deciding to slip the *Skull* in a burlap sack and sneak to the airfield dressed as beggars!

Instead of letting the players *know* that they've sidestepped your scheme, it's time for improvisation. First, set aside your extensive ambush and chase notes. They'll work just as well three sessions from now against the Pharaoh's men in Cairo as they would have in the current scenario. Next, have Colonel Santiago's men hunt around town in small groups, looking for people who match the PCs' descriptions. This creates a tense but subtle series of exchanges as the PCs avoid capture while still making their best possible time to the airfield. It's a different kind of tension than an extended chase scene, but it's no less interesting — and no less valid.

Publicity and the Weird Stuff

The PCs' exploits seldom enjoy the media's harsh spotlight. Heroes may attract the press if their regular exploits take place in the public eye, but the general public doesn't necessarily believe the zany stories that pulp action heroes recount. Newspapers are liable to try anything to boost readership, thinks John Q. Public, and stories about mysterious vigilantes or giant apes might well be just a ploy to get more readers.

Thus, the world at large is skeptical of wild claims. Unless a person is a witness to seemingly impossible events or actually runs into the Dark Avenger in an alleyway, that person will dismiss crazy stories. This works to heroes' advantage, most of the time.

The worst thing you can do is force the PCs back onto the path you created. Responding to the PCs' choices keeps the tension level high and keeps the players equal partners in the roleplaying experience.

Story Seeds

Below are a few ideas to inspire your own plots.

- **Chaos in the Streets:** A reign of terror sweeps through the city — a Mob war, anarchists lashing out against law and order, or something similar. The PCs must help the proper authorities restore order or attempt to bring about peace on their own — or even use the chaos to strike against a known villain who otherwise hides behind



by [signature]

the law. You can create variations using the aftermath of natural disasters like an earthquake, tornado or hurricane, or any other situation where the authorities are too overwhelmed to stop certain elements from engaging in criminal activity.

- **Foiling the Mastermind:** In this hoary old standby, the PCs get involved in a seemingly simple encounter — stopping goons knocking over a jewelry store, for instance. They then follow successive clues which indicate that something bigger is going on, and finally discover that a mastermind is plotting to rule (or destroy or blackmail) the world. The PCs must track down the villain, disrupt his wicked scheme and bring him to justice.

- **The Frame-Up:** A conspiracy acts against a PC (or perhaps all the PCs). It starts subtly — newspaper articles shed light on incidents that the PC would prefer to keep in the dark, for instance. Subsequent articles may then claim that the PC did things that he knows he didn't do. Public opinion starts turning against the PCs, and the police may even mount an investigation. When the PCs are forced to — or choose to — break the law while trying to clear their names, some previously unknown person or group — a new district attorney, an Inspired crime fighter, a vigilante team — catches them in the act. Of course, these are the true villains of the tale, having set up the heroes to get them out of the way or simply to bolster their own reputations. The PCs must defeat these foes and, somehow, rescue their own reputations.

- **The Lost World:** The PCs search for a friend or colleague who has disappeared. Perhaps he was a scientist in darkest Africa or was shipwrecked in the Indian Ocean. Arriving at the site of the disappearance, they discover the border of a hidden land, a place that has been changed by Hammersmith's zero-point energy wave. The PCs must venture into the hidden land to find their friend, facing terrible environmental dangers, strange monsters and foreign cultures along the way.

- **The Mysterious Stranger:** A new person enters the PCs' home territory. He may be anything from a foreigner to a previously unknown local Inspired character. The PCs know precious little about this individual and his goals, but their respective activities soon intersect at right angles. They do not come into direct conflict, but they must reach some sort of détente before they can solve the problem posed by the real villain of the story. Perhaps that villain is the mysterious stranger, or perhaps the villain is merely manipulating the heroes and the stranger into fighting to satisfy his own nefarious ends.

- **Personal Tales:** Often developed from a subplot, a PC's own motivations (or neuroses) push him to accomplish some task. It may be melodramatic, such as confronting the murderer of the hero's parents, or more mundane and long-range, such as deciding to establish his own shipping company in the South China Sea. The great thing is that the GM doesn't have to do too much work. The character's motivation is right there. You just need to set up a few challenges and decide what complications occur.

The downside is that you must often wait until a player tells you that he wants his PC to pursue a given subplot-spawned task. Until that time, sit tight and keep seeding the subplots into your game sessions.

Subplots

Character histories and background descriptions help to ground PCs in the setting, but nothing grabs your players' attention like a

personalized subplot. Subplots can also highlight particular themes and moods. They needn't be complicated, nor should they distract from the main storyline.

To begin a simple subplot for each PC in addition to the main story, just draw from their background information. Possible subplots are listed for the following sample characters.

PC	Description
Ace Borgstrom	Devil-may-care dilettante and sometime pilot. <i>Subplot:</i> The boys at Ace's preferred airfield are acting strange (the Mob's pressuring them to assist in rumrunning).
El Mono Loco	Martial artist from the jungles of Paraguay. <i>Subplot:</i> A suspicious fire razes his apartment building (his corrupt landlord needs the insurance money).
Dr. Tenzing Smith	Half-Sherpa archaeologist. <i>Subplot:</i> A museum contact has an Egyptian artifact (stolen, unbeknownst to the contact) that Smith might want to look over.
Rachel "Lady Lead"	New York's first female Golden Gloves champion.
Buongiorno	<i>Subplot:</i> Kid Midas, a brash young male boxer, scoffs publicly at the idea that Lady Lead could beat a <i>real</i> fighter.

The trick is to avoid having the players mistake subplots for the main story. If the primary storyline revolves around the Elder Statesman's attempt to hold the 1924 Democratic National Convention hostage, you don't want the whole team investigating El Mono Loco's apartment fire instead. We recommend running a new campaign's main plotline for at least one full session before introducing any subplots.

Also, don't go overboard. Don't introduce all the subplots at once. This can be hard to keep track of — if your players mutter that there's too much going on, scale things back. And don't feel pressure to resolve subplots in a hurry. Ace Borgstrom might find his airfield buddies' behavior odd, but perhaps they keep mum about what's up. It may take a session or two before he notices darkened planes taking off and landing late at night, and up to four or five sessions before Ace learns what's really going on — at which point, it may be time for the subplot to take center stage.

Some sample subplot topics are listed below.

- **Mystery:** This can be almost anything, not necessarily a violent, whodunit affair. The intrigue is in discovering the source of the mystery. A PC's parents may be acting cold toward one another simply because "Dad forgot their wedding anniversary." This kind of subplot is easy to introduce — just decide the mystery, how the PC catches wind of it and how tough it is to solve. It then unfolds at whatever pace the PC pursues it.

- **Personal Ventures:** This is a catch-all — work or hobbies the PC engages in when not saving the world. The reformed gangster

might take a night on the town with the boys from the old neighborhood; the action hero might pull down a few bucks doing torch songs at a jazz club; the scientist might tinker in his lab on campus; and so on. These subplots don't haul the same degree of emotional baggage, but that doesn't make them any less enjoyable. They're also good for giving a player a better feel for his PC's contacts and allies.

- **Rivalry:** A character who is not necessarily the PC's enemy competes with him in some way. The PC might respond violently (which may or may not be warranted), or he might redouble his efforts to compete against his rival in turn. A good rivalry can go on for a long time with continued one-upmanship; rivals might become staunch allies or outright enemies. This subplot can impact a PC's heroic exploits or his personal life.

- **Romance:** You or the player may initiate this, depending on whether you have a plan for a given NPC or whether a player sees story potential with an NPC you've established. A romance offers personal motivation for a PC — it's one thing for the Pharaoh to kidnap the handsome yet shy Dr. DeWitt, another altogether if Dr. DeWitt is Lady Lead's fiancé!

Talk to the affected player(s) before you introduce a romantic subplot. Some players may be uncomfortable roleplaying in-character affection, and real-life relationships may create more stress than it's worth.

- **Tragedy:** Something terrible happens (or threatens to happen) to the PC or to a loved one. His parents might be evicted from the family farm, or he might contract the deadly Armstrong's Syndrome. Be careful when applying this type of subplot. Players seldom enjoy having abuse heaped on their characters. Unless you are leading to a major storyline, it's best to allow tragic subplots to be reversible — the parents' farm can be bought back, or the shadowy Dr. Emil Wendt holds the only cure for Armstrong's Syndrome.

You Get What You Encourage

How you react to the PCs' actions can encourage — and discourage — certain behavior in your players. This subtle but important factor is important to remember for novice and veteran GMs alike.

Let's use a novice GM example. Keisha runs a game for Olaf, Hamed and Xue. Keisha says that she wants the game to have larger-than-life, cinematic exploits. With that in mind, Hamed creates a daredevil martial artist, Olaf designs a dangerously curious scientific prodigy, and Xue makes a mysterious, two-fisted righter of wrongs.

Keisha starts the game at a high-class restaurant where a beautiful young diva croons backed by a 10-piece band. Mobsters suddenly try to take the diva hostage. Xue's character dives into a melee with several gangsters. Olaf's character tries to pocket the mysterious device that one of the Mafiosi left on his table, while Hamed's character grabs for a hanging lamp to swing to the stage and help the singer.

Let's say that Keisha has the gangsters mow Xue's character down with Tommy guns; the mysterious device is booby-trapped; and the hanging lamp's cord is too weak to hold Hamed's character. Should all the characters survive this encounter, Xue's two-fisted brawler may start carrying a gun and spend more time behind cover. Olaf's scientist will likely be hesitant to investigate new devices they encounter, and Hamed's martial artist will probably go for straightforward attacks over dazzling maneuvers.

Not only do such changes diverge from the original PC concepts, the entire game is contrary to what the GM said she wanted the campaign to emphasize. In the same vein, if you gloss over romance plots and scientific exploration and spend three-quarters of every game session on combat and heroic derring-do, most players will change their characters to do *something* in combat. This isn't deliberate deception; some GMs' plans just don't match their own storytelling technique.

If you *want* your NPCs to react "sensibly" (shooting the brawler) and you want suitably "real world" physics (the lamp's cord breaks), make certain your players know this before play begins. If the PCs seem too cautious, ask yourself why. Did the last one to try a classic, foolish, cinematic stunt have his legs kicked out from under him? Do villains shoot hostages when the PCs try to bluff them into releasing them? If it seems you're being too restrictive, try letting the zany stuff work! That's part of the fun of the pulp-adventure genre. It's life-threateningly ridiculous for Doc Savage to descend by hand on a steel line strung down the side of a skyscraper, but it's *so* much cooler than taking the elevator. Likewise, your players are more likely to reminisce about the time their PCs fought off the Sky Chimpanzees of Borneo as they parachuted from the exploding airplane than they would about the time the plane blew up their PCs while they were still making skill checks to put on parachutes.

If you claim you're going to run one thing and find yourself running another, you need to change direction or come clean about the way it's headed. You may wish to give the players a chance to change their PCs, or discuss the game in general and see if they're having fun.

You can use this to steer player behavior in a constructive fashion, also — say if a quiet player sits doing little because a more aggressive player monopolizes the game. You can fast-track the aggressive player's request with a polite but quick "Okay, sure, you're working on that," then give details geared to the quiet player's PC to encourage him into action. Still, be careful to avoid rudeness. It is bad storytelling to dismiss everything an aggressive player does with a shrug that makes it clear that his PC won't have an impact on events. It's important to be fair.

Villains

The pulp villain — from the demented tribal shaman to the criminal mastermind — is a crucial part of any **Adventure!** series. Often, without a villain, there would be no story at all. He (or she — women can be just as wicked as men) is the hub around which all things rotten in a given game must revolve. This section contains tips on creating and using villains and on keeping them alive to cackle maniacally another day.

(Appendix One: Heroes and Villains lists some of the key NPC villains who influence the Inspiration Age.)

Creating a Villain

There are three main questions to ask when designing a villain. What does he want? What does he have to help him get it? How will he go about getting it?

Motivation

Many classic pulp villains have suitably wicked motivations that also work well in **Adventure!**: They want to rule the world, destroy



the world, become fantastically rich and/or avenge themselves on our hero and his works. It's one of the tropes of the genre that some people are just unrepentantly bad. This doesn't have to mean that's *all* they are. Just because a character has a clear motivation doesn't make him a two-dimensional caricature.

The 1920s and '30s also had plenty of mundane villains to choose from: mobsters, nihilists, fascists, anarchists and radicals. Many crusaders for the public good would have added blacks, Jews, Catholics, communists, atheists and foreigners of all stripes to that list. To slap such a label on an NPC and assume that that alone makes him a villain is almost never sufficient — few, if any, members of such groups were villainous in the wicked pulp-villain sense.

The villain's *means* — his plans (see below) — must bring him into conflict with right-minded adventurers, but his *motivations* don't have to. Many villains crusade for what they see as a greater good — elevating all humanity, reclaiming a lost homeland or “redistributing” the money of the wealthy. Villains with such motivations give extra roleplaying heft to the game, since their actions come from a reasonable root cause. Such people often feel that the end justifies the means and are guilty primarily of lacking a sense of proportion.

Resources

Villains' resources run the gamut; some live very Spartan existences with only enough resources to rest between crimes. Others control vast multinational companies or even small nations. You will

want to note the villain's Wealth bonus and any relevant background feats, but you don't need to worry about how he spends every dollar.

A villain's resources determine what his plans must be — does he need to knock over the First Federal Bank to hire goons for phase two of his scheme? Can he simply authorize some of his lieutenants to commit a crime on his behalf?

Plans

A villain may plan with mathematical precision, or he may have only a general concept (“My plan is to become fantastically wealthy!”). Specifics depend on the other factors described above, as well as on the villain's personality and, if appropriate, Inspired abilities. A super-intelligent mesmerist does things differently than a former Mafia thug, even if both have the same general plan (eliminate the Gambiosi crime family) and motivation (so that I can take over their territory and get rich).

You may consider the villain's plans in terms of conflict with the PCs: What would this guy be up to that would get the team's attention? Certain GMs start at this point and work backward into the villain's resources and motivations. You can do this if you want; whatever works best for the game.

The Villain's Tools

Any villain worth his salt has numerous tools he uses to accomplish his fiendish goals. Here are just a few suggestions.

• **Minions:** Minions come by many names — thugs, guns, mooks, button men, goons, rabble, assassins, lackeys and so on. They serve as cannon fodder; they help show off how tough the heroes are, and they slow the team down long enough so that the villain can make his getaway.

Minions come from all walks of life. The most common ones are mobsters, cultists, mercenaries or (in the wrong cities) the police. Minions are interchangeable; most of the time their names involve the phrase “The One With ___” (“The One With The Big Sword,” “The One With The Strange Accent,” etc.). There is seldom a need to individualize them beyond this. They are considered to have the minion template (see Appendix Two: Odds and Ends), or are simply of a low Challenge Rating.

• **Lieutenants:** A well-characterized lieutenant can become as dangerous as the villain for whom she works — and if the PCs do away with the villain but don’t clean up after his henchmen, a lieutenant might well *become* the next big villain. Unlike an ordinary minion, she should have a name and a full write-up.

The PCs should typically encounter a lieutenant only after they’ve dealt with some minions at least once. A lieutenant may not be inspired, but she should stand out from minions. She is at least the equal of any one PC — indeed, she should have a good chance of defeating a single PC in a one-on-one conflict. The lieutenant shouldn’t be so tough that the whole team couldn’t take her down.

A villain with a sufficient Wealth and/or background feats might have multiple lieutenants. If so, don’t make them all the same — unless they’re all his *scientifically bred super-warriors*! One lieutenant might be a financial wizard, another could be the harsh mistress who oversees the thugs, a third a cunning foreign spy, and so on.

• **Gadgetry:** It’s cliché for a villain to have a Z-wave device he’ll use to take over the world. That shouldn’t stop you from using the gimmick — the polite term for cliché is “classic shtick” — but try not to overdo it. Also, make sure that any doomsday device’s shut-down process takes some time and skill, and is, by itself, a source of suspense. That way, if some PCs must shut down the device while other PCs are involved in a climactic action sequence, those working on the device aren’t left out of the excitement.

You may also give a villain and his henchmen the same style of unusual equipment. This doesn’t have to be super-science gadgetry: perhaps the villain has some control over electricity and magnetism and

outfits his minions with silent, deadly gauss pistols instead of the usual Tommy guns and brass knuckles. This is great the further you get into a campaign, since you can have such things pop up in unexpected places. There’s nothing quite like the look on the players’ faces when they realize that the gunmen they face have the same gauss pistols employed by Baron Ferrous — whom they locked up over a year ago!

Restrict minions’ gadgetry to one signature device; outfit them with more and things can get out of control fast. A resourceful villain might equip his thugs with better and better gear as the team keeps defeating them, but this takes time and lots of wealth. It should not happen too often.

• **The Secret (or Not-So-Secret) Base:** The villain’s Wealth bonus and/or Sanctum determine his base of operations. The base could be obvious: The corrupt industrialist plots his wicked schemes from the top of his skyscraper; the degenerate Slavic noble works out of the backlit castle on the promontory. Alternately, the base could be hidden in the remote wilderness, underground or some other place. For story purposes, the main consideration is the base’s accessibility.

An inaccessible base (very remote or very defensible or both) presents a good challenge when the time comes to break in, as the PCs must first find it, then get through (or past) its defenses. Still, heroes should not have to fight their way in every time. It can be more dramatic for the PCs to deal with treacherous environmental hazards (a rope bridge over the chasm, a slippery walk alongside a volcano, etc.) or to get in via stealth and subterfuge. The base’s location may present problems for the villain, after all. He cannot send dozens of troops to harass the heroes in Paris at a moment’s notice if his legions are stationed on an island in the South Pacific.

An accessible base gives the mastermind more freedom of action, at the cost of defensibility and secrecy. The villain who works from a skyscraper penthouse must be more circumspect in his activities than one located in the jungles of Guatemala. That same villain has a harder time stationing antiaircraft guns and other defenses on his public building, too. On the other hand, he can count on the support of the authorities should a bunch of vigilantes break onto his property with wild accusations of villainy.

As a final note, do not forget one of the most important features of villains’ bases: They blow up really well. Nothing concludes a rousing adventure quite like a frenzied escape from a pyrotechnic nightmare.

APPENDIX

HEROES AND VILLAINS

ONE

You take center stage in your **Adventure!** game, but there are other forces at work in the world, individuals and organizations with goals both noble and nefarious. You'll cross paths with these folks sooner or later, though not necessarily in a climactic confrontation. Conflict can occur among those who are ostensibly on the same side — just because you and the Black Blade agree that Doctor Zorbo must be stopped doesn't mean you agree on how to stop him. Similarly, you may find yourself sympathizing with a villain's agenda or philosophy — is it really so bad that Zorbo seeks to protect the Earth from ecological devastation? That's where **Adventure!**'s greatest drama and excitement come from: the conflict of personality and ideology among characters.

The Æon Society for Gentlemen

Future generations will regard the Æon Society as a venerable institution. Centuries of philanthropy begin here with a few intrepid individuals who seek nothing less than the complete realization of humanity's potential.

The core members are accomplished adventurers, a cut above other Inspired. Still, they're not gods. We have noted a few specific traits for each NPC, but there are no explicit write-ups. Actual character levels and capabilities are open to individual interpretation, so that the GM can have these key characters interact with the PCs at whatever level she feels is appropriate. If the GM wants to toss Mercer some capabilities not mentioned here or change some of them that are, feel free. Surprises like that keep players on their toes and make for a more interesting game.

Maxwell Anderson Mercer

The only child of husband and wife anthropologists, Max Mercer accompanied his parents on various expeditions as soon as he learned to walk. Young Max entertained himself by reading during the long ocean voyages and train rides. His favorite books came in two different varieties — biographies of influential scientists such as Sir Richard Francis Burton and dime novels of heroes such as Safari Jack Tallon.

After a childhood filled with stories of great men and countless trips to exotic locales, Mercer set out to make his own life just as exceptional. He attended Harvard (where he met Michael Donighal) and earned two Ph.D.s in as many years. He returned to Chicago after graduation to manage his aging parents' fortune, using the profits from investments to finance municipal projects, including several

museums and a monument to William Rainey Harper. The Mercer fortune also funded research, expeditions and charities. Building on contacts he developed at school, Mercer's social circle soon included innovators in business, politics and the sciences across the Midwest and, later, the world.

Mercer had a broad education, formal and otherwise. Though he focused on the humanities, he long held a fondness for science. Hammersmith's invitation in 1922 was like a letter from his first love. He traveled to London with his pal Michael Donighal to witness what promised to be an important moment in the advancement of science.

Maxwell Anderson Mercer was front and center when Hammersmith's machine exploded.

He regained consciousness in the backyard of his parent's Chicago brownstone. Inside, he found some friends — though clearly older — and a few who clearly knew him although they had never met. Most surprising of all was a man who looked like a younger version of his father. Mercer realized he was looking upon *himself*, years older!

Mercer's older self revealed that the year was 1942, and introduced him to the Æon Society, an organization Mercer would found in 1923, a year into his own future. He then confirmed the incredible: Max Mercer had the unique ability to shift through time! After learning other astounding revelations, Mercer explored history. Always pushing the boundaries of the possible, he visited several eras to come, witnessing both the achievements and the horrors that awaited mankind. Though control over his talent was far from perfect, Mercer returned to his own time at last, reappearing six months after he had vanished. Keeping secret his singular power, Mercer laid the



foundations for the organization vital to helping humanity through the coming centuries — the Æon Society for Gentlemen.

Traits: Mercer is unique in that he does not conform to any known Inspired template. Next to Michael Donighal, he received the strongest exposure to telluric energy, gaining the ability to become unstuck in time. In the Inspiration Age, Mercer is far from mastering this amazing talent. Some of his associates know that Mercer can move as swiftly as Mercury or “freeze” his opponents, though only Donighal hypothesizes that Mercer may be manipulating the time stream.

Mercer has several high-end background feats: In Charge, Kingpin, Sanctum Sanctorum and Wealth Beyond Avarice. He is also a master of numerous physical and intellectual disciplines, from Eastern martial arts to esoteric anthropological studies to advanced investigation techniques. It’s worth noting that Mercer mastered these fields prior to his Inspiration — in fact, it seems that the ability to slip through time is his only paranormal talent (though a powerful and versatile one it is).

Chronal Manipulation

“The future is what you make it.”

Psi (Temporal) [Unique]

Level: 5

Manifestation Time: 1 standard action

Range: Special

Target/Area: Special

Duration: Concentration

Saving Throw: No (see text)

Power Resistance: No

Power Points: Special

Description: Maxwell Anderson Mercer can manipulate the streams of time. He can travel most easily to moments of large telluric energy discharge. Among the most notable are Hammersmith’s accident in 1922; the Æon Society’s battle against Doctor Primoris in 1943; an attempt to re-create Hammersmith’s experiment in 1998; the end of a war between humans and aberrants in 2061; and a climactic event that changes humanity’s course forever in 2122. The effort is difficult and draining, so he doesn’t try it very often. His appearance in the later periods of the Trinity Universe via *chronal manipulation* heralds dramatic goings-on.

Mercer can also manifest more immediate effects, such as increasing his speed relative to the normal progression of time or “pausing” time for a few seconds. He acquires the full potential of this power only after decades of practice — eventually, almost any conceivable manipulation of time is his to command!

Effect: Since it’s meant to be unique to Mercer, and given the impact it can have on the game, we’ve refrained from listing specific rules for *chronal manipulation*. We recommend that the GM restrict its use only to Mercer, and base its success or failure, possibilities or limitations, solely on the needs of the story.



Crackshot

Annabelle Lee Newfield’s beauty is matched only by the training she enjoyed from her contortionist father and acrobat mother. A youth full of whip tricks, lion tamings and dinners eaten with silverware held by toes led to mastery of weapons of any sort. Annabelle regards the Society’s endeavors as just another circus act, a tightrope with no net below.

She was invited to join at the tender age of 14 — not for “purposes relating to pederasty,” as Doctor Primoris suggested, but to give lie to Safari Jack’s claim that “the fairer sex is of far more use after, never during, the safari.” Although Safari Jack still treats her with a polite condescension, Annabelle has more than proven her worth. She brings youth, energy and a female perspective to Mercer’s gentlemen’s club, up until her increasingly reckless ways lead her to a bad end shortly before World War II.

Traits: As her nickname implies, “Crackshot” is a daredevil with the Greased Lightning, Trick Shot and Universally Deadly feats. A master of combat, her other abilities and (and social skills) are somewhat undeveloped.

Danger Ace

Jake Stefokowski volunteered for the Lafayette Escadrille and emerged as America’s first hotshot pilot in the Great War. His commander suppressed Jake’s kill tally once he learned how young the gangly lad really was. When Mercer asked a chum in the Army Air



Corps for someone suitable for a “delicate, quite possibly dangerous flight through the mysterious Sargasso Sea,” the pilot had an instant recommendation. Mercer stole Jake away from his lackadaisical barnstorming and has since sent him on numerous missions, most of them to places far worse than the Sargasso.

Jake’s enthusiasm for adventure more than compensates for his lack of visionary zeal compared to his fellow Æon members. He is perhaps the only one with what Professor Dixon calls a “double genius” — talent as an aviator and talent for surviving certain death. Jake’s fellows have thought the “Danger Ace” dead at least a dozen times, only to see his tattered plane coming over the horizon yet again. In fact, Jake Stefokowski proves to be one of the Æon Society’s most durable members. Decades later, the world knows him as Jake Danger, Aberrant Hunter.

Traits: Danger Ace is a daredevil with any or all of the Death Defiance, Eagle Eyes, Navigation Hazard and Barnstormer feats. He is a pilot and navigator almost without equal.

Professor Benjamin Franklin Dixon

Professor Dixon (he answers only to his surname when he answers at all) is the most spontaneous and original inventor of his day — and he’s never had an impulse he did not surrender to. His plans for a solar-powered gyroplane are brown and crinkled, the victims of sloshed hooch. The ash from Cuban cigars smears his lab notes. When his prototype telluric-ionic battery began to leak, he papered the floor with girly magazines. His office has stains on the walls about which no one inquires.



Dixon chose Dr. Hammersmith’s laboratory over the trenches of the Great War after a week of nagging from Hephaestia Geary-Wexler, joining his future wife to assist the father of the Inspiration Age. Unable to suppress an urge to stick it to the Kaiser, Dixon used Hammersmith’s facilities to invent gadgets with military applications, including a treaded general purpose vehicle that could overcome barbed wire and a few serviceable treatments for victims of mustard gas.

In the aftermath of the Hammersmith disaster, Mercer sought Dixon for insight into his employer’s experiments. Mercer was so

impressed with the young scientist that he invited him to join the Æon Society. Being in such august company has tempered the wildness of his intoxicated youth, but Dixon’s timely flashes of insight are often followed with a cry of “To the vomitorium!”

Traits: Dixon is a superhuman with a handful of knacks, including *mad scientist*. He is possibly the world’s most talented scientist and engineer, with a high Inspiration score, many inventions and multiple gadgets. Dixon’s reputation has frustrated his ex-wife to no end — and since he hasn’t coped well with their disastrous relationship either, they have one another as Archenemies. Judging by his daily intake of nicotine and alcohol, Dixon also has a prodigious resistance to toxins.

Doctor Primoris

Like the inflated pseudonym “Doctor Primoris” — adopted in partial mockery of his fellows — implies, Michael Daemon Donighal has surpassed human perfection in both mind and body. In the aftermath of the Hammersmith Incident, his physical form has become a combination of ultimate strength, grace and beauty. The same could be said of his mind. Even among the Æon Society, few individuals have anything to say that Donighal considers worth hearing.

Donighal idolizes, some say adores, Mercer. He wants to believe that Mercer — perhaps the ultimate Renaissance man and embodiment of hope in the new century — can capitalize on this Inspired age, making Hammersmith’s accident into humanity’s salvation. But the wounds of Donighal’s past, his unrequited love for his friend and his singular genius force him to keep the Æon Society’s goals at arm’s length. They are an exercise rather than a crusade. So he acts as a devil’s advocate, a voice of dissent. He skewers the group’s optimistic — Donighal says naïve — plans in a well-meaning, if abrasive, attempt to show its members the error of their ways.

Donighal finds his passion eventually. A dark god lurks within him, frustrated now, but nearing the day that it will explode like Hammersmith’s machine. He grows ever more alienated from his humanity in time, to the point that the Æon Society must rise against him in the dark days of World War II.

Traits: Like Mercer, Donighal was exposed to a massive concentration of Z-waves in Hammersmith’s fateful blast. Also like Mercer, he emerged as something not quite quantifiable. He is a superhu-



man, but one as far beyond the typical stalwart's power as a stalwart is beyond the common man. He has most of the 1st- and 2nd-level quantum knacks *and* quantum versions of many psychic knacks that make him sensitive to the workings of the physical universe, including *marked man* and *telluric resonance*.

Before the Hammersmith disaster, young Michael Donighal was a well-educated prodigy. Now, he is the unparalleled master of a variety of fields. Although Mercer has yet to realize the extent of Donighal's transformation, he already suspects that his younger friend is holding himself back.

Whitley Styles

Styles & Stafford Imports squeezed every penny it could from British-ruled India. When Roger Styles took his wife and their son Whitley along to locate "exotic oriental commodities," he didn't know that payback was in the offing. The Thuggee cult took Roger's offer to buy their statue of Kali in the worst possible way, murdering his wife and imprisoning him. Ten years later, Roger Styles was led to the altar room where his son rested in the shadow of Kali. Instead of embracing his father, young Whitley denounced Roger as an imperialist and challenged him to ritual combat. Raised by the vile Thuggee, young Whitley slew his own father. He had become the arm of Kali that strangles, the foot of Kali that crushes all.



Max Mercer knew Whitley's parents from previous trips to the Orient and traveled to India after the Great War to search for his missing acquaintances. He located the Thuggee cult too late to save Whitley's parents, but at least freed the younger Styles. The youth grew to adulthood as Mercer's ward, unlearning the cult's murderous predilections. He returned to London to claim his birthright, only to discover that Uriah Stafford, Roger Styles's partner, had assumed control of the import company years before. Resisting his murderous training, Whitley struggled in the courts against Stafford, refusing any aid from Mercer and taking menial jobs to pay his legal bills.

The legal battle remained contested when Mercer approached him to join the Æon Society for Gentlemen. Still, Styles became many things in that time, including a dockworker, a mason, a day laborer

and a miner. Mixing with the working class suited his temperament, giving rise to a self-deprecating attitude and an earthy sense of humor. Yet he has never forgotten the deadly arts in which the Thuggee trained him.

Traits: Whitley Styles is a psychic with a high Inspiration score and the knacks *cloud the mind* and *telluric resonance*. He also received a top-notch education thanks to Mercer, and is one of the deadliest martial artists alive. Styles is a Boss within Æon and has extensive Contacts, comfortable as he is rubbing shoulders with the lower classes. Paruq, the Thuggee leader who trained him, and Uriah Stafford comprise two separate Nemeses.

Safari Jack Tallon

Safari Jack Tallon's exploits were the stuff of popular men's fiction even back in the Victorian Era. He explored those places lesser men feared. Safari Jack made maps of the most inhospitable regions when Africa was still "the Dark Continent." He learned from shamans in the Amazon the antidotes for many exotic poisons. The Aborigines of Australia call him the Dream-Lizard. He vacations in the steppes of Tibet.

One of Mercer's first invitations to join Æon went to his childhood idol. Though Jack isn't the sojourner he used to be, a variety of longevity treatments he discovered keep him vigorous despite his advanced (indeterminate) age. Though he still embarks on the occasional safari, Jack Tallon more often plays the elder statesman — though one with a penchant for arm-wrestling and headlocks. His experience tempers the impetuosity of associates such as Jake Stefokowski and Annabelle Lee Newfield. Tallon articulates his own version of the Society's vision for better world, using his folk heroism to encourage "white civilization" to seek "the simple wisdom of the colored world" and, in exchange, lend it the technological expertise to raise its "appalling standard of living."

Traits: Safari Jack is a daredevil with Fists of Stone, Indomitable Will, Resilient and Steely Gaze. He is also a sort of violent Renaissance man, particularly skilled in athletics, endurance, etiquette, linguistics, healing and navigation. His background feats are equally diverse, including extensive Contacts, Influence and Reputation. His daily regimen of exotic remedies is considered a Gadget that gives him the equivalent of *optimized metabolism*.



Persons of Distinction and Infamy

Some of these personalities are outright villains, with plans to enrich themselves at the expense of others. Some are misguided visionaries, seeking to bring their own disagreeable Utopias to reality. A few couldn't be described as villain or visionary, but prove constant foils to the Inspired nonetheless. As with the Æon Society members, these characters are left without detailed write-ups, so the GM may add to or change the ones presented as needed.

The Czar

The wild eyes of a pervert leer from the pubic mess of his hair. His beard reaches to his knees. He is the Russia the world has lost — enraged, fierce, ready to protect itself no matter what drudgery or bloodshed the task demands. His wild appearance and feral demeanor provide a jarring contrast to the man's pedigree. When Lenin and his thugs brought down Czar Nicholas in the 1917 rebellion, Ivan Boris Vladimir Staynskaya — the aristocrat who now calls himself “the Czar” — fled to the Balkans, smuggling as many of the Crown's expensive snoods as he could.



The greatest treasure was no less than Nicholas's last surviving daughter, Anastasia, whom he secreted in the outermost shell of a babushka doll. Staynskaya hopes to amass sufficient wealth influence through Russia to be a proper suitor for the young princess — and an irrefutable claim to the title of czar!

Also called “the Black Wolf” and “the Mongol,” Staynskaya believes that the Soviet experiment will crumble. His quiet control of the Ponatowski Foundation gives him the financial wherewithal to hasten this along — likewise hastening his own ascension to the throne of Russia and, someday, the world. This also involves him with criminal enterprises, bringing him into contact with the Ubiquitous Dragon and Lady de Winter — not always in a productive manner. The Czar is useful enough at present that each crime lord overlooks his frustrating habit of taking actions that disrupt their plans.

The Czar and Princess Anastasia

Usually seen roaring directives at his underlings like a rampaging bear, the Czar is notably gentle in the presence of Anastasia. While with her, the proud lineage of Mother Russia shines within him.

Scarred by the trauma of the revolution, the young princess sees Staynskaya as her only source of safety. The excitement of the world outside threatens to lure her from the Czar's control, though. She grows more self-confident as she grows older, and tales of the Inspired spark thoughts of adventure within her as well. Staynskaya bears Anastasia's increasing willfulness in strained silence. After he becomes the true czar, he can put her in her proper place.

The Czar uses the funds from heists, kidnappings, blackmail and more to bribe Soviet officials from customs inspectors to party big-wigs (and to keep himself and the young Princess Anastasia living in high style). He uses this leverage to keep the communist experiment inefficient and unbalanced, hoping to damage the bureaucracy so that another rebellion returns the motherland to the monarchy. The Czar also commits followers on Ponatowski expeditions to sow the seeds of unrest elsewhere in the world.

Traits: Though not Inspired himself, Staynskaya possesses prodigious levels of Contacts, Followers, Resources and Sanctum, as well as secret Backing in the Ponatowski Foundation and other legitimate and criminal concerns. He has at least three Inspired bodyguards as Allies, two of whom “protect” the fair Anastasia at all times.

The Intrepid Investigator

Sarah Gettel has chronicled the most bizarre and extraordinary events of her bizarre and extraordinary time, often becoming part of the story herself! She's visited the sunken city of Atlantis. She's been cliff diving with the King of Norway. She was one of the Turk's unwitting assassins, and she has had tea with the Ubiquitous Dragon more than once. She often quotes the President as “a high-ranking administration official.”

When Doctor Zorbo invaded New York, Gettel parachuted in and talked the iconoclast into a brief interview, shouting over cannon fire all the while. She has reliable sources as far afield as Bangladesh, and has dinner once a month with a self-described “Martian.” At least half of the Æon Society is hopelessly in love with her, Whitley Styles chief among them.

The story is paramount for Sarah Gettel, and she'll do almost anything to get it — often with a zeal that places her companions in danger. Indeed, it is sometimes unclear which side she's on. The answer is neither: It's the story that she champions. Max Mercer often disagrees with her methods, but he can't argue with her results. If one can overlook her frenetic obsession, she is a valuable contact for any individual who's willing to become another of her informants. Even if she doesn't know the “real story” herself, she knows someone who does.

Traits: The very definition of a daredevil, Sarah Gettel has a couple of high-end Background feats — Kingpin and Renowned — but no daring feats.

The Jaguar Queen

According to centuries-old legends in southern Mexico, the Jaguar Queen — “Ocelotl,” as the natives call her — is the daughter of an Aztec queen who defied her king and bore the child of her servant — a jaguar knight, a member of a special order who protected Aztec royalty. Both parents were executed, but their daughter escaped down a passage between this world and the afterlife formed by her parents’ passing spirits. There, she became the immortal bride of the Jaguar, which in Aztec legend is an emissary between the lands of the living and the dead.

The telluric wave seems to have transformed legend into a strange kind of reality. Natives now tell of a mystic lineage of “jaguar women” who emerge from the trackless rain forest only to mate. Explorers of a romantic bent speculate that these women may follow the jaguar’s lifecycle, living in isolation, coming out to mate and then disappearing to rear offspring and die.

Further rumors talk of her male children, “jaguar men” responsible for unexplained deaths and used as bogeymen to terrify children. Yet there are also sightings in recent months of humanoid creatures with the heads and upper bodies of jaguars and the lower bodies of men! Most dismiss such reports — the deaths are murders either by a cult that worships the so-called Jaguar Queen, or by persons exploiting the “myth” for their own purposes. It is no rumor that those who try to explore the fringes of the jungle swamps in which Ocelotl is rumored to dwell have met with misfortune and even death.

Traits: Ocelotl is a superhuman with a *single bound*, *heightened senses*, *(wo)man for all seasons*, *sex symbol*, *optimized metabolism* and *threat awareness*. She possesses high abilities across the board and is quite skilled in perception and combat. She also has Menagerie to represent myriad animal companions (though not necessarily jaguars) loyal to her and Sanctum for her vast jungle home.

The King of the World

If a dollar is stolen from a wallet in Chicago, the King of the World gets a penny. If a carton of cigarettes falls off a truck in Hamburg, the King gets a pack. Mafia bosses from Italy and New York send the King Christmas cards with their tribute. This shadow monarch has eluded capture for years. Indeed, little proves that he even exists.

To catch “him,” the governments of the Western Hemisphere might want to revise their profile: The King is really a Queen.

Lady Argentine de Winter is one of wealthiest women of Old Europe, the daughter of exiled French aristocracy. She is also the guiding force behind the Contedorri. Accompanying her father at age five to London’s Club Caprice, she looted the coatroom, rifling through the pockets of the most powerful men and women from the continent. Though specifics are the subject of back-alley mythology and speakeasy hearsay, this precocious young thief rocketed through the ranks, catching the fancy of an old Mafia don here and funding the hijacking of a train there, using her influence to authorize ventures that banks would never approve.

Old Europe has always had two rulers — the crown and the hood. The first she earned by birth, the second through her cosmopolitan connections to the world’s every grift. The cartel kingpins even whisper to one another that the Dragon and she have divided the world among themselves.

Traits: Lady de Winter is a psychic with a truly enchanting demeanor. Aside from *cloud the mind* and *hypnotic presence*, she has pretty much every subterfuge-related knack you’d care to name (and a few more beyond). Plus, she has a special psychic knack equivalent to *sex symbol*. In addition to her unmatched prowess at stealing and selling treasures and information, the “King” enjoys the background feats Mystery Man, In Charge, Kingpin and Wealth Beyond Avarice.

The Two Worlds of Crime

Both Branch 9 and the IDA have task forces assigned to discovering how two master criminals, the King of the World and the Ubiquitous Dragon, have come to share the globe. The arrangement allows each side to kill trespassers with impunity, thus giving each crime lord’s associates a strong incentive to stick to their own turf. Of course, each crosses the agreed-upon boundaries when the mood suits them, and minions squabble at the territorial fringes. Clearly, there is no honor among thieves.

Conflict at the borders — particularly the West Coast of the United States — heats up as time marches on. Each criminal kingpin reaches the pinnacle of power by the mid-1930s, and there’s only one place to turn for new territory — the other half of the globe. Their escalating struggle for ultimate control is sure to draw in heroes and villains alike.

The Lone Gunman

Scalper Dutch shoots fast for an old man. He fires his six-guns faster than a Thompson — though he seldom needs so many rounds to take down his targets. Due to his age and spryness, most people figure he must be Inspired. Wherever his skill comes from, one thing’s sure: He’s the meanest bastard you’ll ever run across.

Whether running farmers off their land, policing coolie workers or hijacking Wells Fargo, Dutch broke every law they ever passed. The Wild West has been tamed since then, but not Scalper Dutch. Even in the 1920s, the world has need for a hired gun. He’s cheap



and gets the job done, and he's just too ornery to die. To this day, he's a popular freelance enforcer all over the Americas. He'd have plenty of work across the globe if he didn't hate boats and planes. If he can't ride there or take a train, he's not interested.

When Doctor Zorbo attacked New York, Dutch climbed the Statue of Liberty and shot down three dirigibles — then attacked the Æon Society members who dared approach him afterward. Why? He took off before anyone could ask him. Dutch has something to prove, though no one knows what or to whom.

Traits: Scalper Dutch may well have been Inspired even before Hammersmith's event. He is a daredevil with a Destruction score of 5 and unparalleled ratings in athletic skills (Jump, Tumble, etc.), unarmed combat feats, and a very high Constitution and base attack bonus. He also has Greased Lightning, Perfect Poise, Resilient, Steely Gaze, Trick Shot and Untouchable — which functions even if he's armed! He is possibly the world's best marksman. He's also a son of bitch.

The Machinatrix

Professor Dixon has competition for the title of World's Greatest Inventor — his ex-wife, Doctor Hephaestia Geary-Wexler. She works with the realities of what she calls "metachinery." Her most important invention to date is the "Sanguine Prometheus," a mechanical configuration that channels "Ubiquitous Hammersmith Radiation" to give machinery something like sentient intelligence. This nascent technology requires peculiar materials and must be maintained constantly; her Promethean machines aren't smart enough to maintain themselves and display only *apparent* intelligence rather than actual thought.



Hephaestia foresees a world run by Sanguine metachinery: cities that power themselves, trolleys that move and stop according to the passengers' requests, gins that collect and de-seed cotton on their own, "collectors" that recognize when a crime is being committed and apprehend (and punish) the offender. In this clockwork world, even the lowliest person now suffering in poverty could find gainful employment as a mechanic servicing these machines, with the elite free to ponder the Sanguine Prometheus and further improve this efficient tomorrow.

Hephaestia aids her ex-husband's club infrequently with the loan of information or some technology that Dixon lacks the time or knowledge to create. More often, she meets them coming the other way in

her guise as the Machinatrix, selling her genius to the highest bidder with little concern over how her inventions are used. She also gets funding from the scientifically curious elite in her adopted home of San Francisco. Only the criminal elements with whom she deals and the Æon Society itself know the truth of her dual identity. Frustratingly (for Dixon in particular), the times the Society's caught her in an illegal venture, she has had an ace in the hole — typically information or a hostage — guaranteeing her freedom. What began as a love-hate relationship with her ex-husband has grown to encompass all the Æon Society's core members.

Traits: Dr. Geary-Wexler is a superhuman with at least *indisputable analysis* and *mad scientist*. She has numerous inventions and some truly significant Gadgets. Among her most impressive are miniscule metachinery she has implanted in her body, giving her the equivalent of *optimized metabolism* and *reptilian regeneration*.

Manifest Destiny

"The war to end all wars? Hardly. Communists control Russia and will soon control China. The Fascist powers of Old Europe arise once more. Weimar Germany is ready to collapse. With the rest of the world embracing the various forms of totalitarianism, the American lifestyle will soon be a thing of the past, a brief dream before the sleeper awakens to an oppressive world regime."

When Senator Ernest Warren Caldwell spoke out against America's isolationism and of the need for an American empire to be built before that "oppressive world regime" arose, his fellow Senators laughed him off the floor. Caldwell saw that he needed to display the courage that his fellows lacked, and establish the American empire himself. On July 4th, 1923, E. W. Caldwell and his Manifest Destiny Infantry — composed of Great War veterans and led by an officer's corps of sympathetic writers and academics — landed on the tiny Pacific islands of Bikini Atoll. They slaughtered the leaders of the indigenous population and planted an American flag. Using Bikini as a base, the Manifest Destiny Infantry made other military conquests of nearby undefended regions, working its way south, apparently to Antarctica. The group now controls areas of Timor and several dozen unpopulated islands.

Though the President and Congress denounce Caldwell as a terrorist, a few of those in power, including two Army generals, supply Manifest Destiny covertly. Wealthy and influential members of the upper crust are also sympathetic to Caldwell's cause.

Traits: E. W. Caldwell is a daredevil with the In Charge and Le-gions background feats. He also has high Resources and numerous Sanctums in the South Pacific (and one tucked away in Montana), with an eye toward establishing a Sanctum Sanctorum in Antarctica, Australia or anywhere else he can get away with it. Caldwell's charisma, the fears of the American people and the world's unwillingness to ignite another Great War more than make up for his apparent lack of daring feats.

Master of the Inner Earth

Hammond Banes was a librarian and would-be science-fiction writer who enjoyed minor celebrity in 1921 for his character "Baron Halcyon, Master of the Under-World." The fame proved fleeting, so he sought to refine his earlier short fiction into an epic work that would validate him as a creator and provide for his young wife and



aging father. His father's death triggered irrational behavior, and Banes soon lost his job and his wife. *The Chronicles of the Under-World*, a massive "history" that he toiled away at night and day, took over everything. Descending into madness, Banes became convinced that the Inner Earth *was real*.

Hammersmith's telluric wave found Banes in the depths of insanity and left him forever transformed. Hammond Banes no more, he awakened in the lower depths of the Chiquibul caves as Baron Halcyon! It remains a mystery whether Banes dreamed the "under-world" and its civilizations into existence, had some precognition of it all or is merely the victim of madness and circumstance.

He found a race of subterranean albinos living in the lower reaches of the seemingly endless cave system. He called them the "Goran" after a similar race in his writings and declared himself their "master and protector." The so-called Goran weren't sure what to make of this stranger, but none could stand against his Inspired might. Halcyon led them to the upper caves, into the realm of Neanderthal-like raiders who Halcyon named the "Nawls."

The Goran and their tamed dire wolves were a threat, but it was Baron Halcyon's prowess that drove back the Neanderthals. With success came support and loyalty; soon, the Goran labeled the foreigner a hero. But the self-styled Baron proved a harsh despot when crossed, and some Goran fled to distant reaches of the Inner Earth.

Halcyon faces conflict from below — the Goran hero Gar — and above — explorers from the surface. Chief among them is Doctor Zorbo, whom the Baron knows only as a possible usurper interested in harvesting the light crystals that populate the cave.

Traits: Baron Halcyon is superhuman with *body of bronze, heightened senses, piledriver, Sun Tzu's blessing and threat awareness*. He also speaks the Gorans' simple language and "rock speech" — a kind of Morse code that echoes through the caves. His background feats include Influence over the Goran, Resources befitting a king, the Sanctum Sanctorum of the deep caves and Gar as his Archenemy.

The Mighty Gar

Gar is one of the E'tah, the race Baron Halcyon calls the "Goran." Starving Neanderthals set upon his family as they fled from the mad Baron Halcyon. Young Gar fell through a crack in the cave wall to

land, broken and bleeding, on a vast bed of ruby cave crystals. They provided light in the deep Inner Earth, and gave Gar something more: strength. Even dazed and ruined, he drew upon the throbbing energy. His wounds healed and he arose, stronger and more powerful than he — or any E'tah — had ever been. Tall and massive, with gleaming alabaster skin and eyes that reflected the crystals' rich red, he left the secret crystal pit to seek revenge against the Neanderthals who slew his family and Baron Halcyon, the man who forced them to flee.

His childhood companion, the dire wolf Tak, was waiting when he emerged. Gar sought others who hid from Halcyon and the Neanderthals. His strength and intelligence gave his people hope, and they learned to defend themselves against the encroaching "Nawls." In his quest, Gar learned that the Neanderthals struck against the E'tah to survive. The upper caves lacked the richness of lichens and fungi, of bizarre underworld animals and subterranean lakes and rivers that provided the E'tah with sustenance. The Neanderthals were starving, and Halcyon's continued aggression left them with fewer resources.

Then Gar discovered the opening to the world above. The lush jungle suggested a solution. The surface world is too bright for the E'tah except in darkest night, but the Neanderthals could make a new life there. The conflict would end if his race's enemies moved to the surface. Gar commands several E'tah clans, and some Nawl tribes have ventured into the surface jungles, but the world below remains divided. Relations with Nawl tribes are tentative and often dissolve into conflict, and many E'tah remain loyal to the Baron. In addition to these ongoing struggles, strange beings now come from above, beings interested in the secrets of the Inner Earth.

Traits: A locus of telluric energy, the crystal pit transformed Gar into a superhuman. This cavern remains his secret Sanctum. He has *aetheric vision, blindfighter, powerlifter, superhuman reflexes and reptilian regeneration*. The crystal he wears is a Gadget, a natural telluric battery that enhances his impressive abilities further. His Archenemy is Baron Halcyon. He has Followers in the scattered E'tah tribes and a Reputation among his race and the Nawls. His Menagerie consists of Tak, though he can call upon other dire wolves to aid him. Gar is also very intelligent and intuitive.

Mister Saturday

Long a butler at Sir Calvin Hammersmith's London mansion, the man once called Jackson Harley "controlled" the arbiters of Hammersmith's estate after the fateful accident to become the old scientist's sole heir. Harley had Hammersmith's mansion and all it contained — including the ruined telluric machine — moved brick by brick to a hill overlooking Black Storm Bay, a tiny village in Haiti that he rules through fear of his sinister magic.

Mister Saturday's "black magic" mystifies the greatest minds of the day. Professor Dixon insists the so-called voodoo has a scientific explanation. Yet, beyond the makeup of the man's unusual powers lie still more questions: Did he play any role in the explosion of Hammersmith's machine? Was Hammersmith just another one of his legion of puppets? Mister Saturday's agenda is as mysterious as his origins. He portrays himself as an island Robin Hood, stealing from wealthy America to aid the impoverished Caribbean. This doesn't stop him from working deals with everyone from the Czar to the



Ubiquitous Dragon. Saturday sells gangs of his zombies to mob bosses and others in need of unthinking armies. These creatures begin to rot after a few months, requiring constant replacement (and providing a steady stream of income for the voodoo master). Some *Æon* associates regard him as an unlawful, unconventional folk hero with the interests of the poorer regions of the Western Hemisphere at heart; others believe that those who tolerate him do so because they are under his spell.

Traits: Mister Saturday is one of the most powerful mesmerists alive. To look him in the eye is to fall under his spell. He can trap your soul in a bottle. Not even the dead can escape his voodoo. His “black magic” is actually an array of psychic knacks, including all 1st-level knacks and many 2nd- and 3rd-level ones — most notably *cloak of dread*, *evil eye*, *hypnotic presence* and *psychic control*. He also has the background feats *Legions* (his “zombies,” corpses animated with a super-scientific concoction and Inspiration) and *Sanctum Sanctorum* (Hammersmith’s mansion, complete with any number of that lost genius’s inventions).

The Turk

Once Istanbul knew him as a man of peace, who shared the blessings of Allah with the ignorant. Since the Hammersmith disaster, the world has come to know him as simply “the Turk” (lazy Westerners find Imam Khwarazmi ibn Abi Tirmidhi difficult to pronounce). He is the ringleader of a band of assassins that has murdered producers of girlie movies in Los Angeles and the owners of coca plantations in Tijuana. Though fanatics in his homeland would fulfill his every decree, the Turk’s assassinations in the West are often performed by someone close the victim — most of whom take their own lives after completing their assignments.

The Turk converts these assassins via a black, sticky hash called “jihad” that fills the smoker with a holy rage against the excesses of the West. The hash acts as a conduit for powers ibn Abi Tirmidhi unknowingly gained in the Hammersmith accident. The Turk can manipulate the thoughts of others, converting even the unwitting into suicidal assassins. Sarah Gettel, a rare survivor of the experience, describes the feeling as “an inescapable sense of duty to a god — a god that all at once becomes real, real *angry*, that is!”

Safari Jack Tallon met the Imam before the Hammersmith event, and noted firsthand the dramatic personality change ibn Abi Tirmidhi underwent. Tallon believes the Turk went insane from exposure to Z-waves. In truth, ibn Abi Tirmidhi acts out of a fear that has haunted him since he witnessed the explosion of Hammersmith’s device. He fears the chaos of the future, so he lashes out at the culture that creates it.



Traits: The Turk is a psychic with a number of mind-influencing knacks. Most significant is a refined *psychic control* that turns the subject into a zealous assassin (the jihad drug makes the subject more susceptible to this brainwashing). He also has a very high Inspiration score and high levels of the *Legions* and *Icon* background feats.

The Sun-Disk Made Flesh

The child of an Egyptian curator and a British archeologist, Emma Nazir preferred her summers in London to her winters in el-Amarna. She had no interest in Egyptology, but her ignorance mattered little to the Brothers Hatnofer, heretical worshipers of the modern Cult of the Sun-Disk and owners of the Circus of the Orient.

They traveled the world, kidnapping children who seemed likely vessels for their reincarnated long-dead queen, Nefertiti, or her pharaoh, Akhenaton. After hypnotizing the children and performing ritual preparations, they placed them on an altar deep within the long-lost golden pyramid of Aton. At high noon, special panels in the structure opened to redirect solar energy into a concentrated ray that seared through the pyramid’s center.

Hundreds of children met their fiery deaths under this beam. Then Muhammad Hatnofer abducted young Emma Nazir and placed her on the altar. She survived the searing beam, clear evidence that she was the long-sought reincarnation!

Emma returned to her parents, apparently none the worse for wear. They do not realize that she sneaks away from her boarding school to the hidden pyramid. During such times, she is no longer Emma Nazir, but believes herself the reincarnated Queen of Egypt, devoted to bringing the worship of Aton to Khem once more.

The depravations of the Brothers Hatnofer continue through all this. The Circus of the Orient may have its Nefertiti, but it has yet to find its Akhenaton. Only then may the ancient ritual be completed, with the divine couple using the hidden pyramid to become gods on Earth.

The Cult of the Sun-Disk

Near the end of the 18th dynasty, the Pharaoh Akhenaton and his wife Nefertiti broke with the Egyptian pantheon. They elevated Aton, the sun-disk, to the pinnacle of divinity. They built a pyramid to dwarf the majesty of all such structures — a pyramid of gold, devoted to Aton, a pyramid so great that it would bring the royal couple immortality in *this* world rather than the next.

As the story goes, the Egyptian gods were offended by this attempt to elevate the abstract Aton above them. The enraged deities buried the golden pyramid in the sands and cursed the land. After the deaths of Akhenaton and Nefertiti, subsequent rulers rewrote the royal couple's heretical theology and forbade the Cult of the Sun-Disk from gathering. In further effort to avoid angering the gods, all future pharaohs were buried in the Valley of the Kings rather than the pyramids.

Yet, rumors persist that the Cult lives on — and that it has rediscovered the lost Pyramid of Aton.

Traits: Emma Nazir survived the sun-disk's beam only because she is a superhuman. Thanks to the Brothers Hatnofer's hypnotic rituals, she has no idea that she's become the mad child-queen who terrorizes northern Egypt while the Brothers — when they aren't reinforcing her hypnotic conditioning — scour the world for their reincarnated king. As Emma, she is a normal, healthy girl who couldn't give a damn about dead Egyptians. While she is Nefertiti, she becomes a zealous tyrant with *body of bronze*, *superhuman reflexes* and *threat awareness*, and the quantum equivalents of *conjure fire* and *inspirational aura*. Emma's alter ego also has high levels of Followers, Backing (Cult of the Sun-Disk) and Resources. Mystery Man reflects Emma's split personality. The hidden pyramid is her Sanctum Sanctorum, a veritable battery for telluric energies. (The beam of light emitted upon the altar is so intense that it means instant death to anyone without *body of bronze*.)

Tyrant of the Skies

The world's population will double by the end of the 20th century. At that rate, Earth could become one gigantic city by the end of the millennium. Emerging innovations might accommodate this, but what will humans do for air? As Doctor Manfred von Zorbo well knows, people can't breathe without trees. He grew up in the Black Forest of Germany. Trees surrounded his family's estate for miles. The air was fresh. Much fresher than the air in London, where Doctor Zorbo traveled years later to witness Hammersmith's famous demonstration.

Zorbo was well known for combining the two German practicalities — sociology and engineering — into innovative solutions for a dying world. He designed various modes of mass transportation and tenements that could house the populations of small cities (even if they were a little claustrophobic). Exposure to Z-waves must have unhinged Zorbo's already frenetic brain because, in the months that followed, he published increasingly inaccessible screeds about the



solutions to the problems of overpopulation and over-industrialization, including one whose title became his battle cry. When Zorbo invaded New York in March of 1925 with an armada of zeppelins — apparently a response to the universal denunciation of his theories and a critique of urban civilization — his bullhorn rumbled with the now-infamous phrase:

“Menschheit! Zum Himmel!” or “Humanity! To the sky!”

Zorbo believed a floating city could sustain a manageable population. Humanity's best hope was to abandon the Earth altogether and take to the skies, leaving the verdant planet below untouched. Doctor Zorbo stumbled onto a hydrogen purification process that, among other things, allowed a dirigible to stay aloft for almost a month at a time. His research to discover an even more effective lift process led him to the hidden Chiquibul cave system. The good doctor thinks that by harnessing the power of the crystals he can sustain multiple sky cities indefinitely. If only the current residents weren't so intent on getting in his way!

Traits: Doctor Zorbo is a psychic with *psychic synergy*, *inspirational aura* and *scientific prodigy*. He also has a Gadget with the quantum knack *aetheric vision*. Zorbo has numerous Followers (his Sky Brigade) and multiple Gadgets of various sky-craft (his zeppelin armada and things such as the Death Balloons are super-science creations, but they weren't bought as Gadgets). His greatest achievement is the floating sky citadel he calls the Eyrie, a Sanctum Sanctorum held aloft with the aid of a treasured stash of Chiquibul crystals.

The Ubiquitous Dragon

A figure with a past shrouded in darkest mystery, the Ubiquitous Dragon is the polar opposite of Maxwell Mercer. While Mercer is a man of science, the Dragon believes that his abilities are gifts from ancient demons. While Mercer uses his gifts to elevate humanity, the Dragon uses his to inspire dread in the Eastern underworld. Like Mercer, the Dragon has a vision of a world transformed, but the Asian crime lord's intent is quite different. He explores the duality of human nature — the desire for enlightenment, yet the tendency for corruption. He believes that everyone is flawed, pawns in a struggle that transcends the physical realm. The Ubiquitous Dragon

explores these flaws to discover the goals of the forces that manipulate mankind so *he* might control *them*.

A youth spent learning about honor and duty from his father was lost when a warlord massacred his entire village — all but the boy who would become the Dragon. As it happened, the Dragon's father had been the warlord's advisor, but fled with one of his concubines years before. The warlord took the boy, teaching him everything he knew to make the son the antithesis of his honorable father. The warlord taught that all people were victims of vice and corruption. He taught that no one was innocent and that everyone had a price. He taught that knowledge was power and that only the strong deserved to rule. In the end, the warlord succeeded beyond his expectations. The young Dragon marked his passage into manhood by spilling the blood of the second man he'd called father.



It's unclear if Hammersmith's telluric wave Inspired the Dragon or if he was always this way. Regardless, he already controlled much of the Eastern underworld by the early 1920s. His hand can be found in everything from drug trafficking and the theft of precious artifacts to assassinations and government coups. He seduces the incorruptible with promises of power, wealth, fame — whatever is dearest to their hearts and most likely to awaken their inner weaknesses. Absolute master of the Chinese underworld, he retains a multitude of loyal servants across every stratum of society in the Pacific Rim who fear failure more than death.

Along with his most loyal followers, members of the dread Dragon's Coil Tong, he has been spotted in every corner of the globe, overseeing opium deliveries to San Francisco, extracting shares from the Ponatowski Foundation, attending the Machinatrix's latest experiment — and more! Some believe that the Ubiquitous Dragon has "doubles," servants handpicked for their resemblance or perhaps surgically sculpted after his likeness — intended to foil assassination attempts and further his reputation for being ever-present. The truth is perhaps the Dragon's greatest secret.

The Inspired have captured the Dragon's interest of late. Those he can subvert become his loyal lieutenants, and those who resist him are marked for destruction. Rare souls such as Mercer puzzle

the Dragon — individuals who retain hope in the direst of circumstances and who resist temptation in pursuit of higher goals.

Traits: Though the Dragon believes his powers come from Asian spirits, he is a superhuman with *aetheric vision*, *indisputable analysis*, *optimized metabolism* and *Sun Tzu's blessing*. He is also the keeper of the *curse of many dragons* (see sidebar). Like the King of the World, the Dragon has a number of Background feats, notably Mystery Man, Kingpin and Sanctum Sanctorum. He also has superhuman intelligence, is very skilled in Bluff, Disguise, Listen, Perform, Sense Motive and Spot, and enjoys many unarmed combat feats.

Curse of Many Dragons

"To defeat you, I need only myself."

Quantum

Level: 3

Manifestation Time: 1 round (see text)

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: See text

Power Points: 1

Description: The Ubiquitous Dragon can generate multiple versions of himself. These duplicates resemble the Dragon in every way, though they are not as durable or as permanent as the original. His duplicates are the only people the Dragon trusts.

Effect: Make a DC 18 Concentration check. If successful, a duplicate manifests and is ready to act on your next turn. On a natural 1, the Dragon suffers 10 points of nonlethal damage instead of creating a duplicate. A duplicate lasts one day for every 2 points by which the result exceeds the DC. The original Dragon may sustain a duplicate "in the field" by spending one power point per day before the duplicate's time is up. (The duplicate may not spend power points to sustain itself.)

The Dragon must concentrate for one full round to create a duplicate. If created in direct contact with the original, it appears on the following round and may then travel any distance from the original. The Dragon may create a duplicate anywhere up to (500 miles x the Dragon's Inspiration score). The original must be familiar with the site (typically, he must have spent at least one straight week there). He concentrates for one round, but the duplicate manifests after one hour has passed.

The Dragon and his duplicates enjoy no telepathic contact; any communication must follow standard means (telephone, letter, telegraph). The Dragon can reabsorb a duplicate in person, thereby gaining all of its memories and experiences.

A duplicate is identical to the Dragon, but has the minion template (see Appendix Two) and has half the original's Inspiration score. A duplicate has only one-quarter the original's hit points. If a duplicate is knocked unconscious or hasn't recombined before its time is up, it dissolves into noxious goo, and the original Dragon suffers one-quarter of his maximum hit points in damage.

APPENDIX

ODDS AND ENDS

TWO

Other Character Races

Unlike the Inspired templates that comprise most PCs in *Adventure!*, the majority of the world's population is human. Both are covered in Chapter Five. Below are a few unusual beings worth noting.

Sentient Ape

Description: Sentient apes are found in enclaves far from human habitation. They may have their own formal society (and even cities, in lost worlds deep in the jungle or far underground), or they may be found singly or in bands. Most scientists believe that sentient apes gained heightened intelligence from the wash of Z-rays after the Hammersmith Incident, but a few rebels believe that some apes have always been sentient. Other sentient animal races may lie deep in the wilds of Africa or South America, but none have made themselves known to the Æon Society or its allies. For instance, rumors abound of “mole people” who thrive within the planet's crust.

Appearance: Sentient apes look like, well, apes, although they use tools and even wear clothing in some cases. Spectacles are not uncommon, as it seems that many sentient apes have poor eyesight. Most sentient apes are gorillas, hence the racial traits described below. It is possible that sentient orangutans or chimpanzees might also exist.

Sentient Ape Racial Traits

- **Abilities:** +4 Strength, +2 Constitution, –2 Intelligence, –2 Charisma.
- **Medium:** Sentient apes stand an average of 7 feet tall when upright. They have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- **Speed:** Sentient ape base land speed is 30 feet, and climb speed is 30 feet.
- **Skills:** Sentient apes have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks, retain their Dexterity bonus to AC when climbing, and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks. Sentient apes suffer a –4 penalty on all social checks with humans due to the combination of culture clash and the fact that intelligent apes are not at all common.
- **Special Qualities:** Sentient apes have +3 natural armor, low-light vision and scent.
- **Primal Reaction:** Though intelligent, sentient apes are still apes. They must make a DC 13 Will save whenever confronted with a situation that might trigger an instinctual response — a sudden explosion, surprise attack, etc. On a failed roll, the sentient ape is considered shaken and cannot use special abilities or knacks. On a second

successful Will save against DC 13, the sentient ape masters its primal self and returns to normal.

- **Feats:** Sentient apes gain the benefit of the Acrobatic and Agile feats.
- **Automatic Languages:** Sentient apes are proficient in their native language and are literate at the GM's discretion.
- **Inspiration:** Sentient apes lack Inspiration scores and power points; they cannot manipulate telluric energy consciously or unconsciously. Sentient apes may become Inspired, and are subject to the rules in Chapter Five.

Minion Template

Minions are the unmotivated pawns of villains and major foes of the civilized world. “Minion” is an acquired template that can be added to any creature of Intelligence 11 or lower and Wisdom 11 or lower that lacks an Inspired template (referred to hereafter as the “base creature”).

Size and Type: The base creature's size and type remain unchanged.

Hit Dice: The base creature's Hit Die improves by 1 step (d4 becomes d6 becomes d8 becomes d10) to a maximum of d10.

The base creature's base speed, Armor Class, base attack bonus, attacks and damage remain unchanged.

Special Attacks: A minion retains the special attacks of the base creature and gains the following:

Dogpile: A group of three or more minions can attempt a semi-coordinated mass grapple attack. To execute a dogpile, the minion with the greatest grapple bonus makes a standard grapple attempt; however, his Strength score (not Strength bonus) improves by 1 for every additional minion involved in the dogpile. Up to 3 minions can dogpile on a Small or smaller creature; up to 6 minions can dogpile on a Medium creature; up to 12 minions can dogpile on a Large or larger creature.

Special Qualities: A minion retains the special qualities of the base creature and gains the following:

Foolish: Minions rarely use clever combat tactics, instead trying simple massed attacks and dogpile attacks. Minions under the command of an Inspired character or of a talented lieutenant with a Charisma 13 or higher may attempt more complex combat maneuvers.

Saves: The base creature suffers a –2 penalty on all Will saves due to its lack of resistance to being cowed.

Environment: Any.

Organization: Minions instinctively seek out and wish to serve powerful and capable leaders.

Challenge Rating: The base creature's Challenge Rating —1.

Fictional Characters and Organizations

- **The Æon Society for Gentlemen:** Maxwell Mercer's alliance of heroes and do-gooders. The default, but by no means only, group to which PCs may belong. One of the greatest champions of exploration and discovery of Earth and the human condition.

- **The Air Circus:** A loose brotherhood of daring pilots and barnstormers.

- **Baron Halcyon:** Initially a character in some entertaining tales by the writer Hammond Banes, the Hammersmith event transformed Banes into his creation! Halcyon has become the ruler of an albino people who populate an extensive civilization below the Earth's surface.

- **Branch 9:** A covert international (though independently operating) spy network whose members investigate matters from the individual to the global.

- **Ernest Warren Caldwell:** A former US Senator, Caldwell leads the Manifest Destiny Infantry in a mad attempt to further expand the United States across the world.

- **The Contedorri:** An independent organization that hooks up the perfect criminal with the perfect crime. The King of the World and the Ubiquitous Dragon are among its best clients.

- **The Cult of the Sun-Disk:** A fanatical group that worships the abstract Egyptian deity Aton, the embodiment of the sun. Their goal is to bring about the reincarnation of Akhenaton and Nefertiti.

- **Lady Argentine de Winter:** A woman of breeding and respectability in polite society, Lady de Winter is secretly the King of the World, a master criminal who rivals the Ubiquitous Dragon for control of the criminal underworld.

- **Professor Benjamin Franklin Dixon:** A founding member of the Æon Society, Dixon is a brilliant inventor and enjoys a legendary love-hate relationship with his ex-wife, Hephaestia Geary-Wexler.

- **Michael Daemon Donighal:** Also Doctor Primoris, later Divis Mal. The archetypal foil to Mercer — eventually Dr. Doom to Mercer's Reed Richards. A complex and, in some ways, tragic character.

- **Gar:** A champion of the albino E'tah who dwell beneath the Earth, Gar opposes Baron Halcyon and his usurpation of the underworld.

- **Hephaestia Geary-Wexler:** Sometimes called the "Machinatrix," Geary-Wexler is as brilliant as her ex-husband, Franklin Dixon (a fact that infuriates and excites him to no end).

- **Sarah Gettel:** An investigative reporter with a nose for trouble, Gettel uncovers many sources of weirdness that pop up after the Hammersmith event.

- **Doctor Sir Calvin Hammersmith:** The inventor whose telluric engine explodes to unleash the energy that grants Inspiration to *Adventure!* characters.

- **Jackson Harley:** Better known as Mister Saturday, Harley is a reputed master of voodoo and plays the role of benevolent dictator over his fellow Haitians.

- **The Inquiry:** A shadowy group bent on ending war and punishing those who profit from it.

- **International Detective Agency (IDA):** An international criminal investigation group and society of crime-busters.

- **Maxwell Anderson Mercer:** Philanthropist, scholar, hero, doer of good deeds. A shining example of what the good guys are like. Also (unbeknownst to anyone but a few trusted associates) capable of traveling through time.

- **Emma Nazir:** Unknown even to herself, Nazir has become Neferneferuaten-Nefertiti, the "reincarnation" of the Egyptian queen Nefertiti and worshiper of the heretical sun-deity Aton.

- **Annabelle Lee Newfield:** Talented with all weapons, Annabelle battles fearlessly on behalf of the Æon Society. Her unrequited love for Doctor Primoris drives Newfield to betray the Society and serves as the catalyst for Primoris' own enmity with Mercer and his crew.

- **Ocelot:** The rumored "Jaguar Queen" of South America, this mysterious woman protects her jungle lair from the encroachment of civilization.

- **The Order of Murder:** A British secret society that fakes the deaths of those with the means to afford it, setting up the individuals in new lives.

- **The Ponatowski Foundation:** On the surface, a philanthropic organization charged with funding explorations to the four corners of the Earth. In secret, the foundation is manipulated by corrupt individuals including the Czar, Uriah Stafford, the King of the World and more.

- **The Rational Experimentation Group (REG):** A front in an alliance between the Machinatrix, the Ubiquitous Dragon and Mister Saturday, the REG engages in bizarre experiments and unusual crimes relating to medical research.

- **Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux:** An organization dedicated to liberating women from male oppression by any means necessary.

- **Scalper Dutch:** One of the best, meanest and, at this point, oldest gunslingers who ever lived. Some think he died years ago but is just too damn stubborn to fall down.

- **Uriah Stafford:** Head of Styles & Stafford Imports, a British import firm (also involved in a number of shady endeavors). Partner with Whitley Styles's father before the elder Styles's death.

- **Ivan Boris Vladimir Staynskaya:** The self-styled Czar is an aristocrat who fled the Bolshevik Revolution with the young Princess Anastasia. Staynskaya dreams of one day returning to Mother Russia as its ruler, with Anastasia as his wife.

- **Jake Stefokowski:** Also known as the "Danger Ace" (and later as Jake Danger, Aberrant Hunter), Jake is a founding member of the Æon Society and one of the best pilots ever to take to the air.

- **Whitley Styles:** Kato to Mercer's Green Hornet, Watson to Mercer's Holmes, Styles is the quintessential sidekick. A trained assassin with a heart of gold, he plays the role of the common man in contrast to Max Mercer's enlightened social scientist.

- **Safari Jack Tallon:** A painfully British explorer whose exploits in the Victorian Age became fodder for dime novels and inspired the likes of Max Mercer. Later, a founding member of Æon and mentor to Danger Ace.

- **Imam Khwarazmi ibn Abi Tirmidhi:** A Muslim holy man driven to extremes in the aftermath of Hammersmith's failed experiment. Known to the Western world as the Turk, he directs his fanatics against those who threaten to corrupt the ways of Islam.

- **The Ubiquitous Dragon:** The Æon Society's greatest foe (until Doctor Primoris rises against Æon). A master schemer and intellect, the Dragon threatens to dominate the world through his subtle machinations.

- **Doctor Manfred von Zorbo:** A brilliant German inventor who is a bit off-plumb mentally, Zorbo envisions a world where humanity

dwells in the sky aboard floating cities of his design. He's quite militant about making it happen, too.

Inspiration Age Timeline

The New Century

1900: Republican William McKinley is reelected as President of the US. Maxwell Anderson Mercer celebrates his 11th birthday. Michael Daemon Donighal is born.

1901: Anarchist Leon Czolgosz shoots McKinley, who dies eight days later. Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt becomes President. Guglielmo Marconi transmits the Morse code for "S" from Cornwall to Newfoundland, inaugurating the radio age.

1902: Conservative Lord Arthur Balfour becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain. Safari Jack Tallon has his first heart attack in his early 60s and begins experimenting with exotic herb remedies to restore his health.

1903: Roosevelt sends the first two-way transatlantic wireless communication, from the Marconi transmitter in Massachusetts to King Edward VII in London. The US and Panama sign a treaty to build the Panama Canal. Orville Wright makes the first well-documented heavier-than-air flight at Kitty Hawk. Henry Ford founds the Ford Motor Company.

1904: Republican Theodore Roosevelt wins the US Presidency, defeating Democrat Alton Parker in the largest margin up to that time.

1905: Russian sailors mutiny onboard the battleship *Potemkin*, in a precursor to the Russian Revolution. Liberal Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain. The *Annum Mirabilis*, five papers written by Einstein, are published, changing the world.

1906: Roosevelt wins the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in ending the Russo-Japanese war and is the first President to step on foreign soil while in office, visiting the dig in Panama. The Transvaal and the Orange Free State granted self-rule by the British.

1907: Oklahoma becomes the 46th state of the US. The United Press Association is founded in New York City.

1908: Ford introduces the Model T automobile. Republican William Howard Taft is elected President of the US. Liberal Earl Herbert Henry Asquith becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain.

1909: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is founded. Admiral Robert Edwin Peary plants the US flag at the North Pole.

1910: The Boy Scouts of America is founded. King Edward VII dies; George V becomes King of Great Britain.

1911: The British Parliament passes the National Insurance Act, its first measure for universal health care.

1912: Democrat Woodrow Wilson defeats Republican Taft and Progressive Theodore Roosevelt to become President of the US. New Mexico becomes the 47th state, Arizona the 48th. The Girl Scouts of the United States of America is chartered. The Cadillac division of General Motors introduces the first battery-powered ignition. The

Titanic sinks. Sandra Bernhardt plays the title role in *Queen Elizabeth*, a French four-reel, 60-minute feature film.

1913: The XVIth Amendment allows national income taxes.

1914: Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip shoots Archduke Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary, and cascading treaty obligations trigger the Great War (later known as World War I). American troops occupy Vera Cruz, Mexico, until Mexican President Victoriano Huerta resigns.

1915: The first transatlantic transmission of the human voice takes place between Arlington, Virginia, and the Eiffel Tower. Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Watson reenact their 1876 phone call, with Bell in New York and Watson in San Francisco, in the first transcontinental telephone call.

1916: Democrat Woodrow Wilson narrowly wins reelection to the US Presidency against Republican Charles Evans Hughes. Pancho Villa leads Mexican bandits on a raid across the border into the US and escapes a year's worth of pursuit by American troops. Liberal Earl David Lloyd George becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain.

1917: The US enters the Great War. Puerto Ricans become US citizens. Montana elects Jeanette Rankin as the first female member of the US House of Representatives. Lord Balfour, former Prime Minister, commits the British government to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Ivan Boris Vladimir Staysnkaya flees the Bolshevik Revolution, Princess Anastasia in tow. Jake Stefokowski lies about his age to enlist as a member of the Lafayette Escadrille; he is one of the first air aces at the tender age of 12.

1918: The Great War ends with German surrender. Mercer journeys to India and rescues Whitley Styles from the hands of the Thuggee.

1919: The Treaty of Versailles formally ends the war (and unwittingly lays the foundations for World War II). Congress passes the XVIII Amendment over Wilson's veto, inaugurating the era of Prohibition.

Modern Times

1920: Republican Warren Harding beats Democratic James Cox to become President of the US. The League of Nations meets for the first time, in Paris, while the US refuses to join. US Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer makes many warrantless raids on suspected Communists and anarchists. The first transcontinental air-mail service goes into operation. J.T. Thompson patents his portable machine gun, soon nicknamed the Tommy gun. Mohandas Gandhi inaugurates his campaign of nonviolent protest against British rule of India.

1921: KDKA broadcasts the first religious service; radio evangelism soon becomes one of the most popular uses of radio. Britain grants dominion status and home rule to the Irish Free State. Scalper Dutch celebrates his 75th birthday by massacring the posse surrounding his hideout.

1922: Lord Carnarvon and Howard Carter discover Tutankhamen's tomb. The British Broadcasting Corporation makes its first transmissions. Benito Mussolini becomes dictator of Italy. Lenin proclaims the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, formalizing Bolshevik rule in Russia, Byelorussia, the Ukraine and Transcaucasia. Publication of Claude McKay's poetry collection, *Harlem Shadows*, kicks the Harlem Renaissance into high gear. Mah jongg becomes a national craze in the US. Conservative Andrew Bonar Law becomes the first Prime Minis-

ter of Great Britain of colonial origin but resigns for health reasons a year later. Doctor Sir Calvin Hammersmith unleashes the most tragic lab accident of all time. P.A.M. Dirac postulates zero-point energy in the wake of Hammersmith's experiment (this doesn't occur until 1930 in the real world and isn't even labeled as such until much later).

1923: President Harding dies of food poisoning; Vice-President Calvin Coolidge takes the Presidency. *Time* magazine begins weekly publication. The Teapot Dome scandal implicates high-ranking officials in fraud involving oil and coal leases. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk begins brutally modernizing Turkey. Yankee Stadium opens in New York City. The last US troops return from Europe. Maxwell Anderson Mercer formally founds the *Æon Society* for Gentlemen.

1924: *Right now!* Richard Simon and Max Schuster found Plaza Publishing (later renamed Simon and Schuster) to publish the first crossword puzzle books. Ku Klux Klan membership peaks at between 2 to 5 million and goes into decline. Lenin dies; Stalin out-manuevers Trotsky to become the new head of the USSR. Douglas Fairbanks stars in *The Thief of Bagdad* and becomes a worldwide star. The British Empire Exposition opens with the first broadcast of a British monarch's voice. J. Edgar Hoover takes charge of the Bureau of Investigation (renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1935) and embarks on ambitious reforms after a series of major scandals. RCA transmits the first wireless telegraph pictures from London to New York. The Ford Motor company produces its 10-millionth car. The Leica Corporation, based in Germany, produces the first mass-produced cameras. Labour candidate James Ramsey MacDonald becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain in a government that lasts only from January to October. Conservative Lord Stanley Baldwin replaces him in October.

The Day After Tomorrow

1925: The dirigible *Shenandoah* breaks apart in a storm over Ohio, seriously damping enthusiasm for expansion of commercial lighter-than-air travel. Nellie Ross of Wyoming and Miriam "Ma" Ferguson of Texas take office as the first female governors in the US. *The New Yorker* magazine begins publication. John T. Scopes is convicted of teaching evolution in Tennessee, though the case is overturned on appeal to the Tennessee Supreme Court in 1927. Charles Francis Jenkins makes the first public demonstration of broadcast television in Washington, DC. The first Art Deco fair opens in Paris.

1926: Robert Goddard launches the first liquid fuel rocket. A general strike begins in Britain. Hirohito becomes Emperor of Japan. Lufthansa Airlines begins regular service in and around Germany. Michelson and Morley announce a very accurate measurement of the speed of light (already measured somewhat less precisely in the 1800s).

1927: Transatlantic telephone service begins between New York and London. Mt. Rushmore is completed and dedicated. Charles Lindbergh flies nonstop from New York to Paris. The German stock market collapses on May 13, "Black Friday," inaugurating lasting economic troubles. British inventor John Logie Baird records video signals as electrical impulses on a wax disc, but does not achieve commercial success. Ford Motor Company begins selling the Model A automobile. Heisenberg publishes his Uncertainty Principle, solidifying the growing view that modern physics was getting less and

less clockwork-like. Mao Zedong and other Chinese Communist leaders break with the Chinese government to begin civil war.

1928: The Daven Corporation sells the first consumer television sets in the US. Sixty-five nations sign the Kellogg-Briand Pact, renouncing war forever. (They don't stick to it.) Joseph Stalin announces the First Five-Year Plan. Republican Herbert Hoover defeats Democrat Alfred E. Smith to become President of the US. Mickey Mouse debuts in "Steamboat Willy."

1929: Hans Berger develops the electroencephalograph. Labour politician James Ramsey MacDonald becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain for the second time. Black Thursday: The US stock market collapses, and by the end of the year, the Great Depression is underway.

1930: New York Supreme Court Justice Joseph Crater disappears mysteriously in New York City. Astronomer C. W. Tombaugh of Lowell Observatory discovers Pluto. Sinclair Lewis is the first American to win the Nobel Prize for literature. Chrysler Building completed. Construction begins on the Empire State Building. Ho Chi Minh founds the Vietnamese Communist Party, later renamed the Indochinese Communist Party. The last Allied soldiers (French and Belgian) withdraw from Germany.

1931: Karl Jansky at Bell Telephone Laboratories discovers emissions from the center of the Milky Way, inaugurating the science of radio astronomy. The Ford Motor Company produces its 20-millionth car. The Empire State Building is completed.

1932: Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt easily defeats Republican Herbert Hoover to become President of the US. The neutron is discovered, leading to the atomic age.

1933: Congress repeals Prohibition.

1934: The Federal Communications Commission begins regulating radio station frequencies.

1935: Roosevelt signs the Social Security Act. Conservative Earl Stanley Baldwin becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain for the third time.

1937: The Golden Gate Bridge is completed. Amelia Earhart and her co-pilot Fred Noonan disappear over the Pacific. The zeppelin *Hindenburg* explodes over Lakehurst, New Jersey; Herb Morrison's emotion-laden coverage makes the disaster seem much worse than it actually is. Conservative Neville Chamberlain becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain, his term dominated by concession and capitulation to growing Nazi aggression.

1938: Howard Hughes and his team fly around the world in 91 hours.

1939: Filthy Nazi rats unleash World War II. The New York and San Francisco World's Fairs present determinedly optimistic, technocratic views of the future. The first transatlantic airline passenger service opens, between Long Island and Lisbon.

1940: Roosevelt defeats Republican Wendell Willkie to win reelection. Conservative Sir Winston Churchill becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain in a coalition of parties that lasts until the end of World War II.

1941: Japan attacks Pearl Harbor; the US joins World War II on the Allied side.

1942: Bell Aircraft creates the XP-59A, the first known American jet aircraft. Mercer's inaugural jump through time after the Hammersmith event lands him here, where he is met by his older self and certain key members of the *Æon Society*.

1943: The *Æon Society* battles Doctor Primoris, who vanishes

mysteriously in the conflict's climax. Mercer claims to be content with the resolution but grows more reclusive in the coming years.

1944: Roosevelt defeats Republican Thomas Dewey to win re-election.

1945: Roosevelt dies of a brain hemorrhage; Vice-President Harry Truman becomes President. World War II ends with German and Japanese surrender. A young man going by the name of Michael Mercer and claiming to be Maxwell Mercer's son (but keeping mum about the identity of his mother) appears on the steps of the Æon Society's Chicago brownstone; only Mercer is not surprised.

Yet To Come

1946: The Moore School of Electrical Engineering in Philadelphia builds ENIAC, the first known digital computer (30 ft. x 60 ft. and weighing 60,000 pounds). The League of Nations disbands and assigns its assets to the United Nation; John D. Rockefeller, Jr., donates the money to purchase Manhattan property for the UN's new headquarters.

1947: Private pilot Kenneth Arnold spots unidentified flying objects over Mt. Rainier in Washington state, inaugurating the ongoing public fascination with UFOs. Commercial television broadcasters multiply as wartime restrictions on raw materials end.

1948: Democrat Harry Truman defeats Republican Thomas Dewey to become President of the US in his own right.

1950: Maxwell Anderson Mercer vanishes from public life. Even his associates in Æon appear to be at a loss as to his whereabouts. Michael Maxwell Mercer, his son, observes that Mercer will return "when he is needed."

1998: Dawn of the Nova Age. Divis Mal makes his next play to be the most important person in the world.

2106: Dawn of the Trinity Era.

Inspirations and Resources

Film and Television

Pulp adventure is a matter of atmosphere and attitude at least as much as it is of facts. Look isn't everything, but it is important. **Adventure!** works best when players and GMs agree on the style they have in mind, since it's a lot easier to improvise from shared expectations.

- **Original serials** — A growing number of '20s and '30s film serials are available on videotape and DVD. It's hard to do some of them justice: You have to see singing cowboys and evil robots on screen together for yourself. Availability varies wildly, so check around.

- **The Adventures of Indiana Jones (Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981), Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom (1984), Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989)** — It would be silly to compile a list of pulp influences and not mention these movies. They're set a decade after **Adventure!**'s primary era, but so what? These films are still some of the archetypal stories of two-fisted science, courage in the face of hubris-consumed evil and supernatural power. Games that can capture the rhythm of drama and comedy, action and character that the *Indiana Jones* trilogy offers should be a spectacular success.

- **The Mummy (1999) and The Mummy Returns (2001)** — You can do this with **Adventure!** Really! Handwave the supernatural premise, then sit back and enjoy this tale of ancient curses and modern ambitions with a clear conscience. Take inspiration from the stunts and note that even the lout of a brother gets in some fast thinking.

- **The Phantom (1996)** — If you want heroes in masks, see this movie. See it anyway because, with the skull cave hideouts, all-lady air pirates and delightfully self-satisfied mad villains, there's something for almost every **Adventure!** series here. Billy Zane's portrayal of the Phantom also bears watching for its complete absence of both angst and irony. He isn't parodying the part, he's just showing us a very driven, yet happy, hero.

- **The Rocketeer (1991)** — This movie is less epic than some of the other films (though the prospect of Nazi armies equipped with rocket packs is pretty drastic) and focuses on heroic technology and local adventure. It makes great use of clichés about famous places — Hollywood, in particular — and shows some ways of integrating real people into adventure yarns. GMs take note of the conflicting aims of the various villains, too.

- **The Shadow (1994)** — Every **Adventure!** game should look this spiffy when the powers go into action. The Shadow has one of the all-time great hideouts and demonstrates a variety of background feats along the way. The combination of magic and high-technology is just as suitable for **Adventure!** here as it is in *The Mummy*, too.

- **Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow (2004)** — We haven't seen the movie as of press time, but the trailer captures the perfect look and feel of a rollicking pulp adventure. Danger Ace would be proud!

Comic Books

- **Classic newspaper strips** — Many pulp heroes first appeared in newspaper comic strips: the Phantom, Mandrake the Magician, Flash Gordon and the like. Publishers such as Fantagraphics and Kitchen Sink Press have reprinted a number of them. Check your library and used bookstore.

- **Hellboy** — Mike Mignola's title character is a demon sent to Earth as part of an elaborate scheme to end the world, but he's not having it. Hellboy and his associates investigate weird phenomena of all kinds. Mignola's beautifully detailed artwork conjures up vivid, strange environments, and his writing includes a lot of really first-rate pulp-tradition dialogue. If you want a more supernatural style of series than stock **Adventure!** provides, check this out.

- **Planetary** — Written by Warren Ellis and illustrated by John Cassaday, this series has it all. The title organization investigates weird occurrences of all sorts, and each story makes use of visual and design motifs of different genres. The series' overall construction is worth studying, too, with short, self-contained stories that add up to a much greater whole. You could do worse than to heavily flavor the Æon Society or some other heroic organization with the *Planetary* style.

- **Sandman Mystery Theatre** — Writers Matt Wagner and Steve Seagle and artist Guy Davis brought the darker side of the between-Wars era to life in this series of street-level action. It's loaded with intrigue and tight, deep characterization. A lot of it's now available in trade paperbacks, and even if you don't want to run a series in this

style, look at it for the meticulously rendered environments. Davis gets the clothes, the vehicles and a whole lot else right.

- **Tom Strong** — Writer Alan Moore and artists Gary Gianni and Chris Sprouse throw caution to the winds in this series of profoundly epic, gonzo adventure. If you want to bring **Aberrant**-level characters into a pulp milieu, you should check this out.

Prose and Poetry

Time-Life historical series and other picture-heavy books are great for images and details of the era. And don't forget the children's section of your local library, since some of the best non-academic historical writing of our time is aimed at children. If you want to use airships a lot, grab a couple of books about zeppelins to admire the pictures and steal the vignettes; if you want to run a series set in the Himalayas, do the same with books about mountaineering; and so on. It shouldn't feel like drudge work: get a few books that make you say "That's neat!" or "I must use that!" and don't worry about the boring parts.

- **Period series** — There's a wealth of material we can't cover here directly. Stores now carry facsimiles and reprints of classic series such as the Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew and Tom Swift, all of which were very different in their original incarnations than in later revivals and efforts at updating.

- **The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life From Prohibition Through World War II** — Written by Marc McCutcheon. It's hard to overstate the usefulness of this book. Prices for everyday (and exotic) items, how tariffs were applied, crime and punishment, diet and clothing, a handy list of period slang terms — it's all here somewhere. There are fine roleplaying game supplements that cover some of this same ground, but McCutcheon offers more breadth and depth.

- **The Complete Works of Charles Fort** — Edited by Charles Fort. Fort collected anomalous news stories — what he called "damned facts" because they were unacceptable to the scientific establishment — and they're all in this thick book. Truth is stranger than fiction, and there's stuff in "Wild Talents" and "The Book of the Damned" that will make any group of players scratch their heads. An excellent omnibus edition is available from Dover Publications.

- **Being Red** — Written by Howard Fast. Novelist Fast writes a very readable, very moving memoir of life in New York's slums in the '20s and '30s, what it was like to be a struggling artist in the depths of the Great Depression and his experiences with the Communist Party.

- **A History of the Twentieth Century** — Written by Martin Gilbert. There are many good histories of the era. This one has some advantages: It's recent and can therefore draw on recent discoveries and interpretations, it's organized chronologically for easy brows-

ing (and well-indexed), and it gives more attention to the world beyond Europe and America than many histories written for the general public do. Gilbert has a knack for finding the perfect anecdote to illuminate a situation and an ongoing interest in how people outside the halls of power dealt with a changing world.

- **The Mafia Encyclopedia** — Edited by Carl Sifakis. A one-stop shopping reference for everything mob related, from Meyer Lansky to Vincent "the Chin" Gigante.

- **Timetables of History** — Published by Random House, this book traces important events from 4000 BC to 1993 in an easy to reference format (it's damn interesting, too!).

- **Going Home Again** — Written by Howard Waldrop. Waldrop mostly writes alternate histories; the title story in this collection, for instance, has novelist Thomas Wolfe sailing home from the 1940 Olympics with Fats Waller and others in a world where World War II isn't going to happen. The opening few pages, which reveal the nature of the sailing one detail at a time, are the sort of thing a good GM can strip-mine for inspiration. Waldrop is unique and well worth checking out. You'll probably have to go a library for his earlier volumes, such as **Night of the Cooters** and its story of Martian invasion in turn-of-the-century Texas.

Music

- **Movie soundtracks** — Virtually every movie mentioned above has a soundtrack you can buy. Some have vintage music, others modern scores, but they all capture the mood of just about any **Adventure!** scene you can think of.

- **Ken Burns JAZZ: The Story of America's Music** — Ken Burns. A great collection of, well, jazz.

- **Night and Day** — Chicago. Yup, that classic-rock band performing old-style tunes.

Online

Websites change their addresses just when one least expects it, so if you have any problems with these URLs, use your favorite search engine and look for the site name, which often remains constant while the underlying address moves.

- **ThePulp.Net**, <http://www.thepulp.net/> — This site is just an amazing resource, with a lot of content right there and links to everywhere. Go here to find the text of whole stories and novels, artwork, interviews and much more. **Adventure!** is a much stronger game thanks to this resource.

- **The Vintage Library**, <http://www.vintagelibrary.com/pulp/index.cfm> — These folks will sell you print and electronic copies of famous and obscure pulps alike. You can get a whole lot just by browsing their preview pages and admiring the artwork.

- **The Smithsonian Institution**, <http://www.si.edu/> — A site for one of the greatest repositories of information in the world. This site is an example of just one of many places you can look for authentic details on the early 20th century.

ADVENTURE!

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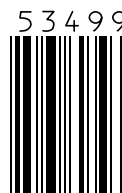


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