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ACTION II



THE THRILL OF THE CHASE

Kelly Pedersen

BLACK GEMINI

David L. Pulver

MORE SKILL SETS FOR SPECIALISTS

Christopher R. Rice

THE GRINDER

Andy Vetromile

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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Do I really look like a guy with a plan? You know what I am? I'm a dog chasing cars. I wouldn't know what to do with one if I caught it.

*– The Joker, in **The Dark Knight***

ARTICLE COLORS

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

Pale Blue: In This Issue

Brown: In Every Issue

Green: Columnist

Dark Blue: **GURPS** Features

Purple: Systemless Features

COVER ART

Bob Stevlic

Now is the time for action. **GURPS Action**, that is! Strap in and get ready to floor it, as we bring the world of the cinematic to the gaming table once more.

When matters get tricky and it's a group of heroes against the world, you need *More Skill Sets for Specialists*. Building on the modular system presented in **GURPS Action 4: Specialists**, this feature by *Dungeon Fantasy Traps* co-author Christopher R. Rice presents 34 new skill sets that can be added on to any hero looking to fulfill certain functions. It also includes supernatural and ultra-tech options, making the **Specialists** core an enticing concept to consider for other genres. Become a movie star, professor, exorcist, or space pilot . . . and then get in the action!

When it comes to keeping games exciting, nothing beats *The Thrill of the Chase*. Expand the possibilities of the chase rules from **GURPS Action 2: Exploits** with terrain complications and unusual events. Go full tilt through narrow alleyways, save endangered bystanders, and navigate out of dead ends. Your life depends on it!

Can your heroes handle the challenges presented by *Black Gemini*? This month's Eidetic Memory offering from David L. Pulver – author of **GURPS Spaceships** – flings the heroes from situation to situation, all in an effort to shut down a dangerous international faction. This adventure includes **GURPS** stats for the many adversaries and obstacles the investigators must overcome.

When it comes time to handle the action that heroes face, sometimes it boils down to who has *The Football*. Gain insight into how to make exciting scenes *without* resorting to “who shoots whom,” by establishing interesting situations that have the adventurers scrambling.

If you need a vehicle that handles the impossible with aplomb, you need to get yourself to *The Grinder*. Discover all the secrets of the mysterious Bolivar Snow: his super-equipped garage, details of his organization, adventure possibilities, and even **GURPS** stats for the enigmatic Snow himself. If you want to drive yourself to the edge, the keys are waiting in the ignition . . .

This issue concludes with a Random Thought Table takes inspiration from unlikely places, all in service of making your action campaign as awesome as possible. When it comes to keeping the excitement flowing, this issue is like drinking from the fire hose of frantic options.

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FROM THE EDITOR

THE ATTRACTION OF ACTION

Assembling a *GURPS Action*-themed issue of *Pyramid* is a daunting task. One of the elements that most defines an action-packed game is . . . well, its *action*. Its devotion to the instant, its speed. After a while, as I craft words like this, there's a part of me that just wants to delete them all and say, "WHY ARE YOU STILL READING THIS? HURRY UP AND GO BE AWESOME!"

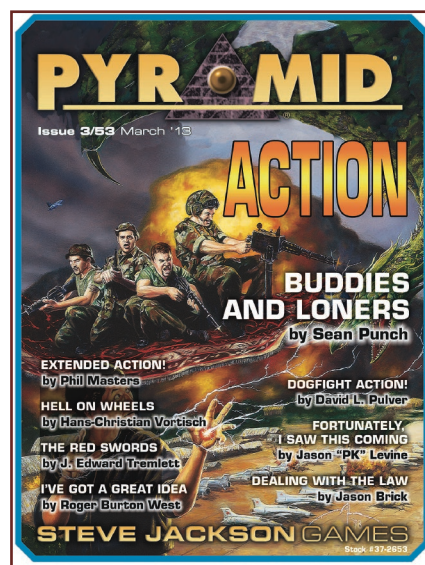
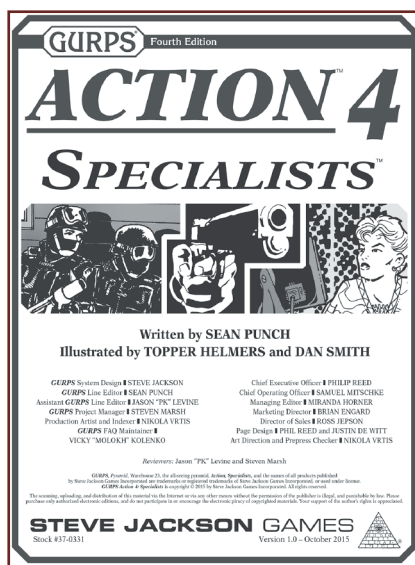
Still, even a true-blooded action hero needs to rest a bit as the frame wipes between new segments of story, and it's in those brief quiet moments that we can hopefully squeeze in some inspiration.

Of course, it's a bit of an exaggeration to say that action tales are *all* action, all the time. There need to be some pauses, if only to give the heroes a chance to catch their breaths and engage in witty banter. It's like a horror movie; if the soundtrack is stuck on "all terrifying strings and screams all the time" mode, then the audience just tunes it out.

Similarly, while there's plenty of adrenaline to enjoy in this issue's offerings, there's also some material to make you rethink stakes, approaches, and even the core atoms that make up the heroes themselves (pp. 4-11). And, once again, in sneaky *Pyramid* tradition, a fair number of articles herein can prove useful for other parts of the *GURPS*iverse, should your tastes not run full-throttle to action all the time.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Speaking of which, what are you actually doing with this issue? Did a feature or two find its way to your gaming table immediately? Did something stick in your cranium to be used later? Is there an article herein that didn't quite serve as the antidote to the doldrums we *spiked your drink with?* (BWAH-HAH-HAH!!) We want to hear about it! Use your favorite cryptogram-scripting program to write to the private codebreakers at pyramid@sjgames.com, or jump aboard the freight train of fun with the *GURPS* fandom at forums.sjgames.com.



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MORE SKILL SETS FOR SPECIALISTS

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

GURPS Action 4: Specialists allows both the players and the GM to create cinematic action heroes who have particular specialties, honed over a lifetime, that make them a nightmare for certain people. The rules in *Specialists* allow bizarre creations like a reporter who is good at hostile rendition or a winter survival expert who just happens to be hell on wheels. It also assists with the creation of those who are *very* good at one particular thing or group of related things.

Add in the fact that skill sets are fast, easy to notate, and versatile, and you have a quick-start system that's useful in any *Action* game that includes *Specialists*. Since this article references *GURPS Power-Ups 3: Talents* and *GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks* several times, those books are also required. Games with psionics, magic, higher TLs, etc. will need books appropriate for such campaigns before taking them before taking them.

MORE MUNDANE SKILL SETS

More options can be useful when designing characters to make them "just right." Some of the following skill sets have traits in them that are not immediately useful in typical *Action* campaigns, so players should check with the GM before taking these.

Does Mademoiselle find gambling an adequate source of income?

– Nicole Dubois, in *Mission: Impossible* #5.23

Animal Handler

25 points

You know how to train, handle, and take care of a particular animal or animals. Maybe you were a lion tamer or trained working dogs. Whatever your experience, you're good with beasts and it shows.

Combine this set with Area Security (*Specialists*, p. 11) or Law Enforcement (*Specialists*, pp. 17-18), for dedicated K-9 units. Add Bushwhacker (*Specialists*, p. 12) to create backwoodsmen like Crocodile Dundee or Grizzly Adams.

Advantages: Animal Empathy [5]; Animal Friend 1 [5].

- Spend 4 points to purchase a particular animal as an Ally with a constant appearance (p. B36) or receive two additional skill choices.

Perks: Call of the Wild* [1].

Skills: Animal Handling (any) (IQ/A) [2]; Animal Handling (any other) (IQ/A) [2]; Veterinary (IQ/H) [2]. • Two of Animal Handling (any) (IQ/A) [2], Falconry (IQ/A) [2], Packing (IQ/A) [2], Riding (any) (DX/A) [2], Teamster (IQ/A) [2], or increase Animal Handling or Veterinary by 2 points.

* See *Power-Ups 2*, p. 12.

Celebrity

You're in the spotlight, and you love it. You're well-known as an actor or musician or simply for being famous. Any character concept might benefit from one of the following skill sets, but spies and ex-military types who pose as rock stars or have become actors are common enough in movies that they don't require much of a stretch! Some celebrities pick multiple options, to account for varied talents or reasons for fame.

Dilettante/Heir

25 points

You have money. Lots of money. Because you have so much scratch, you're popular. Combine this skill set with Famous for Being Famous (p. 5) and/or Femme Fatale (*Specialists*, p. 15) to create vacuous-seeming party animals who use their looks to get what they want.

You can select this package up to three times. At the second level, Wealth (Wealthy) becomes Wealth (Very Wealthy), for 10 points and add Independent Income 15 [15]. At the third level, Wealth (Very Wealthy) becomes Wealth (Filthy Rich), for 20 points, and Independent Income becomes 20, for 5 points.

Advantages: Status 2 [5]; Wealth (Wealthy) [20].

THE THRILL OF THE CHASE

BY KELLY PEDERSEN

The chase system on pp. 31-35 of *GURPS Action 2: Exploits* resolves pursuits in a fun, quick way. This article provides optional rules to add effects from terrain and dramatic events that can spice things up, plus a system to insert such challenges randomly.

TERRAIN

The following rules add modifiers to chases based on the sort of land- (or sea-, or air-) scape they pass through. The starting terrain is usually obvious, based on how it has been described prior to the chase. As a pursuit progresses, it may lead through other types.

The terrain classes are listed below. Each includes *Prohibited Size* (the Size Modifiers of people, vehicles, etc. that cannot enter that terrain at all), *Restricted Size* (the Size Modifiers that treat the terrain as Rough, p. 13), and *Maximum*

Range (the farthest range band a foe can occupy and still be attacked with ranged weaponry, with -2 for cover in addition to other penalties; farther ranges are impossible, while closer ranges have no cover penalty unless the GM wishes to impose one). If the quarry is beyond the Maximum Range band for the terrain, they are always considered to have appropriate conditions to make a Hide maneuver.

If a chase enters an area that participants can't pass due to their size, they must either find a new conveyance or continue on foot, or else treat it as a dead end (p. 14). If a participant can't *personally* fit into the space due to his own SM, he has no way to proceed. Either way, this provides an excellent chance for a smaller pursued party to win the chase!

Open

The easiest sort of area to move through, open terrain doesn't feature prominently in dramatic chases. There are no significant barriers, and movement in all directions is relatively easy. Examples includes wide-open prairie, vast deserts, and the open sea.

Prohibited Size: None.
Restricted Size: None.
Maximum Range: None.

Normal

Normal terrain has wide but present boundaries and only a few hazards. This includes most typical highways, freeways, country roads, the sea near navigable coasts, and airspace above a city with few tall buildings.

Prohibited Size: None.
Restricted Size: SM +7 or higher.
Maximum Range: Extreme.

Tight

Space where the limitations to movement are always a factor in maneuvering and the view is restricted. Some examples are city streets with heavy traffic or narrow lanes, light forests, canals or rivers, or the airspace among mountain ranges or skyscrapers.

Prohibited Size: SM +7 or higher.
Restricted Size: SM +6 or +5.
Maximum Range: Long.

Hyper-Pinched

This extra-restricted form of terrain is passable only by human-sized or smaller characters, and even then, only with difficulty. It includes ventilation ducts, tunnels dug by jungle insurgents, and similarly claustrophobic spaces. Chases that don't start in such terrain rarely go there, and it certainly shouldn't be added randomly – only as a deliberate choice for a really tense pursuit.

Prohibited Size: SM +1 or higher.
Restricted Size: SM 0 or -1.
Maximum Range: Close.

Tiny Chases for Tiny Races

It's not common in the action genre, but *GURPS* games contain multitudes. Sometimes, chases involve very tiny participants and very tight spaces. As a general rule, use the largest SM of an object that can fit into the width of the path along with the next-lowest SM as the Restricted Size range, with smaller creatures moving easily; anything larger is prohibited. For example, a 10"-wide pipe would fit SM -6 or -7 people, vehicles, and so on, but restrict their movement, while those smaller than that could travel freely. Maximum ranges much shorter than Close are usually appropriate.

THE PORT

If the PCs investigate the port, they won't get anywhere unless they have the names of the yacht owner or the yacht *Ultima Cena* itself. The port is very busy with numerous private and commercial vessels, and foreign tourists and visitors. Once they get those names (either from the surgeon or Nina), they can check port authority records and find that it left the day before Nina disappeared. Asking at the specific marina it was moored at (a local yacht club) may find other yachtsmen who know Marco is the owner, and that he visits this port on occasion, but spends most of his time at sea. He is often sighted with women and with a Egyptian man, who he is friends with. When the yacht last departed, there was a very pretty blond woman hanging on his arm, waving at someone ashore.

Once the team has the ship's description, they can use assets such as satellites or maritime traffic control (*Ultima Cena* isn't trying to be stealthy and is following all marine traffic regulations posting its position) and either try to intercept and board it on the high seas or wait for it to make landfall.

Well, it's ironic, isn't it? Something so beautiful should be mixed up with so much ugliness! Beauty brings out the worst in people.

– Elias Blackwell,
*The Inspector Lynley
Mysteries #4.4*

THE ULTIMA CENA

This luxury yacht is currently sailing between Palermo and Cyprus, with Marco Silvestri and Ahmad Aziz aboard along with the captive Kelly Tran. Ahmad is keeping Kelly until she ceases to amuse him, at which point she will be turned into spare parts. Kelly has a certain inkling of this and is trying to keep a low profile.

Also aboard and securely hidden in the back of Marco's closet are refrigerated bags containing a chunk of liver and a kidney packed in sterile ice for two special VIP customers waiting in Cyprus, each of whom has paid a small fortune: Sergei Malinkov, a Russian shipping oligarch whose sickly 12-year-old daughter Vasilisa's liver is failing due to biliary atresia; and Hassan al-Uzbeki, who happens to be a match for Nina's kidney.

If uninterrupted, Marco and Ahmad will dock at Cyprus' major port (Limassol) and invite Malinkov (who has his daughter with him) to come aboard. After making sure he has received payment (to his Swiss bank account), Marco will deliver the liver. Then he will head to northern Cyprus to deliver Nina's kidney to Hassan. After meeting with Hassan (perhaps hosting some of his militants aboard the ship to pick up the kidney), Marco and Ahmad will head to Cairo for a few days of business (meeting with potential clients), then take another four days to sail back to Palermo. If the PCs have not done anything by this point, Nina will have likely had other organs removed, killing her, and Ahmad will tire of Kelly and send her to take Nina's place on the transplant table.

The Yacht

Ultima Cena is a 90' motor yacht built in 2002 in Viareggio, Italy. It has a composite hull and teak wood deck. It is powered by two 2,000-kW diesel engines with a top speed of 27 knots (31 mph).

The bridge has heavily automated "glass cockpit" controls and inertial/satellite map displays allowing two people to operate the vessel, with a 20-mile range radar, radio and satellite communication system, Internet connection with Wi-Fi, and depth-finding sonar. Currently the vessel has a course programmed to take it to the northern Cyprus coastal town of Kyrenia.

The main salon dining area seats up to eight guests. It also has a well-stocked pantry, heavily automated kitchen, and an impressive liquor cabinet.

Three guest cabins accommodate up to six guests, all furnished with king-sized beds. The owner and first mate's cabins (used by Marco and Ahmad) both have Jacuzzis, thick carpets, and gold fittings. Marco also has hidden video cameras for recording his adventures, mood lighting, a mirrored ceiling, and a collection of kinky accessories.

A media room packed with electronic entertainment systems seats six. There are crew quarters with three cabins for up six people.

The study is configured to Marco's antiquarian tastes. In addition to a shelf of books (mostly Italian on classical subjects and archeology), and two comfy armchairs, he has one wall devoted to a display of ancient Greek and Roman coins from Syria, an impressive 18" wide Palmyrene stone funerary relief bust of an aristocratic woman (second century A.D., used to cover the opening of her tomb) and, at pride of place, a glass cabinet holding a Roman-era gold-plated bronze figure of a griffin (originally stolen from the national museum of Aleppo). The collection is worth over \$300,000 and weighs some 200 lbs.

The engine room is largely automated. A couple of small storage closets and rooms run off from the engine room; one holds spare parts, and the other cleaning supplies.

Luxury Yacht Table

Vehicle	ST/HP	Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ.	DR	Range	Cost	Loc.	Draft
Luxury Yacht	248	-1/6	12f	1/15	145	25	+7	11A	10	3,000	\$18M	gS	12

BOATING (LARGE POWERBOAT)

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

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