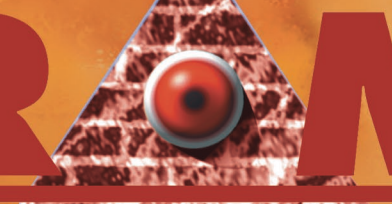


# PYRAMID<sup>®</sup>



Issue 3/107 September '17

## MONSTER HUNTERS III

### THE DWYRM

by David L. Pulver

### BORN TO BE WILD

by Christopher R. Rice

### AN IRREGULAR SORT OF TERROR

by J. Edward Tremlett

### YOUNG HUNTERS

by Liam Duncan



**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

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## ARTICLE COLORS

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

*Pale Blue:* In This Issue

*Brown:* In Every Issue

*Green:* Columnist

*Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features

*Purple:* Systemless Features

### COVER ART

*Abrar Ajmal*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# FROM THE EDITOR

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

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

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

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

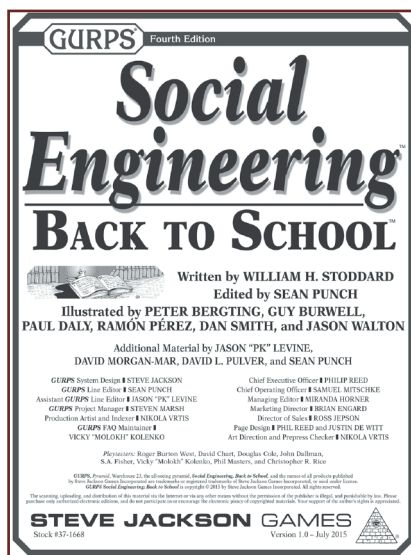
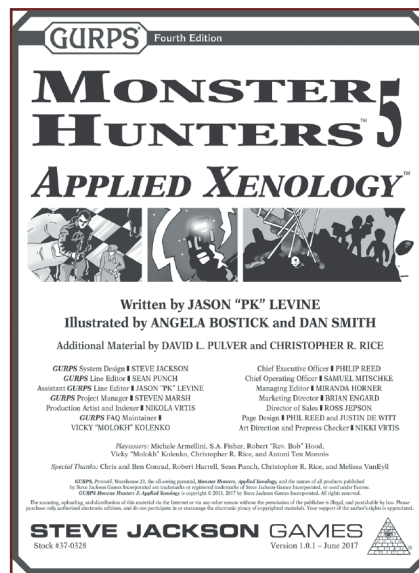
of horror defanged as "modern-day dungeon fantasy, but with vampires instead of goblins."

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

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

## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

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



Additional Material: Sean Punch

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## WILDCARD PATH AND MAGIC TRADITION SKILLS

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

### Druidism!

#### IQ

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

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

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

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

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

### Path!

#### IQ

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

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

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

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

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

### Mathematician!

#### IQ

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

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

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

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

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

## Elder Dwyrm

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

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

**Fright Check:** -5.

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

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

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

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

## SWALLOWED BY A DWYRM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Dwyrm Traits

This set of traits are standard for all Dwyrm.

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

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

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

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

## Social Stigma

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

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

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

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

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

## NEW SKILL SPECIALTIES

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

### Professional Skill

p. B215

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

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

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

## HIGH SCHOOL SKILLS AND FAMILIARITY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Savoir-Faire

p. B218

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

## ABOUT *GURPS*

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