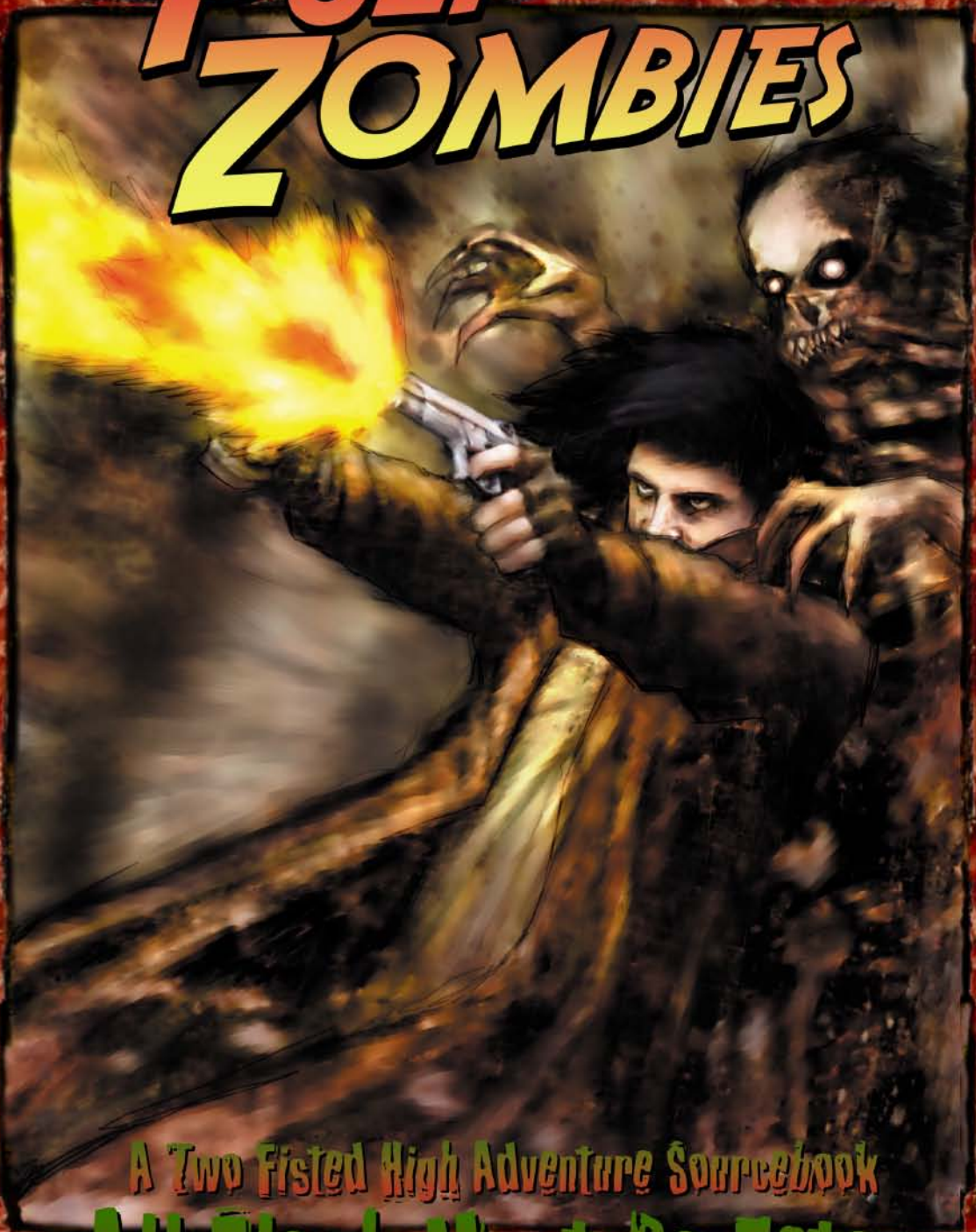


PULP ZOMBIES



A Two Fisted High Adventure Sourcebook

All Flesh Must Be Eaten



PULP ZOMBIES

EDEN STUDIOS PRESENTS A SHY/VASILAKOS PRODUCTION

Pulp Zombies™

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Reader discretion is advised.

Dedicated to Jack Savage.

Comments and questions can be directed via the Internet at www.allflesh.com, via e-mail at edenprod@aol.com or via letter with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

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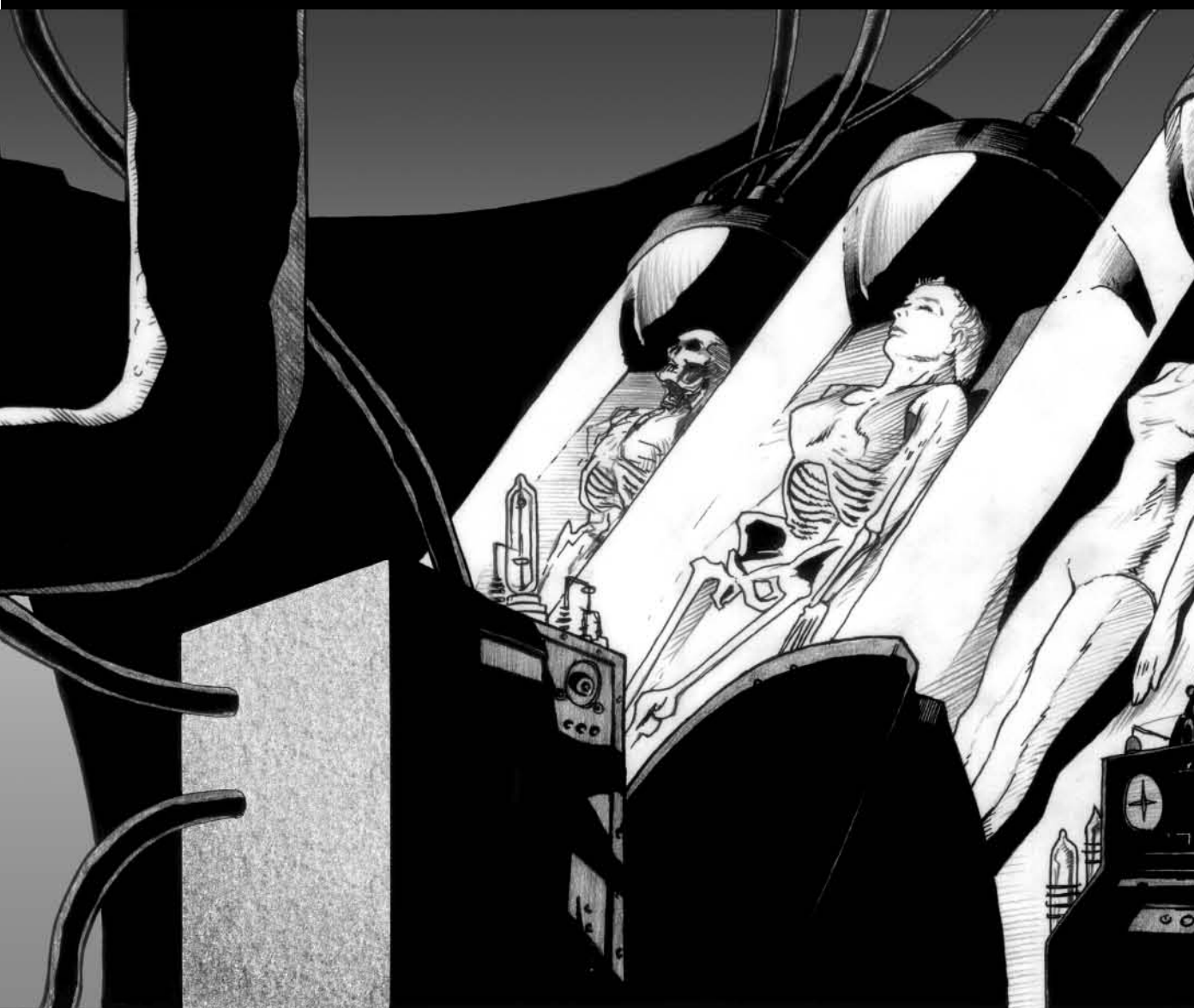
ZOMBIES

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CHAPTER ONE





SETTING THE STAGE



THE NIGHT CHICAGO DIED

by James Lowder

Chicago's most vicious criminals fear but one man: Tristram Holt, known throughout the underworld as the Corpse. But when his most powerful enemies band together to throw wide the gates of Hell, can even the Scourge of Evil turn back an army of the walking dead?

CHAPTER ONE

The Corpse Strikes

Johnny "Gat" Garrison was a man of few words. In fact, he usually let his twin .38s do his talking for him—and those lethal surrogates were about to speak.

"Honest, Gat, I didn't mean nothing by it," stammered Eddie O'Rourke as he stared, quaking, into the black barrels of Garrison's guns. They gaped at him like a skull's empty eye sockets, the face of Death itself. "I'm sure the boss will take care of anyone who gets in our way. Even . . . *him*. I wasn't doubtin' what ya said. Besides, I'm yer pal, right?"

The .38s barked their reply. O'Rourke was not a little man, but the blast still sent him staggering back a half-dozen steps before he collapsed in a bloody, lifeless heap. Garrison didn't spare his victim another look, so accustomed was he to seeing corpses sprawled before him. Instead, he turned his cold, murderer's gaze on the other eight men gathered around him.


"Well?" he rumbled.

The challenge lingered in the bitter February air. By way of a reply, the bootleggers and hit men and racketeers studied the tips of their perfectly polished shoes or pattered with the tools and boards stacked around them in the gutted barn, which was in the process of being turned into a roadhouse. More than one of the gangsters wished he could slip away into the shadows that hung thick in the corners. But the only warmth in the place came from the trash fire burning in an empty oil drum positioned at the room's center. Get too far from that and the winter

night tore into you like a bitter old man with a shiv. Besides, Garrison would cut down anyone who stepped out of the glare created by the trio of work lights set up to illuminate the meeting place. So the men stuck close together, even though distrust hung as thick around them as the dark, curling smoke from the oil drum.

Suspicion was to be expected with a meeting as unprecedented as this one. Half the criminals in attendance were veterans of Al Capone's South Side gang, the other half supposedly loyal to "Bugs" Moran, who ran the rackets on the North Side. Warfare between the two Chicago mobs had been constant for the past decade. Capone's predecessors had either been murdered, like "Big Jim" Colosimo, or frightened into retirement, like Johnny Torrio. On the North Side, Moran had been one of a trio of ambitious men to take over after Dion O'Banion was gunned down in the florist shop he ran. Two of O'Banion's would-be successors soon followed him to an early grave. First George "Hymie" Weiss was riddled with machine gun bullets in front of that same fatal florist shop. Then "Schemer" Drucci, on election day in 1927, was killed in a bizarre scuffle with police after being picked up for the attempted kidnapping of a rival to his candidate for mayor. That left the North Side under the control of Moran, who made it his mission in life to wipe out Capone. The South Side mob accepted the threat and returned it in kind, bullet for bullet, until the streets of the Windy City ran red with blood.

If the mobsters gathered on that winter-wracked midnight had anything to say about it, the gang war would end soon. And Gat Garrison was going to make certain his boss was the one to be declared the new crime king of Chicago. The same fatal hand



he'd dealt O'Rourke awaited anyone who questioned that inevitability.

"Well?" prompted the killer, guns still leveled before him.

It was Dario Fulci who finally spoke. "You'll get no back talk from us," the Italian said in his rasping, almost inhuman voice—a voice horribly familiar to the families of kidnap victims in a dozen states east of the Mississippi. "You done right in shutting up O'Rourke," he concluded. "If he doubted the plan, he would've turned rat on us sooner or later."

"And we don't stand a chance of getting rid of Capone and Moran if someone spills his guts," chimed in a stunted Northsider by the name of Ulysses Flynn. The little man glanced from under his bowler hat at the gory corpse of his fallen fellow Irishman, then laughed rather idiotically at the unintended joke. "I mean—uh, if somebody *tips off* the other bosses to what Bruiser Bill has planned for this burg."

When the rest nodded in agreement, Garrison finally lowered his guns. But the murderer didn't holster the .38s. He simply let them drop to his sides as if they were extensions of his muscular arms.

Flynn's foolish laughter chased away the silence that followed. "I can't wait 'til we're all one gang, with one boss," the little man said cheerfully, stepping forward to warm his hands over the trash fire. He flashed an impish smile that belied his status as a white slaver. "After Bill Sullivan becomes top dog, nobody will be strong enough to stand against us—not the cops, not the Secret Six, not even the Corpse."

For a few moments more, Flynn rambled on about the plan, lingering over certain details he found particularly clever. The others joined in, grateful to have something to take their minds off their boss's absence. And that absence made them more uncomfortable than the bitter cold or even Gat Garrison's fury. "Bruiser" Bill Sullivan was never late. Eventually, even Garrison had to admit that something wasn't right. He glared at his watch with a look almost mean enough to make the hands run backward and said simply, "Trouble."

"Yeah," Fulci rasped, "this ain't good. The boss is always early to meetings."

"Speaking of early birds," Flynn said with a foolish laugh, "there was this old yegg working for—" He paused when something small dropped onto the brim of his hat. Had it not been so cold, he might have mistaken it for a raindrop. A second and a third little impact quickly followed the first, then a half-dozen more. "Hey," Flynn said, pulling off his hat, "what gives?"


Fat yellow-white maggots wriggled on the brown bowler. Flynn dropped his hat and crossed himself. "Christ almighty," the little man gasped. "He's here . . ."

As one, the rest of the criminals drew their guns. Fulci scrambled forward and redirected a work light so that it pointed up. For an instant, the bright white beam revealed two men perched in the rafters, cloaked in smoke and darkness. Then one of the figures dropped.

"It's the boss!" Garrison cried when he saw the raccoon coat and wide-brimmed gray hat on the figure plummeting toward them. "Catch him, somebody!"

Though none of the gangsters moved quickly enough to act on that order, the body never hit the floor. A rope around the man's neck snapped taut and he jerked to a stop, three feet of air still beneath his heels. He danced for a moment on the rope's end, shudders wracking the thin form beneath the heavy coat. Bruiser Bill Sullivan was not, as his name might suggest, a big, burly fellow. He'd gained his moniker from his expertise with a machine gun, the use of which often bruised the gunman's arms and shoulders. An instant after the last traces of life appeared to flee the dangling body, Sullivan's own trademark trench sweeper dropped from above and hit the floorboards with a startling clatter.

All eyes moved from the fallen tommy gun to the unfortunate mobster dangling above them, then up the hangman's rope to the rafters, where the second man still slouched against a vertical beam. The Corpse! The gangsters, like all the denizens of Chicago's underworld, recognized him on sight. And if they could not see the figure clearly enough to make out the details of his bloody, bullet-torn clothing and gaunt features, the maggots that had rained down



upon Ulysses Flynn announced the Corpse's presence. The vermin were his calling card, the things with which the Scourge of Evil marked his victims . . .

The boom of a dozen guns going off at once echoed in the barn. The man in the rafters danced a moment in the crossfire, then toppled forward. No rope impeded his fall. He crashed, face down, to the ground. A second roar of gunfire masked the impact's sickening thud and the sound of bones breaking. The gangsters kept up the hail of bullets until their guns clicked empty.

His twin .38s smoking at his sides, Gat Garrison approached the body cautiously. He dug his toe under the bullet-riddled body and kicked it over, so that it lay on its back. The face was horrible to see, but it was not the Corpse's grim visage that stared up at the fearful gangsters. The face belonged to the would-be crime king of Chicago, Bill Sullivan.

Garrison figured it out an instant before the others. He turned, guns pointed at the body dangling on the rope, even as the hanged man raised his head. Garrison smirked and squeezed both triggers at once. The empty guns clacked hollowly.

A horrible smile spread across the pale face of the Corpse. It sliced his blue-white flesh like a razor's cut. There were guns in his hands now, too, and when his shriveled fingers curled, those gleaming black automatics shouted their owner's hatred of the corrupt and the conniving.

Garrison tried to run for cover, but the body of Eddie O'Rourke tripped him up. Had he any say in the matter, O'Rourke would have kept out of it; he had no interest in helping out his murderer. But the fall saved Garrison from the scythe of bullets that slashed through the barn. Their guns empty, the gangsters faced the Corpse's assault armed only with their courage, which meant that many of them took a bullet in the back as they scrambled for the exit.

Soon the Corpse's ammunition was spent, too. Unlike the gangsters' frantic barrage, though, every one of his shots had found its mark. There were no agonized moans, no cries for help. The Corpse left no man wounded. His aim was much too sure for that. The mobsters were all dead—save one.

From his hiding place behind Eddie O'Rourke's body, Gat Garrison watched in stunned silence as the Corpse casually slipped the empty automatics back into his pockets, seemingly unaware of the danger still lurking in the room. The fall had sent Garrison's twin .38s spinning from his hands. They lay on the dirty floor between him and the Corpse. With his eyes, the murderer measured the distance to them. He could reach the guns before the vigilante could react, but they were still empty. What he needed was a loaded weapon, even one he had to make a grab for . . .

Bruiser Bill's machine gun.

The discarded tommy gun rested in a nearby pile of sawdust. It was loaded, Garrison could see, and seemed to have survived the drop from the rafters intact. The murderer's gaze lingered on the oiled black metal of the machine gun as he weighed his chances of retrieving it. Then his gaze moved upward to his adversary. The horrible smile still split the Corpse's face and his dark eyes glittered red with the reflected light of the trash fire. And those dark eyes, Garrison saw to his horror, were fixed squarely upon him.

Gat Garrison sprang up with a grace unexpected from someone of his considerable bulk, but he had barely covered half the distance to his goal before the Corpse swung forward on the rope, yanked a release on the harness hidden beneath the heavy coat, and dropped to the floor directly over the machine gun. The weapon was in the vigilante's hands, the bolt set and the muzzle aimed, even as Garrison skidded to a halt.

The murderer's face displayed no fear. He stood his ground, his barrel chest thrown out as if to present the Corpse a better target.

"Get it over with," Garrison rumbled.

The Corpse obliged.

CHAPTER TWO

Voices of the Damned

The terrific clatter from the burst of machine gun fire had only just died away in the barn when a screech of truck tires sounded outside. The Corpse barely had time to escape into the shadows before the door burst open. Three men, each with a machine gun leveled before him, stepped in from the darkness. They had entered ready to fire, but hesitated when they saw the carnage. "Somebody beat us to it," one of them said.

"You think Capone did it, or Moran?" another asked.

"Neither," came the reply from outside the barn. The trio of gunmen parted to allow a short, stocky man to enter. "They are both equally ignorant of Comrade Sullivan's plans, just as they know nothing of ours." He sighed and brushed some lint from his Western-style overcoat. "The Corpse, I think."

The name of the Corpse was rarely uttered in Chicago without an edge of fear, but the little Bolshevik spoke it only with exasperation. The Corpse knew why. He had tangled before with Nikodim Fomitch Zametov, known to the American Secret Service as the Red Death, and their battles had always gone against the madman.

The vigilante was tempted to step out of the concealing darkness and once again teach the Red Death the error of his ways, but there was too much to be gained by listening—for the moment, anyway.

"The Corpse has done our work for us," Zametov said in his perfectly practiced English, as he scanned the barn for some trace of the man. "But his involvement so soon in this business is . . . *unfortunate*."

The three gangsters would have chosen other, harsher words for this unexpected turn of events. The little Bolshevik noted their nervous glances, the way they gripped their machine guns tightly. "Unfortunate," he concluded, "but nothing to concern us overly. Please, comrades, unload the prototype from the truck."

The three went out. Zametov drew a pistol and kept careful watch on the barn's shadowy corners. The Red Death was a crack shot with any gun. Years of government training and his own secret program of muscle- and speed-building exercises had honed his reflexes. Though small in stature, Zametov easily overmatched all but the most monstrously strong opponents or those highly skilled in the martial arts. The Corpse was neither of those. In fact, the twist of fate that had given him his hideous appearance had left him physically weaker than most men. Yet he had managed, almost through will alone, to defeat the Bolshevik twice before, just as he had smashed many of the gangs infesting the Windy City during his self-proclaimed war on crime. And as soon as the opportunity presented itself, he would make certain this third meeting with Zametov would be the last. The Red Death would foster anarchy in America no more.

The mechanism the three gangsters wheeled into the doorway a short time later resembled something out of a science fiction movie—a small cannon covered in blinking lights and wires pulsing with power. Strange symbols covered its surface. Cables connected the thing to a portable generator on the truck; the Corpse could hear it humming even through the barn wall.

"Remember, comrades, do not station yourself before the harrowing device once it is operational," Zametov warned as the three thugs moved the cannon through the barn door. "The effect of the beam on the living is quite unpleasant."

The Corpse did not have time to wonder at the meaning of those words before Zametov threw the main switch. The pattern of the blinking lights became more insistent. The rattle of the portable generator increased to a strained whine. The Corpse braced himself for some sort of explosion, but no volley erupted from weird device. Instead, a wave of blast furnace-hot air washed over the barn. Another followed, and another, each coming more rapidly than its predecessor. And each wave carried a sound unlike any the Corpse had heard before: a distant wailing, soft at first, but composed of so many different voices that it seemed to be the entire city calling out.



The waves came faster now, one after another, until they blurred together. The air within the barn became stifling and a thick fog filled the air. The soft wail rose in volume until it became an ear-splitting shriek. Louder and louder the sound grew, until the Corpse slammed his hands over his ears to hold it out. He could still hear them, though—the voices of a million people and more, all crying out in agony. The sound drove all his thoughts from his head, threatened to shake his very soul loose from his body. Dimly, distantly, he felt rather than knew what this sound must be.

Hell's cacophony. The voices of the damned.

His back against a thick support column, which hid him from the men in the doorway, the Corpse slid to the ground. The sound was like a physical thing now. It hammered at him, pressing down with so much force he could barely draw a breath. With superhuman effort he turned his head and peered around the wooden post. The fog had lifted, though the air shimmered from the astounding heat in the room. Zametov and his assistants still waited behind the sinister cannon. It looked as if they could not hear the Hell-drawn sounds or feel the scorching air, but something was terrifying the three gangsters. Even the Bolshevik's eyes were focused on the center of the barn.

The Corpse followed Zametov's gaze to the bodies of the men he had killed. They were moving. Bloody fingers clawed the air. Bullet-bitten arms and legs flexed. Bruiser Bill Sullivan and Dario Fulci and little Ulysses Flynn all pushed themselves to their feet and moved with shuffling steps toward Zametov. Even Eddie O'Rourke rose up.

Only O'Rourke's murderer, the brutish Gat Garrison, seemed reluctant to heed the call of the Bolshevik's device. The machine gun burst with which the Corpse had killed Garrison had all but cut him in half, and his body now proved too unstable to walk. Finally, though, he flopped forward and propelled himself across the wooden floor with his arms alone. His legs twitched and shuddered as he dragged them behind him. A trail of blood and gore marked his wake.

The Corpse fell back against the post. The unbearable heat choked him and the unbelievable sight of the living dead men battered his thoughts. He, Tristram Holt, had the appearance of a walking corpse, but he played up his now-ghastly features to frighten his enemies. Sullivan and Garrison and the rest had been dead, and yet they lived again! They were in truth what he only pretended to be.

Even as he struggled to comprehend what he had witnessed, the Hell-born cries tore at his sanity. The torture continued for what seemed hours on end. Finally, the Corpse felt a desperate scream building in his own throat. It tore free, and he shrieked and shrieked, until at last his throat gave out. Only then did he notice the silence in the barn . . . and the cold.

The voices of the damned had been silenced. The bitter chill of the February night had reclaimed the cavernous room. The Corpse crawled across the floor to the open door, moving in the gory trail left by Garrison. Zametov, his henchmen, and the living dead men were all gone. They had taken the trunk and departed—several hours ago, from the first hints of dawn now coloring the sky to the east. Were it not for the blood still staining the wooden floor, the rope still hanging from the rafters, the detritus of his battle with the mobsters still scattered everywhere, the Corpse might have dismissed it all as some terrible hallucination. A waking nightmare.

But, this was no bad dream. Somehow, the Red Death had discovered a way to reach into Hell itself and resurrect the dead. He called to them and they came, slaves to his formidable will.

Well, Tristram Holt knew something of will, too. On unsteady legs he loped across the field behind the barn, to the concealing darkness of the woods. As he did, he reloaded his gleaming black automatics.

It was up to him now to stop the mad Bolshevik, to bring him at last to justice. And if he had to kill Garrison and Bruiser Bill and the rest all over again to do it, he'd be certain to bring enough ammunition to do the job right this time.

CHAPTER THREE

Rex Mortura

"Gee, Rex, you look like Hell. Rough one last night?"

Rex Mortura, private investigator, continued to stare at the cup of cold coffee sitting on the greasy table between him and Sam Ryan. He knew how he looked—skin the color and texture of dirty clay, eyes bloodshot and rimmed with red, a scowl nastier than the last race for mayor.

Yeah, *Hell* was a pretty good word for it. And more appropriate than the clean-faced cop ever could have guessed.

"The last couple of days have been rougher than some," Mortura admitted. "But I'm still breathing, so I guess other people got it worse. Like Bruiser Bill Sullivan . . ."

"Yeah, he's gone missing alright," Ryan said. "About three days back, as best we can figure." He drummed his fingers lightly on his fat, freckled cheek. He'd been a detective a lot longer than his boyish looks suggested, though he always felt like a rookie around the grizzled investigator. "How'd you know?"

"I read his horoscope," was all Mortura would say. He reached out with a hand gloved in night-black leather and picked up his coffee.

Ryan didn't ask about the gloves, even though it was warm enough in the diner to do without them. Everyone knew the story of how Al Capone himself had held Mortura's hands in a tub of acid to pay the P.I. back for pinning a murder rap on one of his favorite girls. But Ryan had never seen his friend's hands tremble like they were trembling now. He was either exhausted or terrified. Maybe a little of both.

"So you've got nothing on Sullivan's disappearing act?" Mortura prompted.

"It was the Corpse. He killed Sullivan and about a dozen others at some dump outside of town. The mobsters' cars are still parked out there. The inside of the place is painted with blood, and there are

enough bullet holes in the walls that the building whistles when the wind blows. We even found some of those maggots he leaves as a calling card."

"But no bodies."

"No bodies," Ryan said. "That's the queer thing about it. The Corpse usually leaves the bodies around as a warning. But if he's decided to add burying the guys he plugs to the other free services he provides the city, that's all right by me." He brayed a harsh laugh. "I just hope Sullivan and the rest have the good sense to stay at the bottom of the river or wherever else they've been dumped."

"They won't," Mortura noted flatly.

"This is kind of an odd case for you," Ryan said, as if he hadn't heard the reply. "One of their girlfriends looking for them? Can't be their wives."

Mortura sighed raggedly and grabbed his battered fedora. "If anyone spots Sullivan or the others—and they will—let me know. I'd appreciate it."

"Sure thing. Hey, go get some rest."

Mortura shrugged. "There'll be time enough for that when I'm dead." He dug into his pocket and dropped a crumpled bill onto the table. "This will cover my coffee and then some. Keep the change for yourself, if you think you might be passing by a speakeasy later. If things play out the way I suspect, you're going to need a drink."

The cop's face went serious. "You know I never touch the stuff when I'm on duty."

"It's almost midnight. You're not on duty."

Ryan slid out of his seat and stood, a solemn look on his boyish face. "I'm *always* on duty." He clapped a hand on Mortura's shoulder as the detective got to his feet. "I know there's no point grilling you about what's going on, Rex. Just let me in on it when you can—and be careful."

"Sure, Sam," he murmured. "You, too."

He felt Ryan's eyes on him as he slouched across the empty diner and out into the night. *To be an honest man in Chicago is to be alone*, someone had once told him. Mortura knew that wasn't true, so long as there were still cops like Sam Ryan in town.



But that only made him feel all the worse for the deception he perpetrated on the detective every time they met. For there was no such person as Rex Mortura. The P.I. was only one more false identity for Tristram Holt, alias the Corpse.

Hiding himself beneath the make-up was simple enough. Holt had been an actor in his college days—talented enough to tread the boards on Broadway or even London, some said, and handsome and charming enough for a Hollywood leading man. Now, his true face was so gaunt that it provided a fine foundation for a more normal one, like Mortura's, that he created with prosthetics and greasepaint. Hands were harder to disguise, but the story he'd invented about Capone and the acid vat provided all the excuse he needed to wear gloves everywhere.

He had not always lived life in the shadows. Four years ago, he had been simply Tristram Holt, assistant district attorney. He'd been a crusader even then, a foe of the racketeers who had claimed Chicago for their own. Holt took up the war against crime with the same cold resolve with which he'd battled the Kaiser's troops in the trenches of the Great War. Before long, his dedication gained him the welcome attention of the Crime Commission. "The Secret Six," as the commissioners were known, inducted Holt into their hand-chosen brigade of crime-busters and even appointed him their public spokesman.

Others were watching Holt, too, and none so carefully as Schemer Drucci. In one of the bizarre flights of fancy that had earned the gangster his nickname, Drucci had decided that Holt was the key to ridding Chicago of the Secret Six. The half-dozen wealthy businessmen who formed the Crime Commission kept their identities well hidden. The young assistant D.A., though, was an easy target. The only question was how to turn the firebrand against his patrons.

Drucci concocted a wild plan to transform Holt into a living bomb, a walking powder keg of surgically implanted chemicals and tiny electronic devices wired to explode at the sending of a certain radio signal. He got as far as kidnapping Holt and beginning the chemical injections before the young man escaped. Drucci's thugs chased him to the riverfront. A dozen bullets ripped into Holt and he disappeared

into the cold, dirty water. His body was never found. When weeks and then months passed without his return, everyone simply assumed that the mobsters had made him pay the ultimate price for his dedication to the law and order.


More than once after his escape, Holt himself wished they had done just that. But the chemicals intended to make him a human bomb had saved him. They dulled his ability to feel pain and slowed his metabolism enough that he survived his ordeal. They also left him disfigured. Instead of his movie star good looks, he possessed the frightful visage of a dead man. His athletic frame had been reduced to the withered body of a cadaver.

For much of the following year, Holt kept to the darkest alleys and cellars of the Levee. He was worried that Drucci and his gang might try to use him again to get at the Secret Six. Their experiment might have made him dangerous in ways he did not understand. And so he hid himself among the Levee's brothels and dope dens. To the denizens of that crime-ridden district he was just another shuffling, rag-wrapped derelict. A hophead, maybe, or a drunk. In fact, he was a student, and the city's meanest streets were his classroom. And when he had learned the hard lessons those streets taught so well, he struck from the shadows at Chicago's underworld.

By the time the last of Drucci's "doctors" were found floating in the river, rumors of the weird assassin filled the headlines of every newspaper in the city. "The Scourge of Evil," the *Chicago Tribune* dubbed him, even as they lauded his thorough smashing of a local gambling house. The mobsters of the Windy City referred to him only as "the Corpse." Before long Holt was playing to that name. The actor once more, he carefully staged his entrances and exits. Like the harness that allowed him to appear as the hanged man in the barn, his gimmicks and stunts made it seem as if he really were some supernatural avenger returned from the grave. And maybe he was.

Certainly Tristram Holt seemed to die a little bit more with each passing day.

As the Corpse, Holt worked outside the system he had once fought to protect. He waged war all across Chicago, and fought the gangsters with their own



brutal methods. The Crime Commission soon renounced his activities. The police established rewards for his arrest. It didn't matter. He was not proud of what he did, but his time in the Levee had shown him how foolish he'd been to think that courts and prisons could prevent the spread of crime. If he was damned for putting that belief into action—that was a price he was willing to pay. He recognized his duty, just as he had recognized it in the trenches of France a decade earlier.

Dark thoughts of those days of mud and endless slaughter filled the head of Tristram Holt—or, rather, Rex Mortura—as the private eye made his way along the midnight streets of Chicago toward his office. He'd taken what amounted to the least direct route possible from the diner. It wasn't that he felt like a stroll through the frigid night air. He simply wanted to pass by one particular building on his way to what he hoped would be a few hours rest.

The doorman at the Garden Arms tried unsuccessfully to hide a sneer of disdain as Mortura, in his cheap suit and rumpled overcoat, walked slowly past. The P.I. fought back a bitter laugh. The same man had never failed to snap to attention when he had visited the ritzy apartment tower as Tristram Holt. He'd been eager enough then to compliment the young man and to tip his hat to Holt's fiancée, the lovely Angela Burton. The doorman still had the privilege of greeting Miss Burton. To Holt she was lost forever.

Midnight had passed. It was now Valentine's Day in Chicago. He'd met Angela almost a decade ago on that most romantic of holidays, so he indulged himself just a little by taking this road home tonight, to pass as close as he dared to the woman he still loved. She more than anything provided the reason for Holt to keep his survival a secret. So long as he remained dead, Angela Burton held no interest for the mobsters and madmen he had thwarted . . .

A block or two from the Garden Arms, thoughts of the walking dead men crowded out more pleasant memories of Holt's time with his lady love. Unhappily he pondered what he had witnessed in the barn. Then he catalogued other, more sane possibilities for the gangsters returning to life. Perhaps

Zametov's ray induced some sort of temporary psychosis. Under its influence he'd only imagined Sullivan and the other gangsters rising up. That might explain the sounds too, and the terrible heat. Nothing in the barn had caught fire. And Zametov's men simply carrying the bodies out might explain the fact that they were missing.

Perhaps it really was just an illusion . . .

That comforting possibility soon shattered like a plate glass window in a hail of gunfire. As Mortura plodded sleepily up the steps of his office building, a terrified shriek rang out. Guns drawn, he sprinted the remaining three flights of stairs and emerged into the wide hallway of the fifth floor. The body of a cleaning woman sprawled before the open office door of Mortura Investigations. Blood spurted from her savaged throat and spread across the worn and warped floorboards in an ever-widening pool. More blood was smeared on her clothes and the walls—

And on the black-nailed fingers and gaping mouth of Eddie O'Rourke, who stood over the unfortunate old woman and stared down at his gruesome handiwork with dead man's eyes.


CHAPTER FOUR

Nightmares and Allies

With his first shot, Rex Mortura split Eddie O'Rourke's unbeating heart. His second took off the top of the gangster's head. O'Rourke fell back against the door, slamming it shut. The square of frosted glass shattered. For an instant the gangster lay still, impaled upon the jagged edges of the broken pane. Then O'Rourke slowly stood and advanced on Mortura.

Without a moment's hesitation, the investigator took aim and fired again. Three bullets bit into O'Rourke's right shin, one after the other in quick succession. The dead man staggered forward another half-step before the damaged leg gave out. He toppled like a felled tree.

Bullets might not stop the things, Mortura noted to himself grimly. But they can slow them down . . .



The investigator leaped over O'Rourke and threw open his office door. As he stepped inside, he came face to face with the hulking form of Gat Garrison.

The murderer's eyes were black beads of hate. His lips were pulled back in a snarl. The crippling damage the Corpse had done to Garrison with the machine gun had obviously been repaired. He stood stiffly upright. In fact, he was taller now than he had been in life.

Mortura saw the reason for that change when Garrison pulled open the long, filthy coat he wore. Four steel rods ran from the dead man's ribs down to his pelvis, anchored to the bones with silver bolts. His stomach and organs had been removed, and in their place curled a tangled mass of yellow tubing. Finely meshed wire enwrapped Garrison's new guts. A cage, Mortura realized. Garrison resembled nothing so much as a walking cage.

That realization saved his life.

Even as the investigator dove past Garrison toward his desk, the dead man gripped the wire with his rotting fingers and tore it open. The mustard-yellow tubing spilled from the rent. It uncoiled as it fell, hitting the floor in thick loops. And when it struck the carpeting, the writhing mass broke apart into dozens of skittering centipedes. Each of the myriapods was as long as a big man's forearm, from fingertips to elbow. Their heads held poisoned fangs as sharp and deadly as a tong soldier's silver hatchet.

The centipedes swarmed over Garrison and over Eddie O'Rourke, who had by then crawled into the office. But sensing no living flesh there, they moved on. A few vanished into the hallway. The rest spread across the room.

Rex Mortura watched the saffron assassins from the vantage of the padded, high-backed chair behind his desk. He gripped a bottle of whiskey in one gloved hand, a lit match in the other. Even as the dead men turned to him and the first of the centipedes reached the thick legs of the desk, he brought the bottle down, hard. The sound of breaking glass hadn't even died away before he dropped the match onto the spreading alcohol. With a hollow whoosh, flame exploded across the scarred and scuffed wooden

desktop. The centipedes reared back, retreating for an instant from the flare of light. The dead men too turned away, something akin to human fear flickering across their gruesome features. Mortura just had time to note this before the trapdoor opened beneath him and his chair disappeared from the room.


Secret passages and hidden rooms honeycombed the entire office building. Holt had installed them soon after buying the place, a purchase financed with money he had stolen from the gangs. The building not only housed the office of Rex Mortura, but some of the Corpse's labs and file rooms. The front had been compromised, though. The presence of the killer centipedes explained how.

The monstrous and deadly creatures were the creation of Kang Hai, the criminal mastermind known throughout the world as the Celestial Executioner. That oriental genius was the only man who had ever discovered the Corpse's true identity, through the use of a hypno-ray developed by his scientist-sorcerers in legendary Tibet. Under the ray's influence, the Corpse had served the madman. For nearly a month, before he finally broke free of Kang Hai's control, the Corpse had terrorized the innocent citizens of Chicago much as he had terrorized the lawless underworld for the rest of his career. He had also revealed many of his most closely held secrets to the cunning madman.

But Kang Hai was long dead. The Corpse had beheaded the Celestial Executioner himself.

As his chair moved past the final curve of the escape slide and came to a gentle stop on the building's lowest floor, Mortura reminded himself that the grave seemed to present no real challenge to his enemies. If Zametov could resurrect Garrison and O'Rourke, make them do his bidding, why not Kang Hai, too? In any case, the dead men's presence made it clear that the Bolshevik had also cracked the secret of Mortura's identity. So that charade had lost its usefulness. Rex Mortura was dead.

Holt hesitated only a moment before throwing the double switches next to the exit. Through a shell company, he rented out a certain number of small offices in order to conceal the building's true purpose. Some of those tenants, or building staff like



the unfortunate cleaning woman on the fifth floor, might still be inside. It was possible they could escape the dead men and the centipedes, but he could not risk Kang Hai's monstrosities escaping into the city at large. The centipedes could kill thousands, trained as they were to sting any living creature they encountered.

Holt gritted his teeth and threw the switches. Then he grabbed a canvas bag hanging by the door and dashed out through the exit.

He was already across the street, watching from a concealed spot, when the explosive charges brought down the office building. Windows shattered all along the block. A car horn screamed in protest at the cinder block that had crushed the sedan's roof. A dozen small fires in the mountain of debris curled black smoke into the cloud-choked night sky.

Turning away from the wreckage, Holt proceeded to strip away his make-up and shrug off the clothes that had been Mortura's. From the canvas bag he withdrew the tattered, bloody shirt, the threadbare cloak splashed with grave rot, and the weather-stained fedora that served as a uniform of sorts for the Corpse. He had no need of heavier clothes; the biting cold could not penetrate his dulled senses. Finally, with shriveled fingers, he emptied the bag of its remaining contents: a pair of gleaming black auto-matics and a silver tube filled with maggots.

If the Red Death and the Celestial Executioner had joined forces, they threatened not just the city, but the whole of the United States. Perhaps even the world.

Holt was loath to admit it, but he understood that this was a danger he might not be able to face alone.

* * *

The sanctum sanctorum of millionaire Edward Janus stood high atop the most exclusive building in the most exclusive stretch of Lake Shore Drive. The cavernous rooms were a study in taste. Priceless paintings adorned the walls. Atop table and mantle rested artifacts recovered by Janus himself from the most remote corners of the globe. Any museum would offer a king's ransom for just one of these remarkable treasures, had the curators known of their existence outside of legend.

Janus was carefully wrapping one of these—a deceptively plain figure of a falcon, its fabulous worth disguised by a layer of black enamel—when the Corpse crept in from the balcony.

"I'm afraid I can't offer you a seat," Janus said without turning to face his uninvited guest. "The chairs have already been carted off."

Like the Corpse, Edward Janus had a long and strange history—one that set him apart from other men. He was an adventurer, a thief, and a devotee of the occult. The scars that marred his throat and ran along his jawline spoke of perils faced and survived. The faint crimson light that bled from around the battered leather patch covering his left eye provided evidence of more startling mysteries encountered. He possessed the agility and speed of a cheetah, the reflexes of a mongoose. At times he had met the Corpse as an adversary, at times as an ally. A strange tension existed between the two unprecedented men, for each knew the other was his match.


Janus finally set the falcon in a specially constructed case. With a sigh, he turned to the Corpse. "If you would care to be of some use, you can crate up the artwork. Start with the Bosch, I think. Visions of Hell suit you . . ."

"They're going to be pretty commonplace around Chicago soon." The Corpse looked around the room. Most of the contents had been readied for shipping. "Forget to pay the rent?" he sneered.

"I've heard some distressing things about the new neighbors," Janus replied, moving to a pair of swords hanging on the wall. The keen edges on the blades—one of peerless gray steel, the other of amber-tinted glass—made it clear that these weapons were far from decorative. "I understand you've had the pleasure of meeting some of them already."

"Yes, real charmers. So if you know about what's happening, you must know why I'm here," said the Corpse. He took a step forward. "If we work together, we—"

With a quick, fluid motion, Janus drew down one of the swords and spun about to face the vigilante. The tip of the glass blade was pointed directly at the Corpse's heart. The odd weapon hummed softly,



menacingly, in the millionaire's hand. "Not too close," he said, smiling.

The Corpse returned the smile, though on his face the expression was ghastly. Janus had the strange ability to make people see the things they most feared. It happened when they stood near him for more than a moment. He'd said once that the phenomenon, which he could not control, was the unwelcome aftereffect of an experiment gone very wrong. Though not everyone was susceptible to this weird power and it had never affected the Corpse, Janus always kept people at a distance.

"I've already seen my nightmares come true," the Corpse said grimly.

"Not all of them." Janus lowered the blade. "Not yet."

"Are you going to be here when the rest of them come to pass?"

"No."

"I could use your help."

Janus smirked. "I know. But I'm no fool. I'm not even a hero."

"What can I offer you to stay and fight on my side?"

"It's a losing battle. They've planned too well for anyone to stop them. Besides, Zametov's bid was the West Coast. If that wasn't enough to get me involved, I doubt you—"

The Corpse barreled into Janus, pushing him back and slamming him hard against the wall. He had the millionaire by the throat with his left hand, a pistol pressed against the man's temple with his right. Before he could utter the threat burning on his tongue, a sharp jab under his chin brought him up short. Somehow, Janus had managed to get his sword raised in time. It lay pressed between them.

"You can shoot," Janus said, far more calmly than he had any right to be, "but I'll drive the blade through your skull as I go down." The Corpse tightened his grip on the automatic. His finger twitched on the trigger. The millionaire scowled. "You won't be able to do anything to stop them if you're a real corpse—though death is less of a liability now than it was last week."

A curse on his lips, the Corpse shoved Janus away. "Did Zametov tell you what he had planned?"

"Enough to entice me to join. Not enough to make me a liability. He dropped by earlier this evening with a few of his soldiers. Seemed quite cheerful, in fact. Claimed that he'd gotten rid of you for good. Anyway, after demonstrating the prototype of the harrowing device and explaining that the working model was now operational, he offered me a position of authority in his new order."

"The West Coast, right. I'm surprised Kang Hai let him offer you such a plum."

"Kang Hai?" The red glow limning the millionaire's eye patch dimmed and his lips curled in disgust. "But you and I killed—no, never mind. Well, if he's involved, it's one more reason for me to be glad that I declined. And since I've made it clear to Zametov that I have no interest in interfering with his plans, he should be happy if I take my leave of Chicago before the shooting starts."


"Shooting?"

"Lots of shooting. The gang war to end all gang wars."

The Corpse nodded. "And every casualty a new recruit for his undead army. That explains what Zametov was doing at the barn the other night. He was planning on hitting Sullivan himself. The Bruiser's boys might have touched things off between Capone and Moran before Zametov was ready."

"He's ready now," Janus said darkly and went back to packing away his swords. When he spoke again, his tone was casual once more, as if the subject were of no more significance than a trade the White Sox had staged. "He's hired McGurn and some of the Purple Gang out from under Capone. They're going to hit Moran later this morning, and make it look like Scarface ordered it. I don't know where, but if you follow Moran, you're bound to find out."

The Corpse turned toward the window. As he did, he placed the key to a safety deposit box on a table. "I was going to offer what I've got stashed in the box if you'd stay and fight," he said. "Diamonds—a lot of them. I stole them from Capone's couriers over



the years. They're not much to a man like you, but they should make it worth your while to take someone with you when you go. Her name is Angela Burton. You'll find her at the Garden Arms."

"Ah, the woman in the case," Janus quipped. "I was married once, you know." He held up his left hand. The ring finger was missing. Barely a stub of the digit remained. "Not a good match."

Then the careless façade fell away, and the millionaire's handsome face took on a serious cast. "It's not too late for you to ask her yourself . . ."

For an instant the Corpse stood framed by the balcony doors, his shape dark and ominous against the bleak dawn sky. "Of course it is," he said bitterly. And then he was gone.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Gates of Hell

Valentine's Day did not start well for Bugs Moran. Nightmares woke the leader of the North Side mob shortly after sunrise. The terrifying dream-images of Hell faded quickly, but the sounds of the damned burning in the Pit lingered in his ears all morning. It wasn't a shriek or even a drone. More like an annoying buzz at the very back of his consciousness. The annoyance left Moran even edgier than normal, which was no mean feat for a man renowned for his instability. He demonstrated his foul mood shortly after rising, when he beat one of his lieutenants unconscious with a poker just for letting the phone ring one too many times before answering.

Moran might have been more concerned had he not typically teetered on the brink of insanity. Besides, everyone around him was acting a bit odd. More fights than usual were breaking out among the boys. Even the locals seemed to be down with a case of the crazies. Though the cold and the wind had kept most pedestrians off the streets, preachers huddled on every other corner, shouting at the top of their lungs about the Apocalypse. The king of the North Side chalked it all up to bad booze. Such were the risks of bathtub hooch.

By way of a solution, Moran was headed now toward a rendezvous with a hijacker who had promised him a truckload of Old Log Cabin. This was the real stuff, whiskey swiped right off the river between Detroit and Canada, and not some swill cooked up in a South Side basement. A glass or two of that and you'd be seeing Heaven, not Hell.

Traffic was snarled along North Clark Street, thanks to a three-car accident that had sparked off a brawl, so Moran was on foot. He didn't like to travel without his bodyguards, but he was already late for the meeting and the garage was only four blocks away. Still, he took precautions. His hand was tight on the gun hidden in the pocket of his overcoat, and his eyes raked the empty sidewalks and abandoned storefronts between him and S.M.C. Cartage, alert for any signs of trouble.

"It's a surprise you've lived this long," a voice said from Moran's shoulder, an instant before the snout of an automatic pressed into his back.

"What's this—a stick up?" The mob boss smirked. "You've got no idea who you're messing with, pal."


"I know exactly who I'm messing with. Turn around."

Bugs Moran gasped when he saw that it was the Corpse who held the gun pointed at his heart, and his hand went slack on his own pistol. "Oh, God," the mobster moaned.

"Shut up and listen," the Corpse said. "Your men at the garage are already dead. You're going to hear that Capone did it, but that's a lie. It was me. I killed them, understand?" He waited for Moran to nod. "Good. So don't bother hitting Scarface for this. The only enemy you've got to worry about in this town is the Corpse. I wanted you to know, Bugs. I wanted you to know who your boys should be gunning for. Not the Southsiders. Me."

The Scourge of Evil stepped aside, but he kept his gun leveled at Moran's chest. The mob boss faced back down North Clark. He could see his driver running along the street toward him.

"I'm done with you . . . for now." With one grimy shoe, the Corpse kicked the mobster in the seat of the pants. "Go on. Scurry back to your rat's nest."



Moran staggered a few steps forward, then whirled about. The initial shock of seeing the hideous features of the Corpse had worn off and the sight of his driver coming to his aid had bolstered the mobster's spirits. He drew his gun, ready to fight. But the Corpse was gone.

Panting, Moran's driver shuffled to a stop at his side. "Jeez, boss. Where'd he go?"

"Weren't you watching him?"

"I was, but I was watching you, too," the driver replied lamely. "When you come forward, I took my eyes off him, but only for a second. I was making sure you was okay. . . ."

Moran jammed his pistol into his lackey's stomach and pulled the trigger. The big man went down like a felled oak. "That's for making me drive myself home in this traffic," Moran said coldly. "If you survive, you can have your job back."

Not long after Moran had departed, the Corpse slipped from his hiding place in the abandoned store. He pushed aside the panel of wood that had replaced the broken glass on the door, and walked slowly to the gangster writhing in pain on the sidewalk. Pleadingly, the big man reached a hand up to him. Gut-shot as he was, he might last for hours. The freezing cold would only make it worse by slowing his bleeding. The Corpse wasn't certain what the mobster wanted from him—help or the mercy of a bullet through the heart. He gave him neither. There was no time to render aid, and a danger in killing the man. From the buzz of hellish voices in the air, the Corpse understood that Zametov had found a way to turn his harrowing device over the entire city. To kill the mobster now would be to add one more soldier to the Red Death's army, and the Corpse already knew that he would be adding enough men to those ranks in just a few moments.

Without a second thought for the wounded criminal, the Corpse hurried down North Clark to the garage and office of S.M.C. Cartage, where seven men unwittingly wasted the last moments of their lives.

* * *

"They were dead when we got there," Jack McGurn grumbled. His disappointment at having missed out on the chance to butcher a few of Moran's boys made his voice little more than a mad dog's growl. "Seven of 'em. Shot up real good."

"The work of the Corpse, of course." Nikodim Fomitch Zametov continued to examine the living dead men lined up before him. He studied each man's face carefully, then his hands, and then moved on to the next one in line. Jack McGurn stood behind Zametov, his machine gun trained on the newest recruits for the Red Death's undead army. He didn't trust the walking stiff, no matter how many times Zametov had told him they could not turn against their master.

When the Bolshevik reached the last man, he turned. "There are six here," he noted. "The seventh?"


"He just didn't get up," McGurn said. "The rest were already on their feet when we got there, but the last guy never even moved a muscle."

"Another beyond our reach." Zametov scowled and clasped his hands behind his back. Muttering, he paced to a writing desk, made a note, then abruptly asked, "Was the body particularly damaged? More so than the others?"

McGurn gestured with the muzzle of his machine gun toward the bullet-riddled bodies standing before him. "Just like them. Hit in the back more times, maybe. Probably tried to run." He thought about it for a moment more. "I never seen him before, so he probably wasn't one of the gang. A leech, maybe. Somebody that liked to hang around to be near all the money."

Scowling, Zametov made another note. Then, very methodically, he put down his pen, drew his revolver from his pocket, and slowly scanned the room.

It was like many basements in Chicago's Chinatown—large and low-ceilinged, with a floor of packed earth. Crates were stacked high around the edges. The tang of exotic spices and opium smoke hung in the air. Thick wooden pillars held up the sagging floor above. A few bare light bulbs lit the expanse, so that shadows clung to the corners. A



dozen more rooms very much like it could be found throughout the eight-block square section that housed the city's Chinese immigrants.

But at the center of this basement stood something quite unique in all the world.

The device resembled a doorframe constructed out of elaborately decorated silver. The metal itself was twisted into grotesque designs, with insets of gold and jade forming strange slashes and swirls. The designs consisted of an odd mixture of obscure scientific symbols and even more obscure occult glyphs. The silver frame opened onto a pulsing sea of darkness. This endless expanse of shadow roiled and heaved. With each swell of darkness, the buzz of tortured voices swelled, too. The cries of the damned never rose above a soft groan, though, as if they were being bled off by the cables and wires leading from the gate to the control panel at the rear of the room.

Zametov moved close to the harrowing device, gun held before him. "You can come out, Comrade Corpse," he called.

Jack McGurn threw the bolt on his machine gun and whirled around. "Where?" he shouted. "I don't see him!"

"Of course not," Zametov sneered. "Just as you did not see him ride upon the truck from the cartage company, or creep into this building in your wake." He turned to the shadows again. "It is no wonder you have bested these imbeciles time and again, Comrade Corpse."

A jar sailed out of one corner, toward McGurn and the assembled dead men. The gangster aimed his machine gun at it and pulled the trigger, just as Zametov screamed, "No!"

McGurn's aim was perfect, striking the jar with four bullets in quick succession. The first was enough, though. At its impact, the jar shattered and its contents ignited. The flaming liquid splashed across the risen dead and McGurn, too. A second jar followed the first, and soon all six dead men were burning.

The Corpse had seen how Garrison and O'Rourke had turned away from the flames in Rex Mortura's

office. They feared fire, and that was a weakness he could exploit. His plan seemed to be working perfectly, too. The dead men opened their mouths in silent screams, waved their arms, and dropped to the dirt floor in futile attempts to put out the flames. McGurn wasn't so quiet. His shrieks nearly drowned out Zametov's shouted curses in Russian.

"A miscalculation!" the mad Bolshevik cried. "You cannot kill me until you know how to disable the harrowing device!"

A single shot rang out. Zametov gasped, and the pistol slipped from his grasp. He raised his fingers to touch the dark circle in the exact center of his forehead, but they never reached it. A look of utter astonishment frozen on his face, the Red Death collapsed and died.


The Corpse emerged from the shadows. "A miscalculation only if I believe you are the only one who knows how to shut it off," he said coldly.

He glanced at the dead men, all fallen now and burning. So, too, Jack McGurn. The fire was spreading. It had already cut the Corpse off from the exit. That didn't matter, so long as he still could reach the device. Even if they wouldn't tell him how to turn it off, he still had one last option.

"I know you're here, Kang Hai. Come out and finish this."

A figure emerged from behind the control panel at the far end of the room. But it was not Kang Hai, the Celestial Executioner. Instead, a slender woman wrapped in exquisite red silk glided into the light. Blood Lotus, the daughter of Kang Hai. Her eyes were the green of the fathomless ocean, her hair as black as her father's corrupt heart. An albino monkey crouched on her shoulder. The tiny beast's fingers were tipped with knives.

"You had assumed that the Bolshevik resurrected my father," she said, bowing formally. "My apologies. Such indignity is acceptable for Western devils, not for one of such exalted status as my sire. No, I am now the Hand of a Thousand Rings, and possessor of all my father's secrets—including yours, Tristram Holt."



The monkey on Blood Lotus' shoulder leaned forward and hissed as she spoke the name. The knives on its fingers jangled. The Corpse raised his gun. The automatic spat lead and the beast tumbled to the ground.

Blood Lotus wiped a small spatter of gore from her golden cheek. "My pet would have killed you, given the chance, so I will forgive you that unkind act. Tell me, how did you know about our plan to assassinate Mr. Moran?"

"A tip from an old friend," the Corpse said, moving closer. The earthen floor kept the fire from getting out of control quickly, but it had begun to climb the support beams and smoke was spreading along the ceiling. Time was running out. The Corpse knew that there was no point in trying to wrench the secret of the device from Lotus. The few times he had crossed paths with her, she had proved herself possessed of an iron will and a devotion to crime even more unshakable than her father's. No, he would have to do this the hard way . . .

"I've got a tap on Moran's phone," the Corpse said. "Once I heard about the meeting at the garage, it wasn't hard to figure out where you planned to strike."

"No doubt you frightened Mr. Moran away and made certain that he blamed you for the slaughter," Lotus offered, all the while watching the Corpse. Even as she spoke, she stepped daintily over the dead monkey and cut off the vigilante's approach to the harrowing device. "A clever effort to avert the war between the gangs, but a pointless one."

The Corpse gestured to Zametov's still form. "Not entirely."

"He is dead for the moment only." Lotus sighed as if the fire and death surrounding her were only the most minor of inconveniences. The confrontation, it seemed, held no surprises for her. "Besides, his primary missions are now complete."

She ran one perfectly manicured nail along edge of the harrowing device. The gesture was sensual, a woman caressing a lover's body. "I needed him because his knowledge of science sped the transition of the gate from its prototype form, helped eliminate

the problems with heat and its paralyzing effects on the living. And the criminals in this city would not serve a woman, let alone one of my race, long enough for me to set the gang war in motion. That war *will* begin shortly, Tristram Holt, despite your actions today. Feh, you have not even robbed me of the Bolshevik's services for very long."


A cruel smile played across her lips.

"Perhaps Marx and Lenin are there in the Inferno to apologize to Comrade Zametov for their mistakes about religion." She gave a little laugh, though there was no joy in the sound. "He never could believe that the device harrowed the dead from Hell. That's why the ones that refused to rise troubled him so—he could not accept that Heaven was closed to us. Ah, see—he rises. But it is no surprise to us where his soul was bound, eh?"

The Red Death pushed himself unsteadily to his feet. Black blood seeped from the hole in his forehead and thick drool slipped from his slack mouth. The Corpse could see the fury of the Pit in the dead thing's eyes. They churned like the darkness in the gateway.

Sounds of the human minions serving Blood Lotus could be heard now over the fire's roar. They called in their singsong language as they fought the blaze from the entryway to the basement. Water dripped through the ceiling as they doused the floor above to keep the flames from spreading. There were other, more terrible noises in the basement, too: the hiss of charred bones scraping along the packed earth. The dead men were gathering themselves together—McGurn and the Northsiders from the garage. The fire had not destroyed them. It had only stripped the remainder of the flesh from their bones, or baked it hard as steel.

Blood Lotus turned to watch them coming toward her, slaves to her dominating will. In that instant, the Corpse pulled the third of his four homemade bombs from where he had them strapped low on his back, beneath his cloak. His movement toward the gateway had been a feint. His real destination had been the control panel.



He tossed the bomb into the air above the bank of dials and fired. As the flaming liquid splattered the metal casing, seeped into the gauges and scorched the switches, sparks shot into the air.

The wavering light from the fire gave the Corpse's already-grim face a demonic cast. He turned and took aim at Blood Lotus, but Zametov grabbed his arm at the last instant. The shot went wide. The vigilante put a second hole in the Red Death's forehead, and a third. The impacts only made him stagger back a step or two. Before the Corpse could fire again, he found himself surrounded. Dead hands pinned his arms to his sides. They gripped his legs and banded his throat.

"I must thank Zametov doubly," he heard the lovely voice of Blood Lotus say close behind him. "For spoiling your aim and for insisting we install a second, hidden control panel as a fail-safe. You could not have stopped us with a hundred bombs. And the price for that failure will be especially steep for you, Tristram Holt, unless you are certain that you end your life with only the blood of the guilty on your hands." She laughed again, the sound edged like a thousand daggers.

The hands around his throat tightened. Through the pounding of blood in his ears and the incessant murmur of the damned, the Corpse could hear the laughter of Blood Lotus. She still stood quiet close, directly behind him. He struggled to lift his arms, to turn his automatics just enough to shoot behind him. But the grip of the dead things, urged on by Lotus' will, was relentless. His arms were pinned. He could only turn his wrists inward.

So the Corpse directed the pistol in his right hand toward his own stomach. Even as oblivion threatened to overwhelm his thoughts, and the pounding of his own hammering pulse thundered in his ears, he willed himself to angle the barrel so that the shot would strike its target. And then he pulled the trigger.

The Corpse did not scream as the bullet sliced through his guts and pierced the casing of the last of the bombs strapped low on his back. He did not even cry out as the incendiary exploded. He did not because he wanted to hear the startled cry of Blood

Lotus as the flames took her and she realized that his will was even greater than her own. And that gasp of horrible surprise was the sound that lingered in his ears as he went tumbling down to Hell.

It was an instant or an eternity. He could not tell which, though it really didn't matter. His sins spread out before him, each one a thick shroud. The deaths of innocents. The ceaseless, unquenchable wrath. The terrible things he had done in the name of Justice. He claimed them all and they enwrapped him, one by one, cutting him off from the light of Heaven. And when that light was gone, so, too, was the last of his humanity. All that had been Tristram Holt fell away into the Pit, while the rest heeded the call of the harrowing device and rose up.

In a smoke-clouded basement in Chinatown, the Corpse opened his eyes. Lotus' human minions had abandoned the depths. The last explosion had driven them away, so that they fought the fire now on the upper floor. But the living dead men remained. Robbed of Lotus' will, they milled and awaited direction. As the Corpse got to his feet, his gleaming black automatics still clutched in his hands, they turned to him and bowed down. So, too, did McGurn and Zametov—and Blood Lotus, though she alone hesitated a moment before showing her respect to the newly risen king of the dead.

The Corpse willed his hands to reload his pistols. He was uncertain of the reason he needed to do so; he only knew that it was important to be ready. The still-clumsy fingers dug in his pockets until a silver tube tumbled out and clattered to the dirt floor. He picked it up and emptied the maggots it contained into his palm. He stared at them for a time, and when their meaning finally came clear to him, he pressed them gently, with suddenly steady hands, into his wounds. He would need the maggots again, just as he would need his gleaming black automatics.

For the Corpse was not done with his war against crime.

But now, the only crime was to be alive.

* * *



The Best Flesh is Pulpy Flesh

Stories of exploration: adventurers penetrating the darkest, unexplored regions of the Earth. Stories of heroism: supermen foiling the nefarious plots of dastardly villains bent of dominating the world. Stories of mystery: gritty, streetwise protagonists wearing out their shoe leather in search of the clues that will make everything fall into place. Stories of weird menace: unfortunate nephews heir to Secrets Man Was Not Meant To Know. These are only scratches on the surface of the pulp genre.

Truth be told, the term “pulp” does not precisely describe a genre of story at all. The name comes from the cheap paper these stories were printed on when they were ubiquitous on magazine stands in the ‘20s, ‘30s, and ‘40s. There were all kinds of stories printed in this format: romances and westerns are two that are not usually on the tip of the tongue when the pulp convention is trotted out. To put things in perspec-

tive, imagine if, eighty years in the future, all the movies now on shelves at the local video rental joint were lumped together and collectively referred to as “tapes.” Having *Die Hard* lumped in with *Terms of Endearment* would be kind of frustrating to a purist, would it not?

Luckily, the phrase “pulp” has come to have a finer meaning, referring to a genre a little more pointed than the sum of all stories printed on cheap paper in those decades. It is usually taken to refer to the larger-than-life adventure stories of the day, and that is how the term is used in *Pulp Zombies*. A few unifying themes will be discussed in **Chapter Two: Pulpy Flesh**, but for now think of the pulps as barely-believable tales of incredible adventures involving Heroism-with-a-capital-H, Evil-with-a-capital-E, and all the historical tropes the ‘20s, ‘30s, and ‘40s have to offer.



The Pulp Era

The pulps had their roots in stories published before the turn of the previous century and continued on into the late '40s. Many pulp stories were reprinted in the '50s and '60s, and homages are still written today. The pulps were the most popular during the period from the stock market crash of 1929 to the end of World War II, and encompass the years that most people think of when they think pulp. Call those years the “Pulp Era.” For the purposes of this book, what is good for one Pulp Era date is good for all of them. The specifics of “real life” chronology are not overly important. Was the *War of the Worlds* broadcast before or after the Lindbergh kidnapping? Did Gandhi’s campaign of civil disobedience overlap John Dillinger’s spree of bank robberies? What year did NBC broadcast the World’s Fair opening ceremonies in New York? When did Hemingway write *For Whom the Bell Tolls*? It doesn’t matter for our purposes—they all happened in the Pulp Era.

By making that assumption off the bat, three things work out much better.

First, the stories that can be told are not limited to a particular date. If 1930 was chosen as the official setting, it would be difficult to tell stories about Roosevelt in the White House, would it not? For those who are happy having FDR where he belongs, money gratuities are preferred and may be mailed to the author care of Eden Studios.

Second, *Zombie Masters* are free to mix and match all of the technology and cultural events of the era, in any order desired, in order to create more options. Perhaps Widget X was not actually invented until a number of years after Event Y. That should not spoil anyone’s fun if the existence of both X and Y is important to a particular storyline or plot. All of the Pulp Era stuff is presented *en masse* so *Zombie Masters* can pick the stuff they want.

Third, it takes a big burden off the *Zombie Master*’s shoulders. There’s nothing more annoying than a roleplayer who breaks the flow of a scenario with a smug “But Island Nation Alpha was a protectorate of Imperialist Power Beta until 1936, so it makes no sense for them to pay us off in Lira.” The

Pulp Era convention gives *Zombie Masters* carte blanche to bend history to their whims. That is, of course, if a simply “stuff it buddy” does not suffice.

So now that it is clear what it is, welcome to the Pulp Era.

Chapter Summary

Chapter One: Setting the Stage presents these introductory remarks.

Chapter Two: Pulpy Flesh defines pulp stories (for the purpose of this book, anyway), talks about what the Pulp Era was like, and presents information on how to create characters for *Pulp Zombies*. It includes ways *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* should be adapted for pulp play, new rules for gadgets and mental powers, and six character archetypes to start any pulp campaign.

Chapter Three: The Hollow Earth is the first of three detailed campaign worlds. In it, an entire civilization of subterranean zombies is released from centuries of underground imprisonment to feast upon human flesh.

Chapter Four: Zombies, Inc. presents a campaign setting where a demented criminal mastermind—who looks a little too familiar for comfort—uses a legion of the living dead to carry out nefarious crimes across the continents.

Chapter Five: They Want Our Women tells the tale of Martians who have come to Earth for reasons that should be pretty apparent.

Chapter Six: Scattered Pulp includes five more settings, each presented in broad outline, to be fleshed out by individual *Zombie Masters* for campaign play or to be used as fire-and-forget, one-shot adventures.

The Appendix runs through a list of Pulp Era firearms, several handy tables, a bibliography, and some suggestions for finding more pulpy goodness.



How to Use Pulp Zombies

Use *Pulp Zombies* just like *All Flesh Must Be Eaten*. Chapters One and Two are for players and Zombie Masters alike. They include information on the setting with which everyone should be familiar, and will also be needed to create player characters. Chapters Three through Six are off-limits to players. Discovering all the pulpy secrets that lie within is a matter for in-game adventure, so these chapters should only be perused by Zombie Masters.

Just like *All Flesh Must Be Eaten*, *Pulp Zombies* can be approached in one of two ways. Individual scenarios from one (or more) of the settings described can be strung together into a campaign that involves common characters who move from adventure to adventure. This is a fine pulp tradition, as characters like the Shadow and Doc Savage each had dozens and dozens of adventures related to one another only by their common protagonist. Alternately, gaming groups can skip back and forth from setting to setting, playing single scenarios at whim, creating new characters for each one. Some of the settings are more appropriate for one of the approaches than the other, and this is discussed where appropriate.

Conventions

Text Conventions

This book has different graphic features that identify the type of information presented. This text is standard text, and it is used for general explanations.

Certain text is set off from the standard text in this manner. This is sidebar text and it contains additional, but tangential information, or supplemental charts and tables.

Other text is set apart in this way. It details Supporting Cast or Adversaries that may be used in Stories at the Zombie Master's discretion.

Dice Notations

D10, D8, D6 and D4 mean a ten-sided die, an eight-sided die, a six-sided die and a four-sided die, respectively. When a number appears before the notation, that number of such dice should be rolled and their results should be added together. For example, 2D6 means roll two six-sided dice, and generate a result between 2 and 12. Multipliers are expressed after the dice notation. For example, 3D10 x 4 means roll three ten-sided dice, add the results together, and multiply that total result by 4. This generates a number between 12 and 120. A number in parentheses after, or in the middle of, the notation is the average roll. This number is provided for those that want to avoid dice rolling and just get the result. So the notation D6 x 4(12) means that players who want to skip rolling just use the value 12. Some notations cannot provide a set number because their result depends on a variable factor. For example, D8(4) x Strength is used because the Strength value to be plugged into that notation will vary depending on who is acting.

Gender

Every roleplaying game faces a decision about third person pronouns and possessives. While the male reference (he, him, his) is customarily used for both male and female, there is no question that it is not entirely inclusive. On the other hand, the "he or she" structure is clumsy and unattractive. In an effort to "split the difference," this book uses male designations for even chapters, and female designations for odd chapters.

Measurements

This book primarily uses U.S. measurements (feet, yards, miles, pounds, etc.). Metric system equivalents appear in parentheses. In the interests of ease of use, the conversions are rounded relatively arbitrarily. For example, miles are multiplied by 1.5 to get kilometers (instead of 1.609), meters are equal to yards (instead of 1.094 yards), pounds are halved to get kilograms (instead of multiplied by 0.4536), and so on. If a Zombie Master feels that more precision is necessary, she should take the U.S. measurements provided and apply more exact formulas.

About the Author

Jeff Tidball has seen the game industry from all sides: author, designer, editor, graphic designer, publisher, and even retail clerk. He spent nearly five years in the employ of Atlas Games, toiling for three as Director of Creative Development. During that tenure, he has heard almost every ridiculous fairy tale about dogs and hard drives that exists.

Jeff's design credits include *Cults Across America* and *Spammers*, both published by Atlas Games, and *Thunder's Edge* and *Demon Canyon* (with Christian Petersen), published by Fantasy Flight Games. He has edited or developed many, many supplements for *Ars Magica Fourth Edition*. *Cults Across America*, *Spammers*, *Thunder's Edge*, and *Ars Magica Fourth Edition* have all been nominated for Origins Awards.

Jeff currently lives in Los Angeles with his wife Stacey, who is both beautiful and talented. He is laboring towards a Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting degree from the School of Cinema-Television at the University of Southern California. Jeff's personal web site is located at <http://www.jefftidball.com>.



CHAPTER TWO





PULPY FLESH



Pulps? Whazzat?

Chances are that the sort of person who would pick up a book called *Pulp Zombies* has some idea about what the pulps are. After all, the most popular pulp heroes have remained part of the pop consciousness through the decades and are familiar to almost all fans of genre fiction—even those who did not read the titles firsthand. The Shadow, Doc Savage, and Dick Tracy are three particularly famous examples. On the other hand, some readers are probably more familiar with the pulp-inspired characters and stories that were invented later as tribute to the adventurous tales of the pulp age. Indiana Jones springs immediately to mind. But even readers blankly shrugging at these famous personalities probably know more about the pulp sensibility than they think. And even those who do not are in luck—the essential elements of the *Pulp Zombies* genre are coming up . . . oh . . . right about now.

High Adventure

Pulp adventures involve high stakes and thrilling locations. While pulp heroes no doubt volunteer as merit badge counselors for the local Boy Scout troop and help old women across Main Street, these are not the stuff of their pulp *adventures*. True pulp adventures are the sort of tales that make curmudgeonly moviegoers (and everybody knows at least one of these unfun guys) say “That could never happen in *real* life.”

Pulp adventures involve pulp heroes who return kidnapped millionaires to their families, save entire cities and civilizations from destruction at the hands of evil-doers, and seek out the greatest lost treasures ever known. They travel to Darkest Africa, forgotten Mayan ruins, the chaotic warrens of Chinatown, and even other planets. The action keeps moving, the danger keeps intensifying, and the hero keeps pushing until everything climaxes in the most incredible way imaginable. *That* is high adventure.



Heroes are Heroic

While some rare pulp heroes have checkered (or even villainous) histories, by the standards of the Pulp Era, pulp heroes are simply heroic. They do the Right Things for the Right Reasons. Real life presents everyone with moral quandaries aplenty, but pulp heroes never agonize over ethical and moral questions. They know instinctively what is right. Leave the shades of gray to those games played by people in the black trenchcoats and piercings.

In order to keep the heroism heroic, *Zombie Masters* running pulp genre games should avoid *presenting* moral quandaries in the course of play. That is a sure-fire way to break everyone's pulp mood. So avoid agonizing choices between the tortured death of a cherubic little orphan (behind door number one) and the lives of the entire assembled citizenry of San Francisco (behind door number two), okay? Once all the information is in hand, the decisions should be pretty simple.

Patriotism and Heroism

Pulp heroes embody the patriotic ideals of the good old United States of America: Truth, Justice, and the American Way, as it were. Enlightened (?), modern-day global villagers—especially those from other countries—may find this bold flag-waving a little bit weird, but those pulp Cast Members who are truly in genre can never go wrong touting the virtues of the red, white, and blue.

Villains are Villainous

Pulp villains are evil. Not misunderstood. Not mildly naughty. When thinking of pulp villains, think of words like depraved, sinister, nefarious, and wicked. These Adversaries are thoroughly corrupt, down to the core. Two hundred fifty-six shades of gray are found on computer monitors, not pulp villains.

Some pulp menaces are villainous for good reason. Their fortunes were destroyed by their enemies or by sheer bad luck. Their parents were killed by muggers. Their teddy bears have been stolen. They just cannot get a fair shake. Whatever. Justifications and rationales are purely window dressing. Pulp villains can be evil for any reason or no reason at all.

It is true that some pulp antagonists—usually those best described as “weird menaces”—lack the moral capacity to be evil according to a strict definition of the term. The mad gods created by H.P. Lovecraft and the other authors of the Cthulhu Mythos are not, strictly speaking, malevolent. Neither are the dime-a-dozen walking dead, for that matter, since most zombies lack the capacity to choose pizza toppings much less tell right from wrong. Do not be bothered by these how-many-angels-can-dance-on-the-head-of-a-pin philosophical quandaries. They are the antithesis to all that is Good and Right in the world—everything the protagonists represent. These creatures' actions are so devoid of moral compass that for the purposes of pulp stories, they are evil.

Cheese: Good and Good For You

Readers would be forgiven for thinking that the pulps are chock full of pretty cheesy stuff. They would be forgiven because they would be completely correct. Modern audiences have seen all of this stuff before and are surprisingly sophisticated when it comes down to separating the campy stories from the serious drama. That is a good thing though, because it means that everyone has an almost innate sense—once they get going, anyway—of the genre.

Zombie Masters will find that once the juices are flowing they have a natural ability to spontaneously invent villains, plots, heroes, death traps, riddles, McGuffins, and more. They spring directly from the fanboy lizard-brain where details about movie and book plots go to live in between gaming sessions. Players will also easily be able to get in the pulp mindset. In fact, once they do it is likely to infect all the roleplaying sessions they play in ever after (much to the annoyance of *Rolemaster* Game Masters everywhere). This is all good.

The important thing to remember when playing *Pulp Zombies* is that *nothing* should be dismissed out of hand as too cheesy. No villain's mad plot is too unbelievable, no stereotype is too hackneyed, and no hero's Aunt Prudence is off-limits.

“Bring on the cheese!” must be the *Zombie Master's* credo.

The Golden Rule of Pulp Zombies:

Too Much is Never Enough

The Zombie Master's Credo:

Bring On the Cheese!

The Pulp Era

The Pulp Era was defined in **Chapter One: Setting the Stage**. Here, it is described in more detail—hopefully enough detail for players and Zombie Masters to actually play *Pulp Zombies* without feeling like they are doing the period a disservice. In addition to providing the sort of information that constitutes the daily life of the Pulp Era—the things that people living then would know about the world around them—this section is also be sprinkled with historical events that might spark scenario ideas or provide things for Cast Members to talk about between pitched combats with the walking dead.

The Depression

Mass unemployment is both a statistic and an empty feeling in the stomach.

—Cabell Phillips

The Pulp Era is a time of economic depression. The stock market crash of infamous Black Thursday left the fortunes of thousands of the country's leading citizens and banks in the gutters. While stories of investors and businessmen casting themselves out

the windows of their skyscraper offices in despair are probably overstated, to say that the event was a disaster would be a dramatic understatement.

The economic hard times mean that the unemployed are likely to stay that way and that those fortunate enough to have jobs are constantly waiting for the other shoe to drop. Fully one in five are without jobs and millions more are underemployed, working part time jobs or sharing full time positions.

For those without money or means of support, bread lines and long days spent searching for work are the order of the day. Many long-term job-seekers have discovered that an extra cup of hot water ordered with coffee and combined with a few dollops from the ketchup bottle on the restaurant table make a serviceable tomato soup.

The lower classes are not the only ones affected. Not by a long shot. All segments of economic society are intertwined, so white-collar professionals—lawyers, doctors, administrators, bankers, and more—are also out of work, their services rendered irrelevant because no one can pay for them.

A long drought is making things worse for farmers in the Midwest and elsewhere. Dust storms, crop failures, and through-the-floor commodity prices have forced many to hit the road, heading for California and other points west in search of work. These migrant workers and their families are the Okies, so-called because many came from Oklahoma, which has been particularly hard-hit.





Some Representative Prices

While the prices of goods obviously varies widely by location, quality, and innumerable other factors, the following can be used as sample Pulp Era prices. They provide a general idea of the costs of typical consumer goods.

For items not listed here, the Zombie Master should feel free to assign rough costs to consumer items by dividing the modern day costs of similar items by a factor of between five and fifteen, depending on the sort of item in question. Use the lower end

of the range for things that have not changed much from the Pulp Era to the modern day, such as groceries. Use the higher end of the range for things that have undergone substantial development or were new in the Pulp Era, such as cars. When in doubt, assume a factor of ten. Zombie Masters who receive flack from their players about the cost of some particular item should remind them that prices of everything fluctuated wildly as the economy dipped and swayed before, during, and after the Depression.

Coupe: \$585.00

Sedan: \$995.00

Half-ton pickup truck: \$650.00

Packard: \$2,150.00

Gasoline (gallon): \$.18

Bicycle: \$10.95

Airfare (New York to Chicago, round trip): \$86.31

Airfare (Chicago to LA, round trip): \$207.00

Women's mink coat: \$585.00

Women's wool suit: \$3.98

Women's wool dress: \$1.95

Men's overcoat: \$11.00

Men's wool suit: \$10.50

Men's golf suit: \$20.00

Men's tuxedo: \$25.00

Pack of cigarettes: \$.15

Cigarette lighter: \$.39

8mm movie camera: \$29.50

Console radio: \$50.00

Grand piano: \$395.00

Milk (quart): \$.10

Sirloin steak (pound): \$.29

Coffee (pound): \$.26

Potatoes (pound): \$.02

Cornflakes (8 ounce package): \$.08

Modern house, 6 rooms, 2-car garage (Detroit):
\$2,800.00

English cottage, 8 rooms, 3 baths, 1 ballroom (Seattle): \$4,250.00

Italian villa, 12 rooms (Westchester, NY):
\$17,000.00

Spanish stucco, 7 rooms (Beverly Hills):
\$5,000.00

The following are representative annual salaries for the Pulp Era.

Hired Farm Hand: \$220.00

Waitress: \$520.00

Coal Miner: \$700.00

Priest: \$800.00

Construction Worker: \$900.00

Secretary: \$1,000.00

College Teacher: \$3,000.00

Doctor: \$3,300.00

Lawyer: \$4,200.00

Airline Pilot: \$8,000.00

U.S. Congressman: \$8,600.00

Source: This Fabulous Century, Volume 4: 1930-1940. Time-Life Books.



Popular Entertainment

- *Mutiny on the Bounty*, by Charles Nordhoff and J.N. Hall, is a pirate tale of . . . well . . . mutiny on the *Bounty*.
- *Amos 'n' Andy* is the most popular radio program going, performed by comedians Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll and broadcast on NBC.
- Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig play baseball for the New York Yankees
- "Hoovercart Rodeos," wherein the rear half of an old Model T was hitched to a team of mules and raced over an obstacle course, are taking place across the country.
- *Frankenstein*, the horror movie classic of a mad scientist and his stiff creation, has hit the movie theaters.
- The World's Fair in New York is the largest ever, being held on 1,200 acres of what, until the fairgrounds were built, was the Queens city dump. The massive fair with the theme "World of Tomorrow" will go on for two years. In that time, millions of visitors will see hundreds of exhibits ranging from displays of consumer products to fantastic midway rides.

Daily Life

The first supermarkets are open in the Pulp Era, collecting all manner of diverse foods under cavernous roofs, practicing deep discounting in order to attract shoppers, and emphasizing "do it yourself" grocery shopping. The first pre-cooked frozen foods are on their shelves. Beer in cans is a recent development and sliced bread has just been introduced in the United States. It was initially greeted with suspicion, but quickly caught on.

Refrigerators are being sold at a rate of more than a million each year and home freezers are beginning to become commercially relevant, but icemen continue to make regular deliveries to most households, which still keep food cold using nothing fancier than an icebox.

The Social Conscience of the Pulp Era

In our world, the 1930s were a time that did few favors for women and minorities, at least by today's standards. To say that a Negro could not get a fair shake would be understatement in the extreme, and women were far from liberated. Their constitutional right to vote had only been in effect for a little more than a decade. To put it bluntly, these features of the 1930s are not very much fun to roleplay. For that reason, those aspects of life in the real world are glossed over in *Pulp Zombies*. Feel free to allow female Cast Members all the advantages of men. Do not feel the need to perpetrate the shameful treatment of blacks and other non-Caucasians throughout the country in the Pulp Era just because it happened in real life. This is a game, and that is not fun. (Unless, of course, the campaign is designed around showing the tension and drama of the powerless and oppressed seeking their fair share.)

Tobacco, through paid commercials and program sponsorships, is helping to expand commercial radio, while commercial radio is popularizing cigarettes. Pall Mall has introduced the first "king size" cigarette at eighty-five millimeters, fifteen millimeters longer than other brands.

Airmail crosses the United States in thirty-one hours; airmail postage is twenty-five cents for three ounces. Telephones are largely crank-driven wooden boxes hung on walls; calls are connected through Central. French phones, which combine the mouthpiece and receiver, are recent innovations just beginning to appear.

Blondie, Dick Tracy (originally "Plainclothes Tracy"), Mickey Mouse, Felix the Cat, and Prince Valiant comic strips appear in the daily newspapers. Superman and Batman can be found in comic books.



Sample Pulp Era Brands

Groceries

Ballard Biscuits

Beech-Nut Baby Foods

Birds Eye Frosted Foods

Bisquick

Campbell's soup

Cheerios

Durkee Famous Foods

Gerber baby food

Green Giant canned vegetables

Jiffy biscuit mix

Kix cereal

Mott's Apple Sauce

Oscar Meyer wieners

Pepperidge Farm bread

ReaLemon lemon juice

Ritz crackers

Spam

Sterling table salt

Wonder Bread

Wyler's Bouillon Cubes

Snack Foods

Hostess Twinkies

Lay's potato chips

Snickers candy bars

Beverages

Black Label beer

Budweiser beer

Coca-Cola

Kessler whiskey

Libby's Tomato Juice

Lithiated Lemon (later renamed 7-Up)

Mott's apple juice

Nescafé

Pepsi-Cola

Royal Crown Cola

Sanka decaffeinated coffee

Seagram's 7 Crown blended whiskey

Smirnoff vodka

Sunsweet prune juice

Tree-Sweet canned orange juice

Cigarettes

Camel

Lucky Strike

Pall Mall

Parliament

Philip Morris

Miscellaneous

Toastmaster electric toaster

Zippo lighter



Politics

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.

—Franklin Delano Roosevelt's
First Inaugural Address

Franklin Delano Roosevelt is the President of the United States, and his New Deal—a sweeping program of legislative reforms characterized as dangerously socialist by his opponents—has made some headway against the difficulties of the Great Depression. A host of his programs, which are known popularly by their acronyms, include the National Recovery Administration (NRA), responsible for regulating wages and working hours; the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which puts unemployed men to work for thirty dollars a month doing conservation work; and the Public Works Administration (PWA), which is constructing hundreds of hospitals, transportation facilities, and the like. FDR's "fireside chats" have revolutionized the use of radio in politics.

While previous Presidential administrations were led by the enfranchised scions of business and banking, Roosevelt's advisors and appointees include swarms of academics, lawyers, and other intellectuals. His inner circle is known by some as the "Brain Trust" and they are viewed with suspicion by his detractors. Nevertheless, the academic culture of ideas surrounding Roosevelt has injected a new feeling into the political establishment and provided a place for scores of lawyers and professors who would otherwise have no work.

Big business money men—bankers, investors, and brokers—oppose most tenets of the New Deal. One, James Rand, Jr., the chairman of the archconservative Committee for the Nation, has openly claimed that the Brain Trust is using the New Deal as an intermediary step to delivering the nation into the hands of communists.

Machine politics are alive and well in the Pulp Era, though their power and importance is reduced from a few decades ago. Still powerful are Tammany Hall

in New York, the machine of Tommy Pendergast in Kansas City, and the organization created by the Long family of Louisiana. The legendary Richard Daley, while not yet mayor of Chicago, did start out in politics in the Pulp Era.

Entertainment

Light entertainment (when entertainment can be afforded at all) is the rule of the day for a populace overwhelmed with day-to-day difficulties. Pulp stories (of course!) dominate magazine stands with their lurid and fantastic tales. Movies typically have sound, and the average price of a movie ticket is about thirty-five cents. Popular movies are low-budget, lowest common denominator affairs: westerns, slapstick comedies, and war movies are very common. Shirley Temple, Clark Gable, Will Rogers, and Mickey Rooney are a few of the popular movie stars of the era.

Radio is in its golden age, beaming music, comedy, news, and a diverse array of other programming into the homes of millions of Americans. Most programs are sponsored by consumer brands. *The Lucky Strike Hour*, for example, is a popular radio variety show. In fact, the Shadow was originally the *nom de guerre* taken by the announcer of the Thursday night mystery program sponsored by publisher Street & Smith to promote their *Detective Story* magazine.

Travel

Automobiles are everywhere in the Pulp Era—there is about one registered passenger car for every five persons. The Big Three (General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler) dominate the domestic auto market, having recently adopted the system of bringing out new versions of their models each year in order to keep the people who can afford them buying new cars as status symbols. Chevrolet has introduced a model with a six cylinder engine; other automotive innovations of the Pulp Era include safety glass, car radios, automatic transmissions (called "Hydromatic Drives"), station wagons, and a *sixteen* cylinder Cadillac. Route 66, the "Main Street of America," connects Chicago to Los Angeles, traveling through St. Louis, Joplin, Oklahoma City, Amarillo, Gallup, Flagstaff, Winona, Kingman, Barstow, and San Bernardino.

Sample Pulp Era Automobiles

Model	Wheelbase	Horsepower (rpm)	Price Range
Ford Model A four-cylinder	103.5"	40 (2,200)	\$430-595
Plymouth four-cylinder	110"	56 (2,800)	\$535-645
Chevrolet six-cylinder	109"	50 (2,600)	\$475-675+

The massive United States railroad network—more than a quarter million miles of track built in the 19th century—is in decline in the Pulp Era, facing stiff competition from many new modes of transportation. This is not to say the rails are inconsequential. For one thing, freight trains move a legion of hoboes around the country.

First put to use in World War I by Germany, which used them to awe her enemies as well as rain bombs on them, dirigibles are seen in the Pulp Era as the wave of the future, allowing travelers to cross continents and oceans in majestic comfort. The Navy has commissioned a handful of airships, the largest of which are the *Akron* and *Macon*, dirigibles 780 feet long, each able to house five scout planes inside.

Airplanes and all activities associated with them are a national obsession. Air shows featuring stunts and races are highly attended, and word of new records for distance, speed, and endurance are front-page news. The aviators who fly the fragile planes of the era are truly brave—many have lost their lives pushing the limits of their craft.

Air travel is also a commercial enterprise. The largest commercial operator of domestic flights is American Airlines, Inc., which operates routes largely east of the Mississippi and carries more than one million passengers yearly. Pan American Airways provides flights to many foreign cities including Havana, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, and Manila. A whole host of smaller operators (about two dozen in all) provide service in local areas. Transatlantic flight is in its infancy. A \$375 ticket will take a passenger from Port Washington, New York to Marseilles in twenty-six and a half hours.

Of course, planes also carry mail and express freight from place to place. Common aircraft are the

Ford Tri-Motor, or "Tin Goose," which can carry twelve passengers and fly 100 miles per hour, the Douglas D-1, which carries twelve passengers at 150 miles per hour, and the newer Douglas DC-3, which carries twenty-one passengers at 180 miles per hour. The B-17 bomber, the first four-engine, all-metal, low-wing monoplane, was first demonstrated to the Army in the Pulp Era.

Greyhound Corporation is competing nationally with a number of other bus lines and operates a fleet of 33-passenger, nickel-plated buses. Fare wars have recently reduced ticket prices by as much as half, to only eight dollars (for example) for a ticket from New York to Chicago.

Pulp Era Inventions

Fiberglass	Teflon
Plexiglas	Nylon
Polyethylene	Synthetic Rubber
Radar	Ballpoint Pen
DDT	Penicillin

A Hero and His Guns

While Pulp Heroes typically have more than their fair share of martial prowess when it comes to hand to hand combat, rare indeed is the group of roleplayers who do not also "fetishize" their firearms. Some (but by no means exhaustive) statistics for Pulp Era gun-bunnies are presented in the Appendix (see p. 140).



Crime

Criminals are alive and kicking in the Pulp Era. While the end of Prohibition ended the profitability of illegal bootlegging and spelled the end of the speakeasy, the hard times of the Depression have inspired all manner of robberies (especially of banks—at one point, U.S. banks were being robbed at the rate of two a day), kidnappings, extortion rackets, muggings, and worse. Some of the most notorious criminals are John Dillinger, “Machine Gun” Kelly, and Bonnie (Parker) and Clyde (Barrow).

In response to this tide of sin, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which used to be a haven for party hacks in patronage jobs, has come into its own as Congress categorizes more and more crimes as Federal matters. J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI’s Director, is idolized by law-abiding citizens for his tough stance on crimes and more-than-rigorous personal work ethic. Although his public pronouncements in speeches and publications range from bizarre to irrelevant, he remains a scion of law enforcement.

Alcatraz Island became a federal prison during the Pulp Era, having served as a cellblock for military prisoners from 1909 onward. It houses such notorious criminals as Al Capone.

Famous Pulp Era Crime

- Popular hero Charles Lindbergh’s baby boy is kidnapped and murdered. The nation is agast.
- A former Hoover Cabinet Secretary is indicted for running an illegal lottery for the Loyal Order of Moose.
- The St. Valentine’s Day Massacre takes place in Chicago.
- An unemployed bricklayer from New Jersey attempted to assassinate President-elect Roosevelt while Roosevelt conversed with Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak in an open car. He fired off six shots, killing Cermak but leaving Roosevelt unharmed.

Around the World

The Great Depression was hardly limited to the shores of the United States. The entire global economy was in ruin. Only the most destitute nations were unaffected, and that was solely due to the rampant poverty even in the best of economic times. The desperate times justified and emboldened a multitude of political extremists, on both the left (communists and socialists) and the right (fascists).

In Germany, Adolf Hitler is Chancellor. One of his first acts was to dissolve the German Parliament. President von Hindenberg has signed an emergency decree giving Hitler dangerous powers by suspending constitutional guarantees regarding personal property and individual freedom.

The United States has only recently opened official relations with the Soviet Union. The question of communism continues to divide Americans. Conservatives rail against “godless communism” while liberals often see the government in the USSR as the preview of a political system that will surely dominate the world in the decades to come.

In the Soviet Union, Stalin rules with an iron fist, purging the Communist Party of his enemies. He will execute more than two thirds of the elected central committee, arrest hundreds of delegates, and brutalize and slay countless intellectuals. Far from affecting only those concerned with politics, the purges will reach into the general populace as well and take the lives of millions. The Pulp Era is spanned by three Five-Year Plans which use collectivization to facilitate speedy industrial growth.

Loyalists and Nationalists are fighting the Spanish Civil War. The conflict is demonstrative of the worldwide polarization between the extreme left and right. Many foreign nations and organizations have sent volunteers to join the struggle on one side or the other, and many new military devices are being tested which will later be used to great effect in World War II.

France is working on the Maginot Line, a series of border defenses intended as proof against future German invasion by land. This will not work nearly as well as they would like . . .

Britain holds her title as Queen of the Seas and her overseas holdings remain extensive, but she is clearly in decline (not that the British would admit that).

Mahatma Gandhi is waging a campaign of civil disobedience against the British government over treatment of India's lowest caste, the "untouchables."

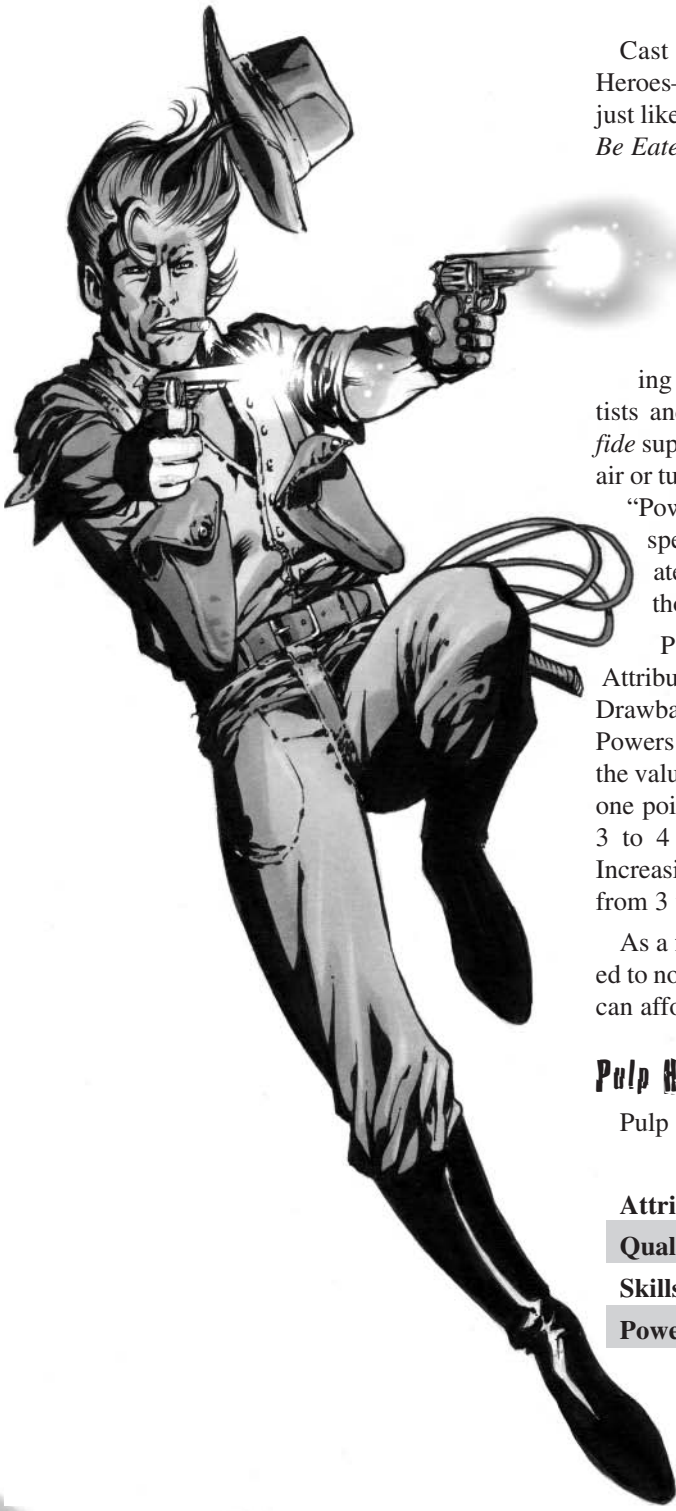
In the Pacific, Japan is the rising power. Her political and economic influence stretches to nearly every nation in the region, and overt military operations have begun in China.

Finding Out More

Some *Zombie Masters* or players may be eager to inject more "realism" into their *Pulp Zombies* campaigns. They might be happy to comb books and other resources for more historical morsels to add depth to the *Pulp Zombies* experience. Doing so is commendable, but certainly not necessary. Players who do not want to invest any more time can rest confident that they are not missing much of the experience.

Those who do want to include more though should feel free. Historical events can be slotted into the Pulp Era just about anywhere. Its "open architecture" means that any event or invention from any date in the era (or even slightly outside of it) may be used in a campaign. Of course, some historical events within the period are mutually exclusive if crammed into the same time. The United States cannot have two different Presidents at once, for example. As long as open and obvious contradictions are avoided and everyone is having fun, everything should be just fine.





Pulp Hero Creation

Cast Members in *Pulp Zombies*—call them Pulp Heroes—are built with a total of seventy character points, just like Survivors and Inspired in standard *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* games. This reflects the “reality” that pulp protagonists fall on the hyper-competent end of the all around proficiency scale. The precise point breakdown appears in a nearby sidebar.

Players do have some options when assigning their points though, to reflect the distinction between Cast Members who are awe-inspiring in a completely mundane way (like rocket scientists and Olympic gymnasts) and those who have *bona fide* supernatural powers (like the ability to fly through the air or turn themselves invisible). That is where the special “Powers” category comes in. Those points can be spent on Qualities, Skills, or Metaphysics. To generate a “mundane” Pulp Hero, do not spend any of those points on Metaphysics. Simplicity itself.

Powers points can also be used to increase Attributes in the same way that points gained from Drawbacks can. Specifically, increasing an Attribute with Powers points costs a number of Powers points equal to the value the Attribute will have once it has been raised by one point. So, for example, increasing an Attribute from 3 to 4 using Powers points costs four Powers points. Increasing one from 3 to 5 costs nine points (four to go from 3 to 4, plus five to go from 4 to 5).

As a final note on Attributes, Pulp Heroes are not limited to normal human Attribute maximums. As long as they can afford the points, their Attributes have no maximum.

Pulp Hero Points

Pulp Heroes are built using the following framework:

Attributes: 20 points

Qualities: 10 points (and up to 10 Drawback points)

Skills: 25 points

Powers: 15 points

Pulp Heroes can purchase any Supernatural Qualities and Drawbacks in *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* (see pp. 47-50), as well as any of the new Qualities and Drawbacks described in this book.

Pulp Heroes may not purchase the following Skills from *All Flesh Must Be Eaten*—they are not applicable in the Pulp Era.

Computers

Computer Hacking

Computer Programming

Electronic Surveillance

Lock Picking (Electronic)

A handful of skills in *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* (Engineer, Fine Arts, Humanities, Sciences) specify that the Zombie Master may declare that Types need not be chosen and that knowledge of the Skill in general confers knowledge in all possible Types of that skill. (Think of them as “collapsible” skills, if it helps to have a label.) The default assumption in *Pulp Zombies* is that these Skills are “collapsed.” A character need not list a particular Type and is assumed to know about all the areas governed by that skill. Pulp protagonists tend not to spend a lot of time worrying about the distinction between opera and theater or archaeology and sociology. If desired, a player may use the Specialty rules (*AFMBE*, p. 51) to gain additional levels in some aspect of a “collapsible” skill.

Pulp Heroes may use the Combat Moves for Martial Arts Skill described in *Enter the Zombie* (see pp. 34-36).

Bigger, Stronger, Faster

Some may want to play *Pulp Zombies* games or campaigns where the Cast Members are even more hyper-competent than the average Pulp Hero (if the term “average Pulp Hero” even makes sense). Characters with such incredible capabilities are called “Legendary Heroes.” These worthies are created just like standard Pulp Heroes, they simply have more points to spend. Use the following framework:

Attributes: 30 points

Qualities: 20 points (and up to 10 Drawback points)

Skills: 30 points

Powers: 30 points

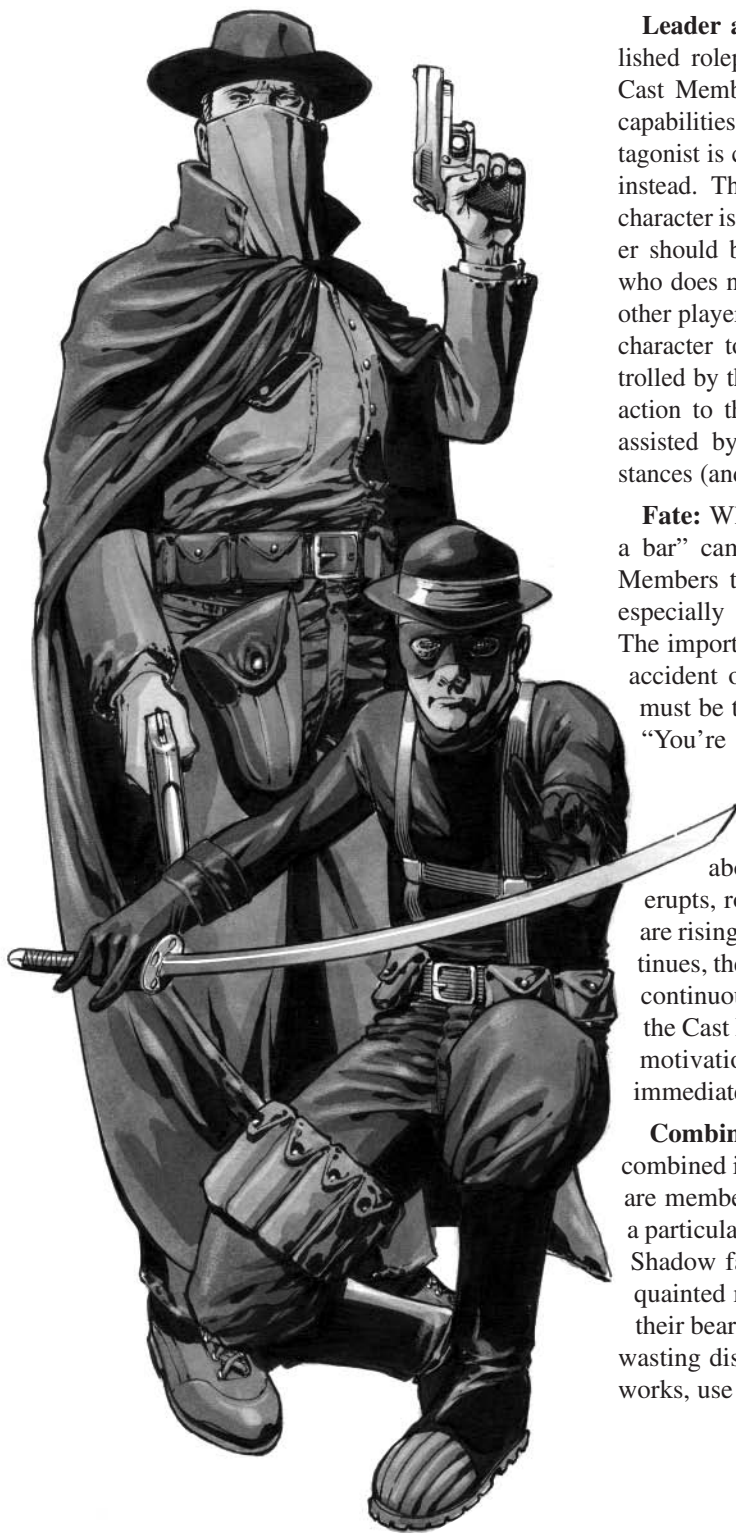
Legendary Heroes are fearless, and therefore are never required to make Fear Checks.

The Pulp “Adventure Party”

Most roleplaying groups involve more than one player and one Zombie Master. To be frank, that is how it is best enjoyed—roleplaying is a social activity. But the majority of pulp adventures featured single heroes like the Shadow, the Spider, and the Phantom. True, some pulps featured multiple protagonists. Doc Savage was accompanied by a band of five extraordinary assistants and G-8 was assisted by a pair of additional aviators—his Battle Aces. But even those two examples feature one character who was clearly the focus of the story and whose capabilities were superior to those of the supporting protagonists.

How can a party of equals be shoehorned into this pulp tradition? The hoary old “you all meet in a bar, looking for something to do with your life” introduction is even less appropriate in *Pulp Zombies* than it was in *Dungeons and Dragons*. Some better ideas follow.

A Club or Association: Social clubs are a firm staple of the Pulp Era, especially among the wealthy and respected. For example, Lamont Cranston (either an ally of the Shadow or the Shadow himself, depending on which story is taken as the authority on the matter) could often be found at the Cobalt Club. Thus, the Cast Members can be created and played as members of a similar fraternity. The club may have a special purpose (an organization of explorers, or archaeologists, or crime-fighters) or may be nothing more than a social organization. The organization might also be a secret society whose members are bound to some clandestine purpose—defeating the walking dead wherever they stalk the earth, perhaps.



Leader and Sidekicks: While it is a firmly established roleplaying tradition for all players to control Cast Members who are approximately equal in their capabilities, the Doc Savage model—where one protagonist is clearly superior—could certainly be applied instead. There are two options. In the first, the central character is controlled by one of the players. This player should be a more experienced roleplayer and one who does not hog the spotlight to the detriment of the other players' fun. The second option is for the central character to be largely absent and remote, and controlled by the Zombie Master. This leaves most of the action to the Cast Member associates, who are only assisted by their leader in particularly dire circumstances (and not even then, if possible).

Fate: While a close cousin of the “you all meet in a bar” campaign introduction, fate can throw Cast Members together in a desperate situation. This is especially appropriate in the survival horror genre. The important principle in making it work is that the accident of fate that brings the characters together must be tied directly to the action of the campaign. “You’re the only people attending the graveside services for your dearly departed mutual acquaintance, Doctor Siegfried Schultz. The minister is mumbling something about ashes and dust. Suddenly, the ground erupts, rotten fingers reaching skyward! The dead are rising! What do you do?” As the adventure continues, the Zombie Master must always be careful to continuously provide plot-related motivation for the Cast Members to stick together. As soon as that motivation disappears, the party structure will immediately become strained and false.

Combination: These and any other ideas can be combined into new ideas. Perhaps the Cast Members are members of a secret society devoted to assisting a particularly powerful crime-fighter (sound familiar, Shadow fans?). Maybe they’re all otherwise unacquainted members of a social club on a safari when their bearers, who have been afflicted with a strange wasting disease, assume grotesque unlives. Whatever works, use it!

Pulpy Flesh



New Supernatural Qualities and Drawbacks

Danger Sense

1 point/level Supernatural Quality

The character has preternatural perception where his well-being is concerned; he is able to spot danger coming and take steps to avoid it. Whenever the character is unaware of some immediate physical danger, he may add his Danger Sense level to Tasks and Tests to notice the danger.

For example, Danger Dan Dash, Detective, has three levels of Danger Sense. He is poking around in an alley, looking for clues in a dumpster behind the apartment of a hoodlum he has been tailing for the last three days. Unbeknownst to Dan, the hoodlum has managed to sneak out of the apartment and set up an ambush for him at the mouth of the alley. As soon as Dan rounds the corner, he will be in trouble. When Dan has finished in the dumpster and heads back to his automobile, the Zombie Master calls for a Resisted Task: Dan's Perception and Notice (3 + 3) against the criminal's Dexterity and Stealth (2 + 4). Dan gets an additional +3 to his roll because of his three levels of Danger Sense. Dan rolls a three for a total of twelve. The hoodlum rolls a three as well, for a total of nine. Dan spots the ambush in the nick of time, noticing a reflection in a puddle of murky water and ducking back into the alley as the thug opens up with his Tommy Gun.

Danger Sense is not useful against threats that are not immediate (that is, threats that will not harm the character within the next few moments) and threats that are not directed against the character himself or some group of which the character is a part.

Gadgetmaster

3 points/level Supernatural Quality

The character has a superhuman grasp of science and can use it to construct and utilize all manner of wondrous and useful gadgets. Characters with the Gadgetmaster Quality can use the Gadget rules described later in this chapter (see pp. 44-49). There is one restriction on the number of levels in the Gadgetmaster that may be purchased: the character's




Mechanic and Sciences Skill levels must both be greater than or equal to his Gadgetmaster level. For example, a character with Mechanic 3 and Sciences 4 would be limited to three levels in Gadgetmaster until he increased his Mechanic Skill.

Mentalism

2-point Supernatural Quality

A character with Mentalism can affect the world around him—including the minds of the people in it—using the force of his own preternaturally strong will and perhaps a detailed knowledge of human consciousness and biology. The most potent benefit of the Mentalism Quality is the ability to purchase Mentalism Powers (which requires the expenditure of additional points). For more information, see the Mentalism rules (pp. 50-58).



Mentalism and the Gift in Pulp Zombies

It is a standard convention of the Unisystem that characters with most supernatural powers and Qualities must buy the Gift Supernatural Quality as well. However, in addition to being a prerequisite for these powers and Qualities, the Gift also gives characters who possess it the ability to perceive the presence of supernatural energies and creatures. Because the latter ability does not necessarily flow from the Pulp Zombies idea of what Mentalism encompasses, Pulp Heroes are not required to purchase the Gift in order to acquire the Mentalism Supernatural Quality. They are not forbidden from purchasing the Gift, they are just not required to do so. This bears mentioning simply because it is an exception to the general Unisystem rule that characters with Supernatural Qualities are required to purchase the Gift.

Chi Techniques

Many Pulp Heroes have traveled far and wide, learning strange and wonderful martial disciplines and techniques from masters all over the world. Pulp characters may, with the Zombie Master's permission, represent these special moves by purchasing the Special Chi Techniques described in the AFMBE supplement *Enter the Zombie*. In order to do so, they must purchase the Essence Channeling Supernatural Quality (*Enter the Zombie*, p. 38) using their Quality or Powers character points. Any Special Chi Techniques (*Enter the Zombie*, pp. 39-45) must be purchased with Powers category character generation points. Characters may also purchase Essence Channeling and/or Special Chi Techniques during play by spending experience points as described in *Enter the Zombie* (see p. 37).

By the same token, Pulp Heroes can purchase the Tao-Chi powers described in the *WitchCraft* supplement *Mystery Codex* (see *Mystery Codex*, p. 170) using Power Points instead of Metaphysics Points. All of the requirements discussed there must still be met, meaning that Pulp Heroes must also purchase the Gift Supernatural Quality (see AFMBE, p. 48), Essence Channeling Supernatural Quality (see *WitchCraft*, p. 86), and have a Constitution of 2 or greater. Tao-Chi Powers are purchased just as described in *Mystery Codex*.

Pulps and the Supernatural

While many pulp stories involve elements of the supernatural, a great many of them also employ the Scooby Doo approach to the paranormal: everything is exposed in the end to have been rubber suits and unusual twists on existing technology. Superscience—advanced applications of nevertheless known branches of knowledge—was also invoked to explain story elements first presented as supernatural. Qualities and Drawbacks that are described here and elsewhere as “supernatural” can be explained using either Scoobyism or superscience, or may be considered bona fide manifestations of otherworldly power. All are perfectly within the pulp sensibility.

Gadgets

The pulps are full of characters with incredible scientific knowledge who create and use all manner of strange and wondrous gadgets. Mercy bullets, exploding powders, ultraviolet rays, silent aircraft, miniature tracking devices, and the like are staples of the genre. In *Pulp Zombies*, the ability to create and use gadgets falls within the sphere of the Gadgetmaster Supernatural Quality. (No, neither knowledge of gadget construction nor gadgets themselves are necessarily supernatural. For the mechanical purposes of the Unisystem, though, it makes sense to categorize gadgeteering in this way. See the Pulps and the Supernatural sidebar on p. 42 for a further explanation.)

There are two ways the Gadgetmaster Quality can be used. First, the gadgetmaster can sit in his laboratory and create gadgets to fill some imagined future need. He might make items of general utility like special armor, signature weapons, peculiar investigation devices, or personal vehicles. He might also have the needs of the current scenario in mind—he might desire, say, a device with the ability to slay the walking dead. Once created, these Laboratory Gadgets remain part of his personal arsenal; he can call on them as needed, until such time as he discards or destroys them.

The accomplished gadgetmaster can also “spontaneously” create gadgets in the course of play to solve immediate but unusual problems. A gadgetmaster who finds himself handcuffed to a chair might produce a miniature lock picking device from a hidden compartment in his shoe or a small blasting compound capable of blowing his shackles to pieces, for example. These Spontaneous Gadgets can also be used again and again, but if the gadgetmaster holds on to them for too long they may hamper his ability to use Spontaneous Gadgets in the future.

Gadget Slots

A given gadgetmaster has a number of Gadget Slots equal to his level in the Gadgetmaster Quality. Any given gadget, be it a long-term Laboratory Gadget or an on-the-fly Spontaneous Gadget, occupies a number of Gadget Slots equal to its Gadget

Rating. A gadget only stops occupying its Gadget Slots when it is discarded, lost, destroyed, or otherwise becomes inaccessible to the gadgetmaster. Gadgets given to allies or stolen by enemies still occupy their Gadget Slots until they are re-acquired by the gadgetmaster and retired normally, or until they are destroyed. This rule prevents a given gadgeteer from become a one-man assembly line for futuristic technology, spreading it throughout the populace unfettered.

The only other catch is that Gadget Slots only become available for new gadgets at the beginning of an adventure. That means that discarding gadgets in the course of a scenario does not help the gadgetmaster get new ones until a new adventure begins. Gadget Slots can also be freed up at beginning of a session of play, in the case of very long adventures, at the Zombie Master's discretion.

Rating Gadgets

In order to keep some control over the types of gadgets that are introduced into the game, all gadgets have a Gadget Rating, which represents a combination of the device's scientific complexity and its general level of utility. Gadget Ratings generally range from one to five, but there is no theoretical maximum. Gadgets with high ratings tend to employ advanced scientific principles and have technical or unusual purposes, while gadgets with lower ratings employ everyday technology or have relatively pedestrian uses.

In order to arrive at the Gadget Rating of any given gadget, numbers representing complexity and utility are summed with any other relevant modifiers (for miniaturization, for example). All of the numbers that together make up a gadget's Gadget Rating are called Gadget Rating Modifiers and are discussed below.

Oh, and no Gadget Rating may be less than one. If a Gadget Rating would be less than one, it is instead equal to one. There is no real point to creating such lackluster gadgets with these rules, anyway—such mundane devices are probably no further away than the local Pulp Era drug store.

Complexity

The Complexity Level of a given gadget is measured by the level of technology that would be needed to create it. Is the required technology available in the Pulp Era, is it commonplace in the modern day (the modern day of players of *AFMBE*, that is), or is it futuristic even by today's standards?

For these purposes, for an item to fit in a particular era it must be used by average people of reasonable education of that era in a context other than scientific research. For example, in the Pulp Era, atomic energy was only being investigated and "used" by a small cadre of scientists who were still discovering its basic nature. In the modern day, however, it is commonly known about and used to provide power to average people. Atomic power is therefore of a "Modern Day" level of complexity. Cold fusion is an example of "Futuristic" atomic power.

Complexity Level	Gadget Rating Modifier
Pulp Era Technology	+0
Modern Day (2000 AD) Technology	+1
Futuristic Technology	+2

Examples of Pulp Era Technology


Refrigeration, radio, automobiles, still cameras, propeller-driven aircraft, automatic pistols, submachine guns, dynamite, dirigibles, autogyros.

Examples of Modern Day Technology

Television, GPS, mobile telephony, computers, the Internet, jet airplanes, electron microscopes, chemotherapy, CAT scans, spacecraft.

Examples of Futuristic Technology

Cold fusion, cybernetics, nanotechnology, virtual reality that is difficult to distinguish from actual reality, artificial gravity, invisibility.



Some scientific boundaries are off-limits to gadgeteers, even with future technology. Faster-than-light speeds, time travel, immortality, and devices that violate physical laws as we know them are forbidden as far as gadgetmasters are concerned. The Zombie Master may add any particular device or principle to this roster of the *verboden* at will in order to preserve his sense of game balance, even if he allowed it previously.

Utility

To determine a given gadget's Utility Level, imagine the sort of Pulp Era person who would use the gadget on a day-to-day basis if it were widely available. Would it be used by an average consumer in mundane life or by a technical or skilled worker to do specialized tasks? Do not consider expense; think only of who would use it and for what. Consider that even the very rich do not use dynamite or aircraft on a daily basis (unless they are also specialized users of those things in the course of their business). Also, make sure to consider an average person from the Pulp Era, not an average person from the modern day or future, even if the technology level has already been determined to be modern or futuristic.

Utility Level	Gadget Rating Modifier
Average Consumer/Normal Purposes	+0
Technical User/Specialized Use	+1

Other Modifiers

Miniaturization: If a gadget is made smaller than it would normally be, each quartering of its otherwise-normal size calls for a Gadget Rating Modifier of +1. For example, a gadget reduced to one eighth of its normal size (for example, a parachute reduced to the size of a toboggan) would have a Miniaturization Gadget Rating Modifier of +2. Note that a gadget's "otherwise-normal" size should be judged according to the era of the gadget's Complexity Level. This may require the Zombie Master to make a judgment call, as the size of an Artificial Gravity Machine obviously cannot be determined by checking the *Encyclopedia Britannica* web site.

Onerous Requirements: Each onerous requirement that is obligatory to operate the gadget gives a Gadget Rating Modifier of -1. In order to qualify as onerous, a requirement must fit one of the following descriptions:

- A specific piece of unusual equipment (which is not part of the gadget itself) is required in conjunction with the gadget to use it. It must be possible for this piece of equipment to get lost, destroyed, or stolen independently of the gadget. For example, an ultraviolet light needed to view the traces left by invisible tracking powder.
- A great deal of time (related to the time required for the gadget to do whatever it does) is necessary in order to ready the gadget for use. For instance, preparing a silent airplane for takeoff requiring three hours or preparing a firearm to fire exploding bullets requiring a full minute.


Horrible Consequences: If the consequences of something going wrong with the gadget are catastrophic, it has a Gadget Rating Modifier of -1. For example, if the gadget catches fire, it explodes and levels a city block. Depending on the device and the preferences of the player and Zombie Master, the catastrophic possibility can either be spelled out (as in the example above) or be unknown (to be determined by the Zombie Master when things actually

Examples of Normal Purposes

Preparation and storage of food, local transportation, mass-media entertainment, instantaneous short-distance communications, everyday household tools. Ask whether this gadget makes everyday life convenient.

Examples of Specialized Uses

Military applications including personal weapons and explosives, specialized construction tools and materials, long-distance travel (between countries, for example), instantaneous long-distance communication (trans-Atlantic telephony, for example). Ask whether this gadget would only be useful to professionals in a specific environment.



go wrong). The conditions that cause the consequence should be known and specified in either case, though, and should not be outside the realm of things that could transpire in a *Pulp Zombies* game (Zombie Master's judgment), because then what fun would it be?


Dangerous Side Effect: If the normal use of the gadget creates some dangerous side effect, it has a Gadget Rating Modifier of -1. For example, a miniature explosive which gives off a poisonous gas once it is armed has a dangerous side effect. Zombie Masters should be careful to disallow this modifier when the effect in question is actually useful to the gadgetmaster. It should also not be allowed in conjunction with an Onerous Requirement that defeats the Dangerous Side Effect. For example, the miniature explosive above could not have a -1 for its Dangerous Side-Effect if it also had a -1 from an Onerous Requirement that someone handling it must wear a gas mask.

Combination: Two different devices can be combined in a strange or scientifically unlikely way; this gives a Gadget Rating Modifier of +1. Three devices may be combined for a +2, four for a +3, and so on. Each device to be combined must be separately paid for in terms of Complexity and Utility. The size of the combination gadget is equal to the normal size of the largest device involved, unless miniaturization is also applied.

Laboratory Gadgets

In order to create a gadget in his laboratory, a gadgetmaster first decides exactly what it is he wants to make: what the gadget will do, what scientific principles it will employ, how large it will be, what other characteristics it will have, and so on. If the Zombie Master wishes, he may require the player to write this out so there are no questions during play about what exactly the gadget is intended to do. At this time, the player also proposes the Complexity Level, Utility Level, and any other modifications, and totals them up into a preliminary Gadget Rating.





Then the Zombie Master looks the proposed gadget over. He may increase (or decrease) either the Complexity Level or Utility Level of the device if he feels that the player's estimate is not quite right, and may disallow (or impose) other modifications. He creates any additional rules that are necessary for the gadget—for example, what sort of resistance is possible against its effects. He should also feel free to ask the player exactly how he intends to use the gadget in play, to avoid surprises or disagreements later on. Once the Zombie Master is satisfied with all of the Gadget Rating Modifiers that have been assigned, the final Gadget Rating is determined simply by summing them.

Constructing gadgets takes a number of weeks of work in the laboratory equal to the Gadget Rating. No die roll is required. Gadgetmasters are assumed to have appropriate facilities, raw materials, and other resources required for gadget creation; this is part of the Gadgetmaster Quality. Once the gadget has been made, the Gadgetmaster may use it just like any other piece of equipment he owns. If the gadget is somehow lost or stolen, it can be recreated in the lab in half the time it originally took to create it.

Spontaneous Gadgets

Gadgetmasters can create gadgets in the field to address specific problems. A Spontaneous Gadget is not actually whipped up on the spot by the gadgetmaster out of raw materials. Rather, it was already made—in the gadgetmaster's spare time—and this is just the first it has been shown in public. The only thing the gadgetmaster needs is an unused Gadget Slot and a place of appropriate size (coat pocket, bag, sole of shoe, or whatever) from which to produce the gadget. “Appropriate size” obviously varies based on the size of the gadget.

Spontaneous Gadgets have Complexity Levels and Utility Levels just like other gadgets. They are often miniaturized (in order to fit in that secret sole-of-the-shoe compartment), but very rarely—as in, only with the Zombie Master's permission—do they have Onerous Requirements, Horrible Consequences, or Dangerous Side Effects. Just like with Laboratory Gadgets, all Gadget Rating Modifiers are added up to arrive at a Gadget Rating.

Unlike Laboratory Gadgets, a gadgetmaster must make a roll to ensure that a given Spontaneous Gadget functions properly the first time it is used. This is an Intelligence and Mechanics or Science (whichever is higher) Task, from which the Gadget Rating is subtracted. Success indicates that the gadget works as the gadgetmaster hoped. More than one Success Level indicates that the gadget actually performs better than expected or has beneficial side effects.

Once a Spontaneous Gadget has been created it can either be kept, in which case it occupies a Gadget Slot, or discarded as usual, opening the Gadget Slot up for use in future adventures. Even devices which are consumed in the course of their operation (a chemical compound which burns up, for example) can be “kept” for future use: additional charges, doses, or reserves are available.

Sample Gadgets

The following gadgets may be used in *Pulp Zombies* games as is, or may serve as inspiration for players and Zombie Masters in the creation of new gadgets.

Flying Car


Gadget Rating: 2 (Car Complexity +0, Car Utility +0, Plane Complexity +0, Plane Utility +1, Combination +1)

It's a car! It's a plane! It's a car! It's a plane! The plane's wings fold automatically into the sides of the car's body to allow it to maneuver normally on streets of normal width and park in regular garages. Alternatively, a car could be combined with an autogyro, a boat, or just about any other type of vehicle.

Goggles of Fire

Gadget Rating: 3 (Complexity +2, Utility +1)

The Goggles of Fire are a pair of cumbersome goggles which can shoot a stream of fire wherever the person wearing them is looking, up to a range of about twenty yards (meters), by pressing a button on the side. The wearer's regular sight is impaired while the fire is flying, but not afterwards. The stream of fire illuminates the area briefly, can ignite flammable objects, and does D8(4) points of fire damage to living beings (see *AFMBE*, p. 108). The goggles can be fired for five Turns (consecutive or not) before they



need to be recharged, which can be accomplished simply by leaving them in direct sunlight for fifteen minutes per Turn worth of fire to be recharged.

Hat of Instant Armor

Gadget Rating: 3 (Complexity +2, Utility +1)

This piece of modest headwear can be created in any fashion—from fedora to ball cap—but only works correctly for a single, custom-fitted user. It contains dozens of layers of light-but-nigh-indestructible plates of armor. When a small lever inside the hat's band is tripped, the plates slide down, instantly forming a suit of protective but relatively flexible armor which covers the wearer's clothes and is broken only by a small vision slit. This provides an Armor Value of $(D8 \times 2) + 10(18)$ and has an Encumbrance Value of 8/4 (though it causes at least light encumbrance regardless of the character's total EV). Of course, the hat is still perched on top of the armor. Switching the lever back retracts the plates.

Locator

Gadget Rating: 2 (Complexity +1, Utility +1)

This two-part device consists of a number of magnetic bugs each the size of a pack of cigarettes and a one-yard (meter) by two-yard (meter) table upon which a map can be placed. A map must be set on the table and the device calibrated to the map's scale and the table's location on the map (a procedure which takes fifteen minutes or so, and yes, the table must be physically located within the area described by the map). Once this is done, a bright red light shows through the map to pinpoint the current location(s) of any bugs in the area depicted. The degree of accuracy depends on the scale of the map.

Mercy Bullets

Gadget Rating: 1 (Complexity +0, Utility +1)

Instead of causing gross physical damage and killing their targets, Mercy Bullets use soft rubber to reduce impact damage and chemical compounds to induce unconsciousness and/or lethargy. Characters hit with Mercy Bullets take half normal damage, but must succeed in a Difficult Constitution Test to avoid unconsciousness for (D10 - Constitution) minutes. Those that do succeed, but achieve less than three

Success Levels, are lethargic for the next (D10 - Constitution) Turns, acting at a penalty of -3 due to heavy limbs and double vision. Mercy Bullets can be made to fit any sort of firearm.

Micro Explosives

Gadget Rating: 2 (Complexity +0, Utility +1, Miniaturization +2, Horrible Consequences -1)

These devices pack the explosive power of a half-dozen sticks of dynamite (see p. 140) into a package the size of a cigar. They are easily hidden on one's person and can be disguised as ordinary cigars, pens, screwdrivers, and so on. Micro Explosives need not be cylindrical; tennis balls, cans of Spam, and the like are all fair game. Micro Explosives can be detonated either by timer, impact (crushing or shooting, for example), or remote detonator, an ample supply of each being part of the gadget package. The Horrible Consequence associated with the explosives is that they are liable to detonate upon violent impact or jostling. Being thrown into a wall, hit by a car, or sprayed with bullets could set the explosives off at the Zombie Master's discretion.

Owl Specs

Gadget Rating: 2 (Complexity +1, Utility +1)

These rather cumbersome goggles allow the wearer to see in the dark by magnifying low levels of background light. Even "pitch black" darkness contains enough faint light to allow someone wearing Owl Specs to see very faint outlines. Decrease the lighting penalties (see *AFMBE*, p. 102) by one level when wearing the Specs (e.g., Total Darkness becomes Bad Lighting, Bad Lighting becomes Poor Lighting, Poor Lighting becomes no modifier).

Mentalism

Those with the capacity for Mentalism manipulate the world through force of will using abilities like telepathy, psychokinesis, and hypnosis. They can communicate directly with others' minds, control their actions, probe their deepest thoughts, start fires at will, and more.

The abilities of mentalists are described by a number of Mentalism Powers. Each Power is a discrete ability with two necessary components: Strength and Art. Strength represents the raw power the mentalist has with that Power, while Art is the degree of expertise and finesse he has with it. A character with the Mentalism Supernatural Quality (see p. 42) can use any Mentalism Power as long as he has a Strength and Art of at least one in it.

By the way, do not get too excited—this is still survival horror, and none of the Mentalism Powers described below are of any use whatsoever on the “minds” of the undead. But nice try. (Zombies *can* be affected by Powers that do not affect the mind though, so they can still be physically chucked around by Psychokinesis, for example, or set on fire with Pyrokinesis.)

Hypnosis, Superscience, and Mentalism

The capabilities that fall under the Mentalism umbrella in *Pulp Zombies* were often described in pulp stories through a veneer of science. Hypnosis (for example) was invoked on a regular basis to keep impossible events in line with the science of the day. Although *Pulp Zombies* players have been encouraged in an earlier sidebar (see p. 42, for those reading along at home) to invent a framework of justification for their abilities that is as mundane or unearthly as they desire, that goes double for this section.





Strength

A Mentalism Power's Strength is a measure of the raw force the mentalist can channel into the Power. It is used to determine things like how far the mentalist can project his will, the amount of damage he can inflict, and the duration of the effects he creates. Higher Strength generally indicates more far-reaching and impressive abilities. Each Mentalism Power description includes a table that describes the precise effects of that Power at various Strength levels.

Each level of Strength costs three Powers points up to level five and six points per level thereafter. After character creation, each level of Strength costs six experience points up to level five and ten experience points per level thereafter.

Art

A Mentalism Power's Art is a measure of the experience and finesse the mentalist has with the Power. It is used to determine the level of precision with which the mentalist can use it. Most Mentalism Tasks involve adding an Art level to an Attribute, typically a mental Attribute.

Each Art costs two Powers points per level until level five and five points per level thereafter. After character creation, each Art level costs five experience points per level up to level five and eight experience points per level thereafter.

Resisting Mentalism

The effects of Mentalism Powers can often be resisted by the stalwart, powerful, or righteous. The specific ways that a given Mentalism Power can be resisted are described under each Power. Resistance might be possible in other cases as well, at the Zombie Master's discretion, if a given character or creature has some characteristic that suggests supernatural ability to withstand the force of a mentalist's will. When allowing such "on-the-fly" resistance, the Zombie Master should keep in mind that resistance usually takes the form of a Resisted Task, often involving the target's Willpower.

This Looks Familiar

Astute and experienced Unisystem players have probably noticed that these rules for Mentalism look suspiciously like the rules for Seers found in *WitchCraft*. Guilty as charged—this keeps the experts from having to learn a whole new set of rules to play *Pulp Zombies*. Cash gratuities are encouraged, care of Eden Studios, as always.

Be aware that there are some differences. For starters, all of the Seer Powers have been renamed here to reflect a pulp sensibility. Also, certain Seer Powers do not appear here at all—namely *Mindheal* and *Mindkill*. These do not really fit the pulp genre, though there is nothing to stop a *Zombie Master* from using them if he has a copy of *WitchCraft* handy. Finally, be aware that other, minor changes have been incorporated. If it is really important, check the rules here rather than relying on any *WitchCraft* recollections.

Using Mentalism Defensively

Each Mentalism Power can be used defensively to protect the mentalist from forces both psychic and physical. Defensive possibilities vary widely from Power to Power, and are described for each.

Group Effects

A group of mentalists in the same location can pool their might to increase their overall Strength in using a given Power. All mentalists in the group who know the Power being used contribute their Strength in the Power; all those who do not add half the Strength of their weakest Power (rounded up) to the total. The mentalist with the highest Art in the Power being used becomes the leader and all Tasks use the leader's Art and Attribute levels. The consequences of a member dropping out of a group while it is using a Power are extremely unpredictable and dangerous. *Zombie Masters* are encouraged to make characters' lives "interesting" in such cases, along the lines of the old curse "May you live in interesting times."

Essence

A mentalist adds the sum of his Art levels and Strength levels for all his Powers to his Essence Pool total. Every time the mentalist increases one of his Arts or Strengths, his Essence Pool increases by a like amount.

Mentalism Powers

Clairvoyance

Clairvoyance allows a mentalist to transcend the limits of his senses, “seeing” distant places through barriers that would otherwise block his perception. Clairvoyance can also be a burden, as those with this Power sometimes have unwanted visions of events that are unfolding at distant locations which are laden with intense emotion. Philosophical, heroic mentalists often see these visions as important messages that they should investigate or intervene in some way.

Clairvoyant mentalists can use this Power to see past barriers or beyond the range of their normal sense of sight. The range of this ability and the length of time the view can be sustained is shown on the Clairvoyance Strength Table.

Additionally, mentalists with Clairvoyance are subject to random visions of danger, wonder, and horror. Visions are often seen through the eyes of a participant in a scene, but are sometimes seen from other perspectives, which can be confusing. Sometimes a series of separate visions each gives a little more information about the same scene or puzzle over time. The Zombie Master can make use of this ability to introduce clues, add tension, and guide scenarios along.

A mentalist may actively seek out a vision related to his current situation by making a Perception and Clairvoyance Art Task, though the Zombie Master is never obliged to provide a vision even if the mentalist is successful. Range for these sorts of visions is not limited by Clairvoyance Strength. If the Zombie Master believes the character is in a position to be involved in the events, the vision could be of circumstances occurring halfway around the world.

Resisting Clairvoyance: Clairvoyance cannot be resisted by characters. Still, the Zombie Master may wish to consider the supernatural or Inspired power of the characters or objects that might appear in visions when determining what will or will not be seen and from what perspective.

Clairvoyance Defenses: Mentalists with Clairvoyance often receive visions of nearby danger or threats—a sniper on a roof, a ticking bomb, or an approaching vehicle, for example. The Zombie Master may warn the mentalist of such danger by asking for a Perception and Clairvoyance Art Task. Even if the Task is failed, the psychic has the impression that something is going on—just as his player does, having just been required to perform a Task.

Mind Control

Predictably enough, Mind Control is the ability to control the minds of others. It is easier to force victims of Mind Control to do things they might normally do otherwise, and much more difficult to force them to do things that run contrary to their basic natures.

In order to use Mind Control, the mentalist must be able to see his target and the target must be able to hear the mentalist’s voice, either audibly or via Telepathy. The two then engage in a Resisted Task; the mentalist uses Willpower and Mind Control Art

Clairvoyance Strength Table

Strength	Maximum Distance	Length of Vision
1	Perception and Clairvoyance Strength yards (meters)	Brief glimpse
3	10 x (Perception and Clairvoyance Strength) yards (meters)	Turn
6	10 x (Perception and Clairvoyance Strength) yards (meters)	A few minutes
8	100 x (Perception and Clairvoyance Strength) yards (meters)	A few minutes
10+	(Perception and Clairvoyance Strength) miles (1.5 km)	Not limited



Mind Control Strength Table

Mind Control Strength	Abilities
1	Force target to hesitate for one Turn. Force target to follow a fairly reasonable suggestion like “Why don’t you look for the criminals over there?”
3	Force target to stop doing something. Force target to obey a one-phrase command like “Freeze!” “Flee!” or “Leave me alone.”
5	Force target to follow a one-sentence command to the letter.
8	Force target to follow detailed instructions of any length.
10+	Take complete control of the target’s mind, completely dictating his words and actions, for one Turn. A new Resisted Task is required each Turn to maintain control.

and the victim uses a Difficult Willpower Test. The Zombie Master may give the victim a bonus of +3 to +7 on this roll if the mentalist’s orders are contrary to the victim’s basic nature.

The Mind Control Strength Table determines what sorts of commands can be given and how extensive a control can be achieved.

Resisting Mind Control: A mundane under the effects of Mind Control who makes a Difficult Perception Test is aware that he is being controlled supernaturally, but can otherwise only resist Mind Control using the procedure described above.

Inspired characters can resist Mind Control with a Simple rather than Difficult Willpower Test. Characters with Telepathy, Read Mind, or Mind Control can resist Mind Control as described in the “Defenses” section of each of those Powers.

Mind Control Defenses: The powers of Mind Control can also help a mentalist maintain control over his own mind. This specifically includes (but is not limited to) Read Mind, Telepathy, and Mind Control. Generally, this is done by pitting the mentalist’s Willpower and Mind Control Strength against the attacking force in a Resisted Task.

Psychokinesis

Psychokinesis is the ability to move physical objects using only the mind. It can be used in a number of different ways: to move objects around (including the mentalist himself), to throw them with the intention of causing damage, to manipulate weapons and machinery at a distance, to supplement the mentalist's own Strength when trying to lift massive objects, and to throw invisible psychokinetic punches.

To mentally lift an object, the mentalist must be able to see the object and must succeed in an Intelligence and Psychokinesis Art Task. The maximum weight that can be moved is indicated on the Psychokinesis Strength Table. To determine the speed with which a mentalist can move a given object, note the Psychokinesis Strength needed to simply lift it. Multiply the difference between that number and the mentalist's actual Psychokinesis Strength by ten; that is the object's maximum speed in miles per hour. For example, a fifty-pound (twenty-five kilogram) object requires Psychokinesis Strength 1 to move. A mentalist with Psychokinesis Strength 5 could move the object at forty miles (sixty kilometers) per hour. There is one exception to this calculation: even if the required Psychokinesis Strength and actual Psychokinesis Strength are equal, the mentalist can still move the object very slowly—at about one mile per hour (1.5 kilometers per hour).

To throw objects at people (or other objects) and hit them, the mentalist must succeed in a Dexterity and Psychokinesis Art Task. This Task is subject to the range and lighting penalties for handguns (see *AFMBE*, p. 102). To determine the damage caused by thrown items, consult the Psychokinesis Thrown Object Damage Table. The base damage listed is multiplied by (the mentalist's Psychokinesis Strength minus the Psychokinesis Strength needed to lift the object) to determine the amount of damage actually caused.

Psychokinesis Thrown Object Damage Table

Object Weight	Psychokinesis Strength Required	Base Damage
≤ 10 lbs. (5 kg)	0	D4(2)
≤ 50 lbs. (25 kg)	1	D4+1(3)
≤ 100 lbs. (50 kg)	2	D6(3)
≤ 250 lbs. (125 kg)	3	D8(4)
≤ 650 lbs. (325 kg)	6	D10(5)
≤ 1,250 lbs. (625 kg)	8	D12(6)
1,250+ lbs. (625+ kg)	11	D12+1(7)

To manipulate complex objects at a distance but not lift or move them, the mentalist must succeed in a Task using Psychokinesis Art and a relevant skill associated with the object in question (such as Hand Weapon, Guns, Lock Picking, or Play Instrument). The Zombie Master should also apply a penalty from -1 to -6 to reflect the difficulty of performing the skill at a distance.

To supplement his own Strength with Psychokinesis, the mentalist can simply add his Psychokinesis Strength to his own Strength Attribute when determining how much he can lift.

To throw psychokinetic punches, the mentalist uses Brawling and Psychokinetic Art to launch a “normal” hand to hand attack. Those who cannot see the invisible attack coming (pretty much everyone without relevant supernatural powers) can only hope to dodge by jumping about randomly, which comes down to a Difficult Dexterity Test, and this can only be done if the victim realizes what is happening. Those who can see the attack coming can Dodge normally, of course. Psychokinetic punches cause damage equal to the attacker's Psychokinesis Strength.

Psychokinesis Strength Table

Strength	US Lifting Capacity	Metric Lifting Capacity
1-5	50 x Strength lbs	25 x Strength kg
6-10	(200 x (Strength - 5)) + 250 lbs	(100 x (Strength - 5)) + 125 kg
11-15	(500 x (Strength - 10)) + 1,250 lbs	(250 x (Strength - 10)) + 625 kg
16+	(Strength - 15) + 2 tons	(Strength - 15) + 2 metric tons

Resisting Psychokinesis: Mundanes can only resist Psychokinesis using the methods described above. Inspired can resist being moved themselves by making a Simple Willpower Test; they can make a similar roll to keep items they are holding or touching from being moved.

Psychokinesis Defenses: Psychokinesis can be used to parry physical attacks or to project a bubble of psychokinetic “armor” around the mentalist. The former uses Dexterity and Psychokinesis Art in the place of a normal parry and works against any attack the mentalist can see, including arrows and the like, but not bullets. The latter is a Task involving Intelligence and Psychokinesis Art, and results in a field with an Armor Value of $D4(2) \times (\text{Psychokinesis Strength}/2, \text{rounded down})$ that lasts for one minute per Success Level.

Pyrokinesis

The Pyrokinesis Power allows a mentalist to start fires with the energy of his mind. Pyrokinesis is a dangerous power, because conjured fire has a tendency to take on a mischievous, destructive character.

Pyrokinesis can create the effects described in the Pyrokinesis Strength Table (see p. 56). A higher level Strength can be used to create any lower level effect desired. The abilities described all require Willpower and Pyrokinesis Art Tasks. Unless some other range is described, the mentalist can create fire anywhere within his line of sight, so beware mentalists atop skyscrapers.

Fire created with Pyrokinesis burns and spreads normally, and will continue to do so as long as sufficient fuel remains. The mentalist can artificially extend the life of a fire in the absence of fuel, but when doing so must make a Simple Willpower Test each minute to make sure it does not get out of control. He may add the Success Level of the last Pyrokinesis Task to this Test. Failure indicates a random Pyrokinesis effect of Strength 1-4 (roll a D4 or Zombie Master’s choice) somewhere nearby. If the failure occurs on a roll of one or a draw of an ace, the random effect affects the mentalist directly.

For more information on the effects of fire on humans, see *AFMBE*, p. 108 (under Other Sources of Injury).



Pyrokinesis Strength Table

Strength	Abilities
1	Create a match-sized flame that can ignite highly flammable substances (gasoline vapors, dryer lint) or inflict one point of damage on a person.
2	Create a torch-sized flame that can ignite flammable substances (oily rags, dry leaves, seriously desiccated zombies) or inflict (D4(2) x Pyrokinesis Strength level) points of damage on a person.
3	Create a torch-sized flame that can ignite anything that would combust on continuous contact with an open flame (clothing, wood).
4	Create a jet of flame that inflicts D6(3) points of damage per level of Pyrokinesis Strength. Range is Willpower and Pyrokinesis Strength yards (meters).
5	Create a ball of fire that inflicts D4(2) points of damage per level of Pyrokinesis Strength. Range is (Willpower + Pyrokinesis Strength) x 10 yards (meters). This Task is subject to the range penalties for handguns (see <i>AFMBE</i> , p. 102).
6	Extinguish flames within a radius of Pyrokinesis Strength yards (meters), anywhere within line of sight.
7	Engulf a person within line of sight in flames, doing D8(4) points of damage per level of Pyrokinesis Strength.
9	Create flame that can ignite any even vaguely flammable substance (wet wood, flame-retardant fabrics) and melt metal.
10+	Create a fire over a radius of Willpower yards (meters) that causes D8(4) points of damage per level of Pyrokinesis Strength.



Resisting Pyrokinesis: Any character attacked directly with pyrokinetic fire (other than flame jets or balls of fire) can resist the attack with a Difficult Willpower Test. If the victim wins the Resisted Task, the fire does not manifest at all. A pyrokinetic effect which targets an item near a character cannot be resisted, but may be dodged. Flame jets and balls of fire can be dodged normally, but may not be resisted with Willpower.

Pyrokinesis Defenses: A mentalist with Pyrokinesis can surround himself with an aura of superheated air that melts bullets, deflects flame and energy attacks, and burns anyone trying to touch him. This fire shield provides an Armor Value of Pyrokinesis Strength x 2 and reduces the Damage Multiplier from any flame or energy attack by one for every level of Pyrokinesis Strength. If a Damage Multiplier is reduced to zero, no damage is taken. Anyone coming within one yard (meter) of the mentalist while the shield is active suffers D6(3) x Pyrokinesis Strength damage. No other Pyrokinesis effects can be used while a fire shield is active.



Read Mind Success Table

Success Levels	Result
1	Mentalist senses the target's emotional state.
2	Mentalist discovers what the subject is thinking about at the moment.
3+	The mentalist may "ask" one simple question of the subject and pluck the answer from his mind, as long as the answer can be given in a single sentence. An additional question can be asked for each additional Success Level.

Read Mind

This Power allows the mentalist to pluck information directly from the thoughts of others. The target of the probe must be within range (use the Telepathy Strength Table, see p. 58, but substitute Read Mind Strength) and in sight of the mentalist, unless the target's mind has previously been read with Read Mind or contacted with Telepathy, in which case line of sight is not required. The mentalist rolls a Task using Perception and Read Mind Art. The Read Mind Success Table indicates how much can be sensed.

Most of the time Read Mind produces short flashes of images and words from the target's mind, but a mentalist can attempt to keep a direct mind-to-mind conduit open. This requires a Willpower and Read Mind Art Task. Each Success Level allows one minute of contact, during which the mentalist may peruse the target's thoughts and memories at will. Each minute also drains the mentalist of D4(2) Endurance Points. This process requires intense concentration and if the mentalist is attacked or distracted, mind-to-mind contact is broken.

Resisting Read Mind: A mundane character cannot normally resist the effects of Read Mind. One who makes a Difficult Perception Test has a strange feeling of being watched, but unless experienced with psychic phenomenon, does not know exactly what is happening. Inspired characters can resist Read Mind with a simple Willpower Test. Characters with Telepathy, Read Mind, or Mind Control can resist Read Mind as described in the "Defenses" section of each of those Powers.

Read Mind Defenses: Read Mind can be used to block mental attacks that control, probe, or influence the mind. Mechanically speaking, the mentalist's Willpower and Read Mind Strength is pitted against the attacking force in a Resisted Task. This specifi-

cally foils Telepathy, Read Mind, and Mind Control, but may also be useful in other situations at the Zombie Master's discretion.

Telepathy

Telepathy allows the mentalist to send mental communications to others, so his thoughts can be "heard" as words inside their heads. Once contact has been established the mentalist can also hear mental replies, though only thoughts deliberately "sent" can be perceived.

Sending a mental message is an Intelligence and Telepathy Art Task. A mental conversation can continue for one minute per Success Level. Maximum range is determined by the sender's Telepathy Strength and the Telepathy Strength Table.

In addition to communicating, corrupt mentalists sometimes use Telepathy to scare mundanes by making their mental voices sound strange and unearthly. Some particularly villainous mentalists have driven mundanes mad by telling them to commit crimes or other depravities until they finally give in to the voices in their heads.

A mentalist with a Telepathy Strength of four or greater can use Telepathy to deliver a psychic scream which causes moderate damage and disorients the victim. The maximum range for this sort of attack is two yards (meters) per Telepathy Strength level. Delivering such an attack is a Resisted Task using the mentalist's Willpower and Telepathy Art versus the victim's Difficult Willpower Test. (If the victim has some other method of resistance, it is used in the place of this Difficult Willpower Test, not in addition to it.) Delivering a psychic scream attack costs the attacker one point of Essence whether it succeeds or not. A successful attack inflicts D4(2) points of damage for every four levels of the attacker's Telepathy

Telepathy Strength Table

Strength	Read Mind Range
1	Touch
2	(Willpower and Read Mind Strength) yards (meters)
3	5 x (Willpower and Read Mind Strength) yards (meters)
5	50 x (Willpower and Read Mind Strength) yards (meters)
6	100 x (Willpower and Read Mind Strength) yards (meters)
10	(Willpower and Read Mind Strength) miles (1.5 kilometers)
15	20 x (Willpower and Read Mind Strength) miles (1.5 kilometers)



Strength, rounded down. The victim also loses all of his actions for one Turn and takes a -4 penalty on all Tasks and Tests for an additional number of turns equal to the Success Levels.

Resisting Telepathy: A mundane character cannot normally resist the effects of Telepathy, but one who makes a Difficult Perception Test is aware that the words in his mind are the result of some supernatural effect that originates outside his own mind. Mundanes can, of course, resist the effects of a psychic scream using the Resisted Task procedure described above.

Inspired characters can resist Telepathy with a Simple Willpower Test; this simply allows them to shut out the communication. They can also resist the effects of a psychic scream with a Simple (rather than Difficult) Willpower Test.

Characters with Telepathy, Read Mind, or Mind Control can resist Telepathy (effectively shutting out the communication) as described in the “Defenses” section of each of those Powers.

Telepathy Defenses: Telepathy can be used to block attempts to communicate with or probe the mentalist’s mind. To do this, the mentalist throws up a wall of mental noise around himself, disrupting contact; rules-wise, the mentalist’s Willpower and Telepathy Strength is pitted against the attacking force in a Resisted Task. This specifically foils Telepathy, Read Mind, and Mind Control, but may also be useful in other situations at the Zombie Master’s discretion.

Academic Turned Explorer

Pulp Hero

Str 3 **Dex** 2 **Con** 3

Int 5 **Per** 4 **Wil** 3

Lps 34

Eps 32

Spd 10

Essence 20

Qualities/Drawbacks

Clown (-1)

Good Luck 1 (1)

Hyperlingual 2 (2)

Impaired Sight (Corrected with Glasses) (-1)

Nerves of Steel (3)

Resistance (Disease) (2)

Resistance (Poison) (2)

Situational Awareness (2)

Obsession (Archaeological Artifacts) (-2)

Skills

Climbing 2

Dodge 3

Driving (Truck) 2

First Aid 2

Guns (Rifle) 4

Haggling 3

Hand Weapon (Knife) 2

Humanities 5

Language (French) 2

Language (Little-known African Dialect) 2

Myth and Legend (Darkest Africa) 3

Notice 3

Research/Investigation 2

Riding (Horse) 1

Smooth Talking 2

Survival (Jungle) 1

Tracking 2

Unconventional Medicine (African Tribal) 1

Gear

Safari Clothing (including Pith Helmet),
Elephant Gun

Personality

It seemed like a good idea at the time.

I'd vacationed throughout Mexico and the Pacific Rim as an undergraduate of some means, so it seemed simplicity itself to accompany my graduate advisor on an archaeological expedition to the Belgian Congo. Leopold III, the King of Belgium himself, had given his blessing to our party's foray—what could go wrong?

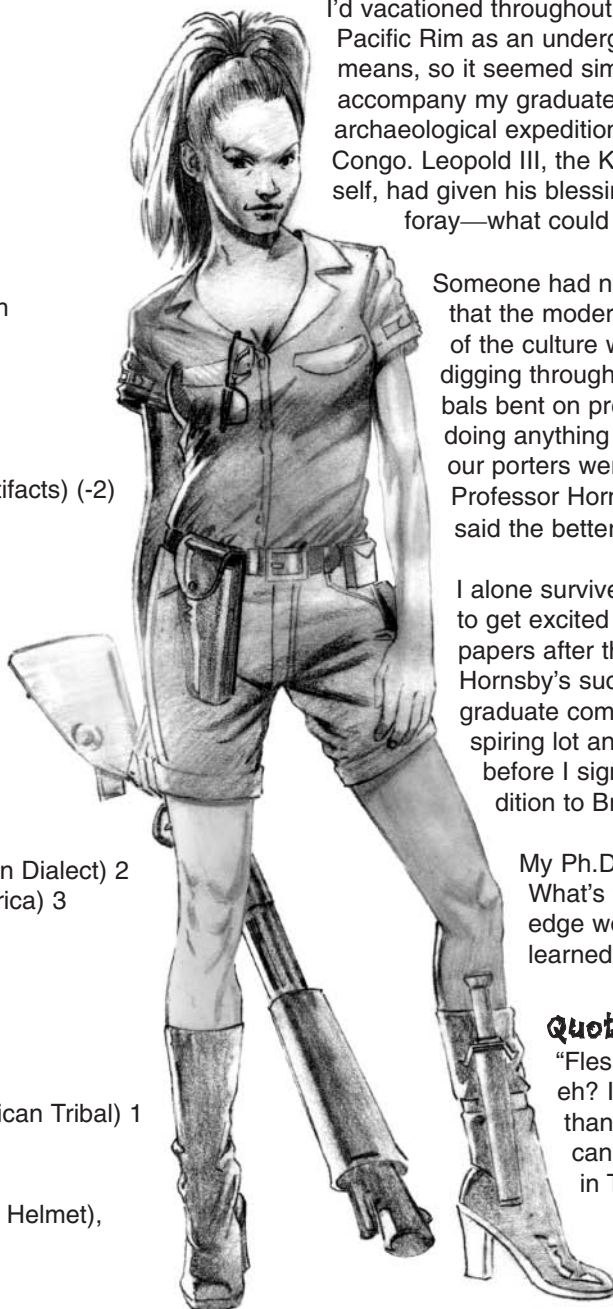
Someone had neglected to mention that the modern-day descendants of the culture whose ruins we were digging through were fierce cannibals bent on preventing us from doing anything of the sort. Many of our porters were slain, and poor Professor Hornsby—well, the less said the better.

I alone survived, but it was difficult to get excited about University papers after that adventure! Hornsby's successors on my graduate committee were an uninspiring lot and it was not long before I signed on with an expedition to British Guiana.

My Ph.D.? I never finished it. What's the point? No knowledge worth the name is learned in a classroom.

Quote

"Flesh-crazed zombies, eh? I doubt they're worse than the head-shrinker cannibals I encountered in Tanganyika."



Daredevil

Pulp Hero

Str 4 **Dex** 5 **Con** 3
Int 3 **Per** 4 **Will** 4
LPS 38
EPS 38
Spd 16
Essence 23

Qualities/Drawbacks

Acute Eyesight (2)
Attractiveness (3)
Charisma (2)
Fast Reaction Time (2)
Fear of Commitment (-1)
Good Luck 1 (1)
Honorable (-2)
Nerves of Steel (3)
Reckless (-2)
Showoff (-2)
Trademark (-1)

Skills

Acrobatics 3
Driving (Car) 4
Driving (Motorcycle) 4
Guns (Handgun) 3
Hand Weapon (Knife) 3
Martial Arts 3
Notice 2
Ride (Horse) 2
Stealth 4
Piloting (Propeller Plane) 5

Gear

Stunt Airplane, Leather Jacket and Cap with Aviator's Goggles, .45 Automatic, Voluminous Travel Papers

Personality

Follow in my father's footsteps? Live the life of a filthy mole in a coal mine? No chance. I left home when I was thirteen. When B. Ward Beam's International Congress of Dare-Devs passed through town, I signed on in a heartbeat.

They put me to work hauling machine parts from place to place, and assisting the mechanics. Still, I worked my way up through the ranks of Beam's Dare-Devs. I learned how to leap between galloping horses, how to ride a motorcycle while standing on its seat, how to drive a car while wearing a blindfold, and finally—*finally*—I was given a plane to fly.

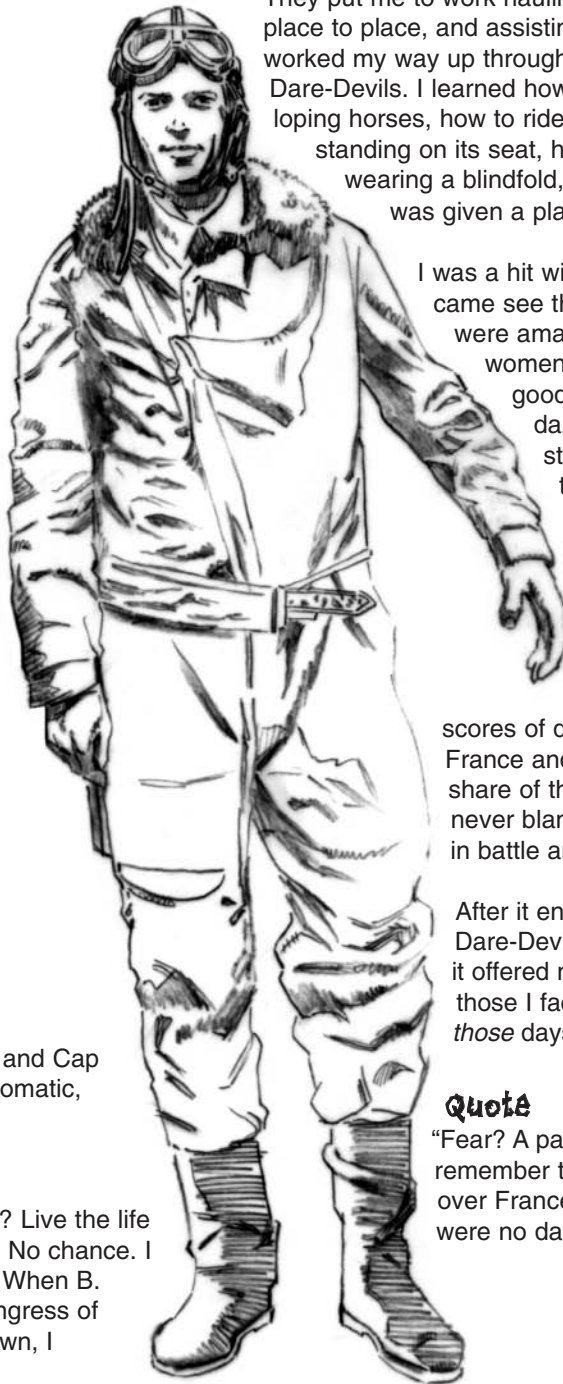
I was a hit with every person who came see the show. The children were amazed by my daring, the women thrilled by my stunning good looks, and my peers dazed by the dangerous stunts I performed without the slightest trace of fear.

When the time came, I enlisted to do my duty in the Great War. I tested dozens of military aircraft and flew scores of dangerous missions over France and Germany. I saw my share of the horrors of war, but never blanched. There was glory in battle and plenty to go around.

After it ended, I returned to the Dare-Devil circuit, but the dangers it offered never seemed to equal those I faced in combat. Oh, for *those* days of struggle . . .

Quote

"Fear? A pastime for cowards. I remember the smoke-filled skies over France like yesterday. *Those* were no days for fear."



Human Mountain

Pulp Hero

Str 7 **Dex** 2 **Con** 5
Int 2 **Per** 2 **Will** 4
Lps 73
EPS 53
Spd 14
Essence 34

Qualities/Drawbacks

Artistic Talent (Painting) (3)
Hard to Kill 5 (5)
Minority (Black) (-3)
Obsession (Health) (-2)
Resistance (Fatigue) (2)

Skills

Brawling 5
Dodge 4
Driving (Car) 2
Fine Arts 2
Fine Arts (Painting Specialty) 4
Guns (Shotgun) 2
Hand Weapon (Club) 2
Intimidation 3
Mechanic 2
Running (Marathon) 1
Sport (Boxing) 1
Streetwise 2
Weight Lifting 3

Gear

Crowbar, Practical Clothing

Personality

This guy I'd seen once or twice watching the fights down at the Club walks up to me and hands me this piece of paper. Which I did not look at.

"Aren't you going to look at it?" he asks. He's got this three-piece suit on, all tweedy. Some academic type. Patches on the elbows and stuff.

So I look at it. *Dr. Albert Riggs, Ph.D.*, it says. "So you're a doctor," I say.

It turns out this guy is from the college and that he's organizing this expedition to this really small little island way out in the ocean.

Seems this guy had seen me fight a couple of times down at the club and he thinks he's going to need somebody who can handle himself, if you know what I mean.

Because he's going to dig up some artifact that the local native-types think is some big religious thing and brings people back from the dead. Or something.

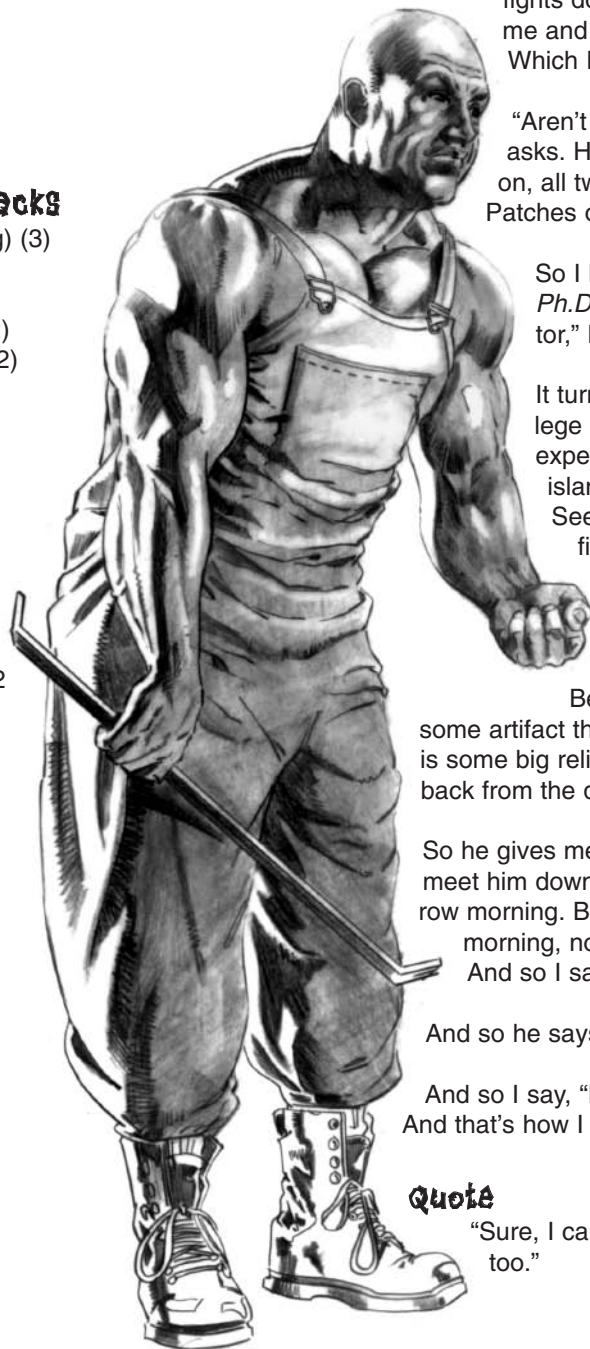
So he gives me ten bucks and tells me to meet him down by the docks at eight tomorrow morning. By which I mean the next morning, not tomorrow for us, little man. And so I say, "Down by your place?"

And so he says, "No, down by the docks."

And so I say, "I thought you were the doc." And that's how I got messed up in that.

Quote

"Sure, I can bend that in half. Yeah, him too."





Masked Vigilante

Legendary Hero

Str 5 **Dex** 6 **Con** 4
Int 4 **Per** 4 **Wil** 5
LPS 52
EPS 47
Spd 20
Essence 36

Qualities/Drawbacks

Acute Hearing (2)
Adversary (Local Mafia) (-3)
Contacts (Criminal) (1)
Contacts (Local Police) (2)
Fear of Commitment (-1)
Hard to Kill 1 (1)
Honorable (-2)
Mentalism (2)
Nerves of Steel (3)
Recurring Nightmares (-1)
Resources (Multimillionaire) (10)
Secret Identity (-3)

Skills

Acrobatics 3
Brawling 4
Disguise 4
Fine Arts 2
Guns (Handgun) 3
Guns (Submachine Gun) 4
Intimidation 4
Lock Picking 4
Notice 5
Piloting (Autogyro) 3
Questioning 4
Research/Investigation 4
Sport (Polo) 2
Streetwise 4

Mentalism Powers

Read Mind Strength 2
Read Mind Art 2
Clairvoyance Strength 1
Clairvoyance Art 1

Gear

Signature Tommy Gun, Colt .45, Vigilante Garb,
Vast Family Holdings and Resources

Personality

I am haunted by the knowledge of the evil men do,
for I know it well.

My mother and father died before I can remember,
and I was sent to live with my wealthy uncle in the
country. He was a mysterious figure, absent often
at his business, the New York International Trading
Company. I was tutored by experts in their fields,
indoctrinated into wealthy society, and wanted for
no comfort money could buy. I learned well, and
though I rarely saw Uncle, I felt that he alone knew
me.

I learned the real truth one fateful day on the cusp
of my adulthood. It had been raining, the mansion
closed up tight, all the servants secure in their
quarters. Manfred, Uncle's manservant, burst into
my chambers, his clothing drenched in blood and
gore.

"The Shade is no more," he choked. "You must
come with me."

He led me through secret passages and hidden
chambers deep below the estate to an inner sanc-
tum where Uncle's body, obscured by a cloak and
mask of black, lay dead on a slab of marble. He
pointed at a thick tome, open on a lectern, and
withdrew.

I learned that day of my Uncle's secret identity, of
his battle with the forces of evil, of my father's bat-
tle before him, and of his father's battle before
him. That day, I took up the mask of the Shade.

Quote

"I know your heart, evil-doer, and in that black pit
lies no redemption."

Masked Vigilante

Pulp Hero

Str 3 **Dex** 4 **Con** 3
Int 3 **Per** 4 **Wil** 3
Lps 34
Eps 32
Spd 14
Essence 20

Qualities/Drawbacks

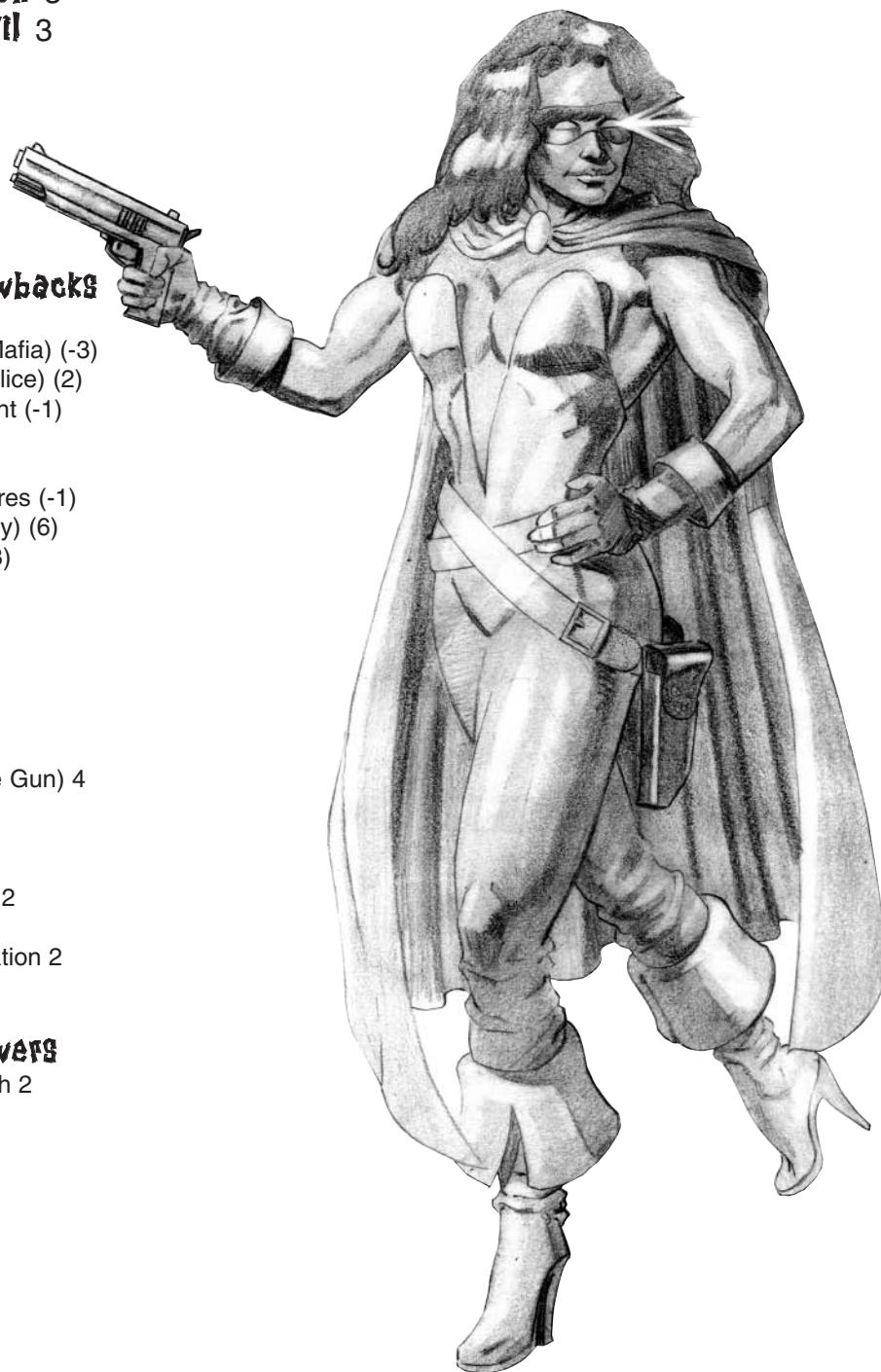
Acute Hearing (2)
Adversary (Local Mafia) (-3)
Contacts (Local Police) (2)
Fear of Commitment (-1)
Honorable (-2)
Mentalism (2)
Recurring Nightmares (-1)
Resources (Wealthy) (6)
Secret (Identity) (-3)

Skills

Acrobatics 3
Brawling 3
Disguise 3
Fine Arts 2
Guns (Submachine Gun) 4
Intimidation 3
Lock Picking 3
Notice 5
Piloting (Autogyro) 2
Questioning 3
Research/Investigation 2
Sport (Polo) 2

Mentalism Powers

Read Mind Strength 2
Read Mind Art 2



Private Dick

Pulp Hero

Personality

Str 2 **Dex** 3 **Con** 3
Int 4 **Per** 5 **Wil** 3
Lps 30
Eps 29
Spd 12
Essence 20

Qualities/Drawbacks

Acute Hearing (2)
Addiction (Heavy Smoking) (-2)
Contacts (Local Hoods) (1)
Contacts (Local Reporters) (3)
Contacts (Police) (2)
Good Luck 3 (3)
Honorable (-1)
Humorless (-1)
Photographic Memory (2)
Recurring Nightmares (-1)

Skills

Acting 2
Brawling 3
Cheating 2
Dodge 4
Escapism 1
Guns (Handgun) 4
Haggling 3
Lock Picking 3
Notice 5
Questioning 4
Research/Investigation 4
Streetwise 4
Tracking 3

Gear

Notepad, .38 Snubnose
Revolver, Binoculars



It was a typical Tuesday. On a typical Tuesday, it rained, I came to work wet, and smoked a pack of Lucky Strikes while I read the paper, which was also wet. Like I said, it was a typical Tuesday.

Until she knocked on the door. High-fashion suit, short skirt, expensive perfume that smelled like lilacs. I sit there and stare at her like I got no brain in my head until she says, "Spare one of those Luckies?"

You know the story. Her father's gone missing, she's scared he was mixed up with the mob and they had him taken out of the picture, yadda yadda yadda. I take the case.

It's late at night and the two of us are back at her place. There's one of those awkward silences—you know the kind—and she steps close to me. She's got this weird look on her face, not like a dame getting ready to kiss a guy, but like she wants to rip off the top of my head and eat my brain.

Which she tries to do.

In the struggle, her hat falls off. The top of her head ain't there, like it got blown off or something.

So yeah, I almost made it with a dead dame. Gotta find a new line of work.

Quote

"Dames. Always the dames. I swear, dames are gonna be the death of me."

Scientific Wizard

Pulp Hero

Str 1 **Dex** 2 **Con** 2
Int 5 **Per** 5 **Wil** 5
Lps 22
Eps 29
Spd 8
Essence 20

Qualities/Drawbacks

Addiction (Habitual Drinking) (-1)
Bad Luck 1 (-1)
Contacts (Local University) (2)
Contacts (Military) (3)
Honorable (-3)
Nerves of Steel (3)
Photographic Memory (2)
Gadgetmaster 5 (15)

Skills

Bureaucracy 1
Demolitions 1
Dodge 1
Guns (Handgun) 1
Hand Weapon (Sword) 2
Humanities 1
Instruction 2
Mechanic 5
Notice 2
Pilot (Dirigible) 1
Research/Investigation 4
Sciences 5
Traps 1

Gear

Sword Cane, Lab Coat with Many (full) Pockets, Duffel Full of Tools and Bits, Micro Explosives (see p. 49), Flying Car (see p. 48), one Gadget Slot reserved for Spontaneous Gadget (see p. 48)

Personality

Since my earliest days I sought the truth. As a child, I did rude physics experiments with marbles. As an undergraduate, I accelerated a bit of matter to nearly the speed of sound using only the electricity produced by a common hamster running on a treadmill. Those were days of magic.

As a graduate student I fell victim to campus politics. Though my thesis was brilliant, the endless posturing of the tenured professors eviscerated my work. Outraged, I left.

In the military, I was put to work developing super weapons for use in the trenches of France in the Great War. But after the war, men in black coats replaced the ribbon-decked officers which previously directed our efforts. They ordered us to perform questionable experiments on cadavers, and worse. I began to drink heavily.

I've finally escaped those horrors. I know now that I must stop them from continuing their terrible experiments to bring back the dead. Unless I'm too late . . .

Quote

"Behold the marvels of . . . science!"




CHAPTER THREE





THE HOLLOW EARTH



A swallow of precious brandy from his flask was like nectar of the gods in this forsaken place.

Guy Cicero and James Merriweather sat in the common room of the small, dusty inn where they had arranged their accommodations. The dust of the Iraqi desert had been blowing in through its windows and doors for decades unabated, and the place—not to mention the pair of explorers, who had been riding camels for the better part of a week—were covered with it.

“Why, James,” asked Cicero, “do you suppose it took prehistoric man millennia and millennia to move from caves and rocks to stone, copper, bronze, domesticated animals, and agriculture?” His query had the patronizing tone a grizzled lecturer might take with a dense undergraduate.

“Good grief,” replied Merriweather. “I thought we agreed to leave the monotonous lectures and quizzing on the steamer.” He stole a nip from his hip flask. “I would say,” Merriweather continued unenthusiastically, “that in the case of the Egyptians it had a lot to do with the fact that life in the Nile valley really wasn’t so bad. What did they need iron and chariots for? In the case of the Sumerians, I’d say it was because of their constant feuding and attacks from outsiders like the Assyrians, compounded by—”

“Bah!” replied Cicero, dismissing the younger man’s bored recitation with an annoyed wave of his hands. “You’re regurgitating Rehnquist, Foote, and a passel of other encrusted heads of history departments.”

“They *are* the authorities on the subject,” Merriweather retorted. When he had agreed to accompany Cicero on what he had been told would be the most important expedition to Mesopotamia in decades, he had assumed it would involve concrete travel arrangements, definite plans, and some reliable source of funding. To his chagrin, he had traveled across the Atlantic in steerage. He was not impressed and his level of enthusiasm with Cicero was still on the slide.

“Bah!” Cicero opined.

“Please,” Merriweather’s voice dripped aggravated sarcasm, “enlighten me with your wisdom.”

Cicero reached into the worn leather satchel he had not let out of his sight since they set off and removed a cylindrical leather case, which he unrolled to reveal a large sheet of parchment, a rubbing from some sort of hieroglyph-covered stone.

Merriweather, surprised, looked at the parchment with genuine interest, which was more than he had been able to work up since first mounting a camel in Beirut. “What’s this?”

“This,” Cicero replied, “came to me by way of a grave robber. He made this rubbing at a burial site at Saqqara—the tomb of a minor pharaoh from the earliest days of ancient Egypt’s middle kingdom. It suggests that the Egyptian obsession with democratizing the afterlife in the first intermediate period was not completely about resolving internal politics.”

Merriweather stared at him blankly.

Cicero’s eyes flashed with excitement, but he lowered his voice to a tense whisper. “This suggests they were concerned about the afterlife because the deceased *weren’t staying dead!*”

Merriweather’s face flooded with disgust and annoyance. He pushed his chair back, stood up, and turned to storm out of the inn. But then he turned abruptly back to Cicero. “Even assuming,” he fumed, “that this completely idiotic fantasy has any germ of truth to it—which it can’t possibly—what in God’s name are we doing in Iraq? The pyramids are in *Egypt!*”

“There’s the small matter,” replied Cicero sheepishly, “of locating the grave robber in question and finding out exactly which pyramid we need to visit.”

“Oh, for Christ’s sake!” retorted Merriweather. With that, he stormed out of the inn, drinking mightily from his flask.

Cicero never saw him again.



Introduction

The power of an ancient spell is unwittingly broken.
An unspeakable horde of living dead are released!

The Hollow Earth, however, is unlike some of the others presented in *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* and *AFMBE* sourcebooks in two ways. First, while most *AFMBE* settings presuppose the circumstances that have brought the dead to life, here, the Cast Members are directly involved in those events. Second, The Hollow Earth presents a more structured approach than most settings. It has a definite beginning, middle, and end. While there is plenty of room for flexibility, this sure progression remains at the campaign's heart.

Overview

In broad outline, The Hollow Earth has three stages.

Stage One: the Cast Members, employed by or otherwise associated with Guy Cicero, undertake a series of pulp-flavored expeditions to recover a number of ancient artifacts. No zombies yet.

Stage Two: When the last artifact is removed from its resting place, the zombies are unleashed in a series of earthquakes that open up great holes in the Earth's crust. They run rampant across the globe. Major cities are sites of massacre, widespread panic ensues, and society in general is plunged into chaos.

Stage Three: The Cast Members must make their way to the Earth's core from whence the zombies have issued and energize the ancient artifacts once more, to put an end to the zombie menace.

More Than Six Feet Under

Bodies are buried in the earth when they die, as they have been for millennia. Where zombies are found in movies, books, comics, and so on, the undead usually burst out of the ground, poking rotting hands up through the soil, reaching up and into the everyday world of air, sun, and chirping birds. Imagine, though, that instead of reaching upwards, an entire civilization of the undead secretly flourishes *underground*, inside a worldwide network of antediluvian caverns. Imagine that these undead at the Earth's core make a regular practice of harvesting some fraction of the recently buried and using them to increase their number. Imagine that the numbers of this undead multitude number have been swelling in the hollow earth since the Bronze Age. Finally, imagine that this civilization of zombies—if it could truly be called such—is embittered and hateful of those who still walk the face of the earth, as they are prevented from doing so by potent magic they are powerless to dispel.

The Ancient Ones

Millennia ago, legions of the living dead rose up to threaten the people of Egypt, Sumeria, and the other ancient civilizations of the Middle East. The elite priest-kings of these tribes banded together, invoked the power of their gods by journeying personally to the realm of the dead, and worked mighty magic. They managed to banish the walking corpses forever to the realms of the underworld.



The Hollow Earth as the First Domino

One problem with running an extended All Flesh Must Be Eaten campaign—one where the same Cast Members travel from place to place, encountering all manner of different zombies—is that it can be hard to “realistically” justify such a diverse range of the living dead. If the walking dead are so common that the same group of protagonists keep running into them everywhere, why aren’t historical texts (much less daily newspapers) chock full of reports of the dead walking the streets?

The backstory of The Hollow Earth—that a protective ritual has made the world safe from the undead (until now)—can be used to solve this problem by explaining where all the zombies have been for all these years, and why they are all just coming up for air just now. An enterprising Zombie Master should be able to combine the introductory sections of The Hollow Earth with just about any other setting or settings, either official or of her own devising. The campaign can even be ended as described—after dozens of other adventures, when the Cast Members finally manage to figure out what allowed the zombies to escape.

Note that this approach will require the Zombie Master to make some changes to this campaign. The middle segment must be much less apocalyptic, for example, if the Cast Members are to have any chance to do anything other than devote their full attention to immediately stemming the menace.

In order to preserve the power of their rituals, however, artifacts were required to sustain the magic. They were secreted throughout the ancient world, some entombed in the great pyramids and ziggurats of Egypt and Sumer, others hidden away in remote shrines and vaults. These forgotten artifacts have lain undisturbed for hundreds of generations, protecting humankind from the evil that lurks below. Where originally there may have been more than a dozen, only three remain. When the last is removed from its resting place, the spell will be broken.

The Society

Only a handful of Pulp Era persons have any idea about the ancient plague of zombies and the magical solution the ancient priest-kings invoked. They are members of an ancient fraternity they call, very simply, the Society. Members of the Society span the world (though they are mainly concentrated in the Middle East), rarely crossing paths with one another and never meeting as a corporate body. Each member can theoretically trace a lineage to one of the ancient priest-kings. They individually undertake the day-to-day task of keeping the artifacts from falling to the hands of anyone who would—accidentally or purposefully—open the subterranean vault of the legions of undead.

As many of the artifacts have already been destroyed or removed from their resting places, many members of the Society have become superfluous. In addition, after uncounted eons, most members have lost touch with their purpose and history, their ancient wisdom distorted as each generation gradually corrupts the group’s communal lore. In the Pulp Era, a given site’s protector might have only the vaguest idea about what will happen if the sacred artifact under her protection were to be destroyed or removed from its resting place. Some members of the Society now believe in completely incorrect versions of their history. Some, for example, believe that their fellowship is descended from the Templars, that the ancient ritual prevented and continues to prevent the moon from crashing into the Earth, and that the ancient cabal of priest-kings are still alive today and simply remain hidden for their own indecipherable reasons. This is not to say that the entire Society is populated by the completely deluded. The Society’s secret leaders do, for the most part, know the score, and retain knowledge of some of their ancient rituals. In the current state of affairs, though, even contact between geographically separated members is very uncommon.

Members of the Society will be encountered throughout this campaign. Where nothing else is said about a given representative, the Zombie Master should feel free to invent specific idiosyncrasies that keep things lively and fun.



Typical Society Muscle

These are the nameless mooks the Society can call out by the baker's dozen. These statistics should be beefed up accordingly if the Zombie Masters intend for the antagonist in question to challenge any but the weakest of Cast Members.

Strength 3 **Intelligence** 2
Dexterity 3 **Perception** 3
Constitution 3 **Willpower** 2
Life Points 34 **Speed** 12
Endurance Points 29 **Essence Pool** 16
Notable Skills*: Guns (relevant type) 3, Intimidation 3, Martial Arts 3, Myth and Legend (Society) 1

Gear: Mundane pistol or rifle and/or cudgel, sword, or large knife, clothing appropriate to the region.

* The mooks may possess other skills if desired.



Generic Society Mystic Henchman

This is a generic middle-echelon Society soldier—the type who might lead a handful of the mooks. If this template is used more than once, swap the Qualities, Drawbacks, and Mentalism Powers for new ones to keep the Cast Members on their toes.

Strength 3 **Intelligence** 4
Dexterity 3 **Perception** 3
Constitution 4 **Willpower** 4
Life Points 47 **Speed** 14
Endurance Points 38 **Essence Pool** 21

Qualities/Drawbacks: Acute Hearing, Force of Law (Local Law Officer), Hard to Kill 3, Mentalism

Mentalism Powers: Mind Control Strength 3, Mind Control Art 2, Pyrokinesis Strength 1, Pyrokinesis Art 1

Notable Skills*: Dodge 4, Guns (relevant type) 3, Martial Arts 5, Notice 4, Myth and Legend (Society) 3

Gear: Mundane pistol or rifle and/or cudgel, sword, or large knife, clothing appropriate to the region, mystic paraphernalia

* The henchman may possess other skills if desired.



Guy Cicero

Strength 2 **Intelligence** 4
Dexterity 2 **Perception** 3
Constitution 4 **Willpower** 4
Life Points 34 **Speed** 12
Endurance Points 35 **Essence Pool** 19
Qualities/Drawbacks*: Addiction (Habitual drinking), Nerves of Steel, Obsession (Finding the artifacts)

Notable Skills*: Cheating 3, Dodge 3, Humanities 5, Instruction 4, Language (Arabic) 3, Myth and Legend (Middle East) 5, Myth and Legend (Others) 3, Notice 3, Occult Knowledge (Middle East) 2, Research/Investigation 5, Smooth Talking 3, Writing (Academic) 4

Gear: Pith helmet, rusty revolver, random array of maps related archeological paraphernalia

* Guy may possess other Qualities, Drawbacks, and Skills as needed.

Guy Cicero

Guy Cicero, once a professor of ancient civilizations at Princeton, may be the only living person outside the Society with any inkling of the importance of the artifacts. The road began when he purchased an ancient rubbing from a grave robber who had no further use for the curiosity. Additional research put more of the puzzle together, but as he devoted more and more time to the project, his single-minded personality led him to neglect his other duties and he was fired from his lecturing post. Since then, he has funded his obsession with collecting the ancient artifacts in a variety of seedy ways, from deluded private benefactors to insurance scams to outright theft. Although Cicero is not an evil man, it would not be inappropriate to classify him as driven and unscrupulous.

Now, several years later, he has assembled proof (proof to his mind, anyway—the historical establishment sees him as a crackpot) of the ancient plague of the undead and the creation of the artifacts to maintain the power of the ritual that dealt with the menace. In what will prove to be a deadly misunderstanding, however, Cicero has misinterpreted a key translation. He believes that “banished to the underworld” means that the power of the ancient ritual destroyed the zombies, sending their souls to their just desserts. He will be very, very surprised to discover the existence of a more literal and immediate “underworld.”

Cicero has now latched onto the idea of acquiring the ancient artifacts, having managed to piece together what he believes are the locations of the surviving three. The archaeological impulse of the Pulp Era has little to do with leaving ancient relics where they lie, after all. He is just now beginning to look for sponsors and assistants.

The Legion of the Damned

Although they do not come into play right away, a little should be said about the zombies at the Earth’s core. The zombies in question have been trapped in the vast series of (otherwise natural) caverns that riddle the Earth’s crust for millennia. It is

dark and unpleasant down there, and it makes them cranky. When the floodgates open, they do not waste a second before they start to scarf living meat.

For the past several millennia, of course, the only human flesh the zombies could get was already dead, because they were prevented from going up to the surface to eat the living stuff, which tastes better. They foraged for food by tunneling up into graveyards to steal bodies after they were buried. They did get to eat the odd living spelunker from time to time, but that was like giving a Roman legion a cheese curd to share—it only made them more bitter than they were before.

Pesky Questions

At some point in *The Hollow Earth*, the players may want to find out more about the precise nature of the ancient zombie menace, or about Guy Cicero's research, or about any number of obscure scholastic topics. Pulp adventure, however, is about adventure and these academic concerns should stay firmly in the background.

Zombie Masters may employ two different strategies for keeping the story moving in the face of such questions. The first is to make a quick, superficial explanation of whatever question is at hand, taking frequent opportunity to use words and phrases like "unbelievably ancient," "Second Intermediate Period," "antediluvian," "as best you can tell," "Assyrian city-states," "records lost to history," and so forth. The second option is to smile, roll some dice out of sight, and say, "Your sources on that are sketchy." The Cast Members of those players who do not take the hint are promptly attacked by a pair of zombies who burst down their door howling for human flesh . . .





Stage One: Ancient Artifacts

In the first stage of *The Hollow Earth*, the Cast Members retrieve three ancient artifacts from their resting places.

The New Guy

The adventure begins when Guy Cicero comes knocking, looking for people to help fund and staff his coming expeditions. Here are a few reasons why he might approach the Cast Members:

- If the characters are archaeologists, historians, or explorers, Guy approaches them because he respects their work (if their work is respectable) or because no one else will listen to him (if they, too, are outside the intellectual establishment).
- If the Cast has any level of wealth or history of patronage, Guy comes to them about funding. Pulp adventurers who fund expeditions they do not personally accompany should be mocked by the Zombie Master until they agree to go along for the ride.
- If the characters have fought the living dead before, Guy approaches them from that angle, having read about their exploits in some newspaper or journal. While he does not have any idea that there are still zombies lurking below the Earth's surface, he does hope that his theories about the artifacts' historical relationship to the undead will interest the characters.
- Guy needs able assistants, clerks, bearers, muscle, and a whole host of other general help. Pulp heroes such as the Cast Members certainly possess the sorts of skills (not to mention the impulse for adventure) he is looking for.

If the Cast Members resist involvement, the Zombie Master might just want to tell the players that Guy simply goes on his way without them. He then succeeds in acquiring all of the artifacts without the Cast Members and the zombies burst forth right on schedule. If that happens, the Zombie Master should let the Cast Members think that if they had only gone

with him they might have been able to avert the flood of zombies that is busy bringing about the apparent end of civilization as they know it. That is not the case, but letting them think they could have prevented the catastrophe probably ensure that the Zombie Master never again has to deal with ornery players who try to sidestep her adventures.

Running Without Guy

If the Zombie Master can arrange the campaign so that one of the Cast Members takes Guy's place as the motivation for recovering the artifacts, so much the better! While it might take a little more work in character creation or backstory hand waving, there is no reason a Cast Member could not single-mindedly obsess about finding a series of artifacts she has learned about by deciphering a series of ancient texts.

Keep Them Guessing

If the Cast Members take up with Guy, it is very important they not suspect the “successful” outcome of their expeditions—that is, the recovery of the artifacts—will be an unmitigated disaster. But since Guy himself has no idea, and he will be the primary source of information, that should not prove too difficult.

Especially devious Zombie Masters might choose to keep the characters guessing, at first, about the most basic of questions. Perhaps Guy recruits them for “an archaeological expedition of the utmost importance” but says he is unable to tell them anything more until they arrive on the site. Or perhaps he only tells them about one of the artifacts, waiting to spring the other two after the first has been recovered.

The Zombie Master must walk a fine line, though, because if the Cast Members do not trust Cicero at all, they are liable to just walk away, like James Merriweather did in the introduction to this chapter. The best course is to portray Guy as a sympathetic explorer ostracized by the establishment. The Zombie Master should do everything possible to suggest that the Cast Members' best interests dovetail with Guy's.

All-Purpose Encounters

The following is a list of brief encounters and events the Zombie Master can use to spicen up any one of the expeditions. They should be seeded in as needed.

- Guy hooks the party up with an unscrupulous guide who incapacitates the Cast Members in the middle of the night and sells them as slaves to a group of nomadic herders.
- A reliable guide might later be found who provides comic relief, talking at great length about the Cast Members' strange foreign ways. The Zombie Master's ability to employ a humorous accent is vital here.
- A pulp expedition would not be a pulp expedition unless someone wound up in a pit full of snakes (or scorpions, or poisonous beetles, or whatever). Said pit could be the "death" portion of a death trap or be the focal point of a dangerous melee, over which combatants must frequently jump.
- Guy becomes depressed by some setback and disappears on a drinking binge. The characters must track him down and sober him up.
- A handful of Society members begin tailing the characters from place to place, trying to figure out what they are up to and to retrieve any artifacts they have already taken. If any of the characters notice and manage to nab one of them, it will provide them with an opportunity to learn about the Society.
- If the purchase of supplies is entrusted to natives, the Cast Members may be horrified to discover that their entire stock of bullets are of the wrong caliber.
- Camels spit. Hilarity ensues.
- Guy falls in love with an enchanting native woman. Her husband is not amused and is required by some obscure local code of honor to kill him and his companions.
- The characters wind up in a desperate back-alley fight with a gang of robbers. Things go pretty badly for the robbers, but then one of them does manage to grab something valuable (like one of the artifacts!) before running off into the night. A dangerous rooftop chase ensues. If the characters go to the authorities, they discover that the robbers have paid them off—the Cast Members wind up in jail themselves!
- After almost a week of futile searching at one of the sites, Guy discovers that one of his clues is flat wrong about the precise location of one of the artifacts. He must backtrack to one of his sources who operates a map store in Rome. This involves a welcome return to western civilization, but sets the schedule back by several weeks.





Techniques of the Lazy Zombie Master

Zombie Masters who do not want to do any additional research before running these adventures should not have to do so. The following pointers may prove useful to the lazy Zombie Master.

- Pulp *Zombies* is about pulp adventure, not musty academia. These ancient sites are present in this story so Indiana Jones style characters can run madly from death traps featuring four-ton boulders, not to give anyone a lesson in real-world Egyptology. Zombie Masters who feel as though they are being bogged down in academic detail should immediately involve the Cast Members in a fight scene or devious trap.
- Many of the dangers in the locations described spring from completely modern and completely mundane sources. Think of adventure tropes like shady pickpockets, nomad bandits, crippled beggars, and “expert guides” trying to bilk Cast Members out of their money. These sorts of colorful characters and “modern-day” interactions will distract players from any historical inconsistencies that arise.
- Watch out for know-it-all players. (“Actually, the pyramids were encased in limestone sheaths until the ninth century, when the Arab ruler of blah blah blah . . .”) They can ruin everyone’s fun with their annoying pedantry. The best defense is to make sure they have no chance to get started by keeping the action fast and furious.

Expedition Kernels

The sections below provide scenario kernels for three expeditions, one for each of the three artifacts. Each provides only the briefest description of the location in question. Many scholarly works have been written on each of these sites and a single scenario in each could easily fill three complete books. There is simply no room here.

Prior to running these scenarios though, Zombie Masters might want to investigate the sites in greater detail at their local libraries or on the World Wide Web. Britannica.com is an excellent Internet-based resource for this purpose, and provides links to other excellent sites, many of which include painstaking descriptions of these locations as well as detailed maps.

Some Zombie Masters may find it difficult to manage the transitions between the sites, since little information is provided about the Middle East outside the three sites. Those who do are advised to employ the “Indiana Jones” method of pulp travel across foreign continents by hauling out a world map or globe and tracing a finger across it to describe the path of the characters. (Hum the Indiana Jones theme, or play it on a CD, for the full effect.) For extra credit, the Zombie Master can describe brief flashes of travel: “Here, by camel-back, across the baking desert. Once on the Mediterranean, by tramp steamer, packed into steerage . . .”

Finally, the Zombie Master should feel free to either add or subtract sites and artifacts from “The Hollow Earth” to suit her interests and the strengths of the Cast Members. The important thing is that the players remain involved and everyone has a good time.

Saqqara, City of the Dead

Located about twenty miles (thirty kilometers) south of modern Cairo on the edge of a high desert plateau, the necropolis of Saqqara is where many of the earliest rulers of ancient Egypt chose to build their great funerary monuments. Inside the pyramid complex of Djoser—the largest of the monuments found at Saqqara—lies the first of the ancient artifacts, a scepter of relatively simple appearance that has lain undiscovered by grave robbers for centuries.

Saqqara is a virtual city of ancient monuments, tombs, and temples in varying states of ruin. Most major memorials—each of which was both burial chamber and monument to one of Egypt’s pharaohs—are surrounded by smaller satellites where the ruler’s benefactors and servants were entombed and where religious ceremonies were carried out. Although none of the monuments found at Saqqara match the might of the more famous Great Pyramids at Giza, they are

notable for the sheer number that are so close together. While only a few pharaohs are buried at Giza, about eighteen Egyptian monarchs lie at Saqqara.

In the Pulp Era, a moderate scattering of both permanent and temporary modern buildings can be found surrounding and among the erections of antiquity. These are home to tourists, archaeologists, and local residents. The latter group typically serves the former two as laborers, guides, and the like. It is possible to buy food and other staples in Saqqara, but anything specialized must be purchased in Cairo.

The complex of Djoser consists of a half-dozen buildings dominated by a six-tiered step pyramid, a type of pyramid that is an ancestor of the full-blown pyramids for which Egypt is so famous today. The entire complex is surrounded by a ten-yard (meter) wall that still stands in places. The step pyramid itself rises to a height of about sixty yards (meters). Under the pyramid is a labyrinthine maze of corridors, galleries, and shafts whose total length stretches to nearly two and a half miles (five kilometers). A seven-yard (meter) wide central shaft descends from approximately the center of the step pyramid about thirty yards (meters) into the ground. It is the main passage that connects the other underground passages.

The scepter itself lies in a small chamber at the bottom of a secret shaft (entirely separate from the main shaft) that is concealed deep within the bowels of the subterranean network. Just as burial chambers were sealed with giant stone plugs after their occupants were entombed, so too was this secret chamber sealed off once the all-important artifact was secured within. Once in place, the plug and the entire corridor the shaft descends from were covered with a layer of limestone to conceal the plug's existence. Without Guy Cicero's painstakingly assembled clues, it would be impossible to find. As it is, locating the shaft exactly will require a painstaking search, as his instructions are very old and several key passages are missing.

The scepter in the pyramid is guarded by a member of the Society named Neferti. Neferti has no recollection at all of where the scepter is located within the Djoser compound—that information was lost when his great-great-grandfather died unexpectedly in a fall before passing the information along. He has so far managed to gain employment with all of the major



Neferti

Strength 3

Intelligence 3

Dexterity 3

Perception 4

Constitution 3

Willpower 2

Life Points 34

Speed 12

Endurance Points 29

Essence Pool 18

Qualities/Drawbacks: Contacts (The Society), Fast Reaction Time

Skills: Climbing 3, Dodge 4, Engineer 2, Hand Weapon (Knife) 5, Hagglng 5, Humanities 2, Language (French) 2, Notice 4, Stealth 4, Throwing (Knife) 3

Gear: Wicked little curved knife (occasionally poisoned), throwing knives

groups that have dug anywhere within the Djoser complex, and has used the opportunity as much to explore the complex himself as to keep explorers from finding the scepter.

The Dead Sea

The second artifact is located within a cave near the Dead Sea. Forming part of the border between Pulp Era Palestine and Transjordan, this lake-sized body contains waters of a brilliant, sapphire blue. It is long and narrow—roughly ten miles (twenty kilometers)



su'ad

Strength 2 **Intelligence** 5
Dexterity 3 **Perception** 5
Constitution 3 **Willpower** 4
Life Points 30 **Speed** 12
Endurance Points 32 **Essence Pool** 22

Qualities/Drawbacks: Acute Taste*, Contacts (Society), Contacts (Commercial Network), Honorable 2, Resistance (Poison) 4*, Resources (Rich), Status 4, Old Soul

Skills: Acting 3, Bureaucracy 4, Fine Arts 3, Hagglng 7, Language (English) 4, Language (Latin) 2, Notice 6, Riding (camel) 4, Smooth Talking 5, Streetwise 5

Gear: Whatever he needs.

* Taken together, these two Qualities are great fun at parties.

The high salt content prohibits any plant or animal life in the Dead Sea and any fish that are washed in from the Jordan River (which empties into the Dead Sea) are immediately killed. Because of this, the shores of the Dead Sea are virtually uninhabited. While small farming and herding communities are found from place to place, they are hardly ubiquitous.

The artifact hidden here takes the form of a triptych of ancient cuneiform tablets. It is hidden in one of the many caves dotting the high cliffs surrounding the Dead Sea. The particular cave in question lies on the northwest shore of the Sea. Guy possesses a drawing that was discovered near the ancient Sumerian ziggurat at Uruk. It reveals the method for finding the cave. At dawn on a specific day, a particular peak will be struck by the sun's first rays and cast a shadow that reveals the location of the cave. (The Zombie Master should pick a day—solstice, equinox, ancient holy day—coming in the days soon after the characters arrive at the Dead Sea. No sense dragging on about it.) Even once the location of the cave is known, the climb is still torturous.

When the Cast Members finally gain access to the proper cave, they may be distracted by deposits of brittle, ancient paper documents dating from the first century. These are a collection of some of the Dead Sea Scrolls (otherwise due to be discovered by shepherds in 1947). To make a long story short, the Jewish members of the Society in New Testament times made use of the best hiding place they knew to secret their holiest documents, the scrolls. Far, far in the rear of the cave, however, past the scrolls, the ancient tablet the Cast Members have come for is preserved and sheltered by an ancient death trap which will bring the entire cave crashing down if the correct route through the ancient stones which line the floor is not taken.

The members of the Society that guard these tablets are much better prepared and organized than Neferti. They are the Akhtar clan, headquartered in Jericho (near the north end of the Dead Sea). They trade in general goods, traveling around the Dead Sea to the small villages near Jericho, Hebron, and throughout the area. Their network of contacts allows them to keep very close track of any strangers that enter the area. While this information is largely

used in their commercial activities (“You say the group of tourists camping at Herod’s Castle will be running out of food the day after tomorrow, eh?”), it also allows them to keep track of anyone who exhibits interest in local antiquities. The patriarch of the clan, Su’ad, has perhaps the most coherent picture of what the artifacts are for and where other members of the Society can be found. This knowledge arises from the clan’s detailed records, which stretch back for centuries.

Baghdad and Babylon

The last leg of the journey takes the Cast Members to Iraq—to the ancient ruins of Babylon and then on to Baghdad. The final artifact is an ancient water jar nearly the size of a man, decorated in relief with pictures of bulls, lions, and dragons. According to Guy’s notes, the water jar is located within an ancient Babylonian vault that is otherwise unassuming. His map actually dates from Roman times, and is the work of a Roman mystic, Calistrat, who viewed the water jar and understood its significance, but was tracked down and slain by members of the Society soon afterwards.

The ancient city of Babylon is uninhabited in the Pulp Era, though a twenty-year archaeological effort conducted by the German Oriental Society has recently departed the scene having excavated dozens of sites and hundreds of remnants of statues, pillars, reliefs, seals, pottery, glassware, and jewelry. All that remains is a vast sea of ruins laid out according to the ancient city’s street plan. While the most famous monuments of Babylon—the Hanging Gardens and Tower of Babel—had not been built when the urn was originally hidden here, their ruins certainly remain in the Pulp Era, and provide excellent opportunities for Zombie Masters to incorporate a sense of the span of history. Either would also make a great place for a fight.

The map leads directly to the vault Calistrat described . . . save that the urn is missing. While the vault appears to have been unbroken by the recent excavations, the water jar is nowhere to be found. Fortunately for the Cast Members, as they leave the vault, one of them notices that they have been followed. The pair of watchers—Abdel and




Abdel

Strength 2	Intelligence 2
Dexterity 3	Perception 4
Constitution 4	Willpower 2
Life Points 34	Speed 14
Endurance Points 29	Essence Pool 17
Notable Skills: Brawling 3, Dodge 4, Guns (Handgun) 3, Stealth 3	
Gear: .45 automatic (old and full of sand)	

Yahya

Strength 4	Intelligence 2
Dexterity 3	Perception 1
Constitution 2	Willpower 3
Life Points 34	Speed 10
Endurance Points 32	Essence Pool 15
Notable Skills: Intimidation 5, Martial Arts 4, Myth and Legend (Society) 1	
Gear: None	



Yahya—are members of the Society charged with the safekeeping of the water jar. The pair is not particularly bright and are relatively easy to capture and interrogate (though not before a tense moonlight chase through the ruins!). In this way, the characters can discover that the ancestors of the pair, having slain Calistrat, moved the urn to keep its location secret. The Cast Members can either grill the current location out of the scared Arabs, or do a little leg-work themselves and discover that the pair lives in Baghdad above an ancient series of sewers, and that their families have lived in the same place for as far back as any documents that can be found. A bit of exploration in the sewers reveals the hidden room where the water jar has been hidden since the first century AD.

In Baghdad, the Cast Members also have a chance to sample every conceivable Pulp Era Arabian Nights trope, including rotund Arab merchants with great

beards in wide sashes and enormous turbans, selling all manner of silks, carpets, melons, and lamps; beautiful veiled women tempting them into all manner of debauchery; and dirty robbers with wide scimitars. At the Zombie Master's discretion, flying carpets and bottled genies may even be in order.

Johnny Come Lately

One way to abbreviate The Hollow Earth would be to begin the story after Guy manages to liberate the artifacts. That allows the introduction of zombies right away, but does, on the downside, exclude all the fun of exploring ancient ruins and visiting the Middle East.

Stage Two: Zombie Rampage

The second stage begins immediately upon removal of the third artifact from its resting place. The ground trembles and shifts, opening up gaping crevasses to the depths. After the ground stops moving (or before it stops moving, for sadistic Zombie Masters), a horde of ravenous undead streams up from the Earth's ruptured crust. This turning point is very important, not only because it marks the first time the living dead have shown their decaying faces, but also because it marks a transition in focus: from exploration and archaeology to the survival of the human race.

Debugging Guy's Death and Other Disasters

As Stage One of The Hollow Earth proceeds, something may happen that completely derails the course of the campaign—Guy's death, for example. If the artifacts are not recovered, the story is pretty much over, because the undead remain trapped in the ground. Here are some possible solutions to such a problem:

- *The Cast Members recover Guy's notes and take up where he left off.*
- *The terrible fate did not, in fact, slay Guy. He turns up later with a crazy story of how he was able to survive. (Bonus Pulp Points if you manage to work this one in—it is perfectly in genre!)*
- *James Merriweather shows up looking for Guy ("My God, I just realized he's been right all along!") and, finding out of his untimely demise, picks up where he left off.*

Ask the Author

Q: *How come the players have to remove all three artifacts from their locations in order to release the zombies? Hasn't the Babylonian artifact already been moved from its original vault?*

A: *It doesn't count when the members of the Society move the artifacts, because they are the legitimate descendants of the priest-kings of old. The proper resting places for the artifacts are wherever the Society decides to keep them.*

The Zombie Master should pull out all the stops when the Cast Members initially come into contact with the zombies, keeping the tension high and the action furious until the excitement can no longer be sustained. The fight should move from place to place, encompassing as many locations as possible. Every time the Cast Members are about to get a breather, more zombies leap up to continue the fray.

While most of the zombies are rock stupid, a few have retained some of the intelligence they had in life and impose a sort of rule over the unwashed masses of zombiedom. These “alpha” zombies do not have quite the level of control over the undead that the Zombie Lords (see *AFMBE*, p. 206), but they get by. Different alpha zombies are neither innately cooperative nor antagonistic. They each want to feast on as much human flesh as possible, so to the extent that they get in each others’ way, they fight.

An alpha zombie can command any zombie or group of zombies within about twenty yards (meters), including giving orders for long-term tasks that take the lesser zombies outside the twenty-yard radius of normal command. An alpha zombie can take control of *any* zombie in its radius, except another alpha zombie, even if that zombie was previously controlled by a different alpha zombie. If two alpha zombies try to control the same rank-and-file zombie that is within the radius of each, they must roll a Resisted Willpower Test to see which one wins. Even after one wins however, the second can still take control as soon as the first one stops actively instructing.

All communication and command occurs in zombie “language,” which consists of incoherent groans, screams, and howls, augmented by some kind of eerie telepathy. This process of zombie communication—the screaming, howling, and carrying on—is extremely scary and intimidating, and all who witness it must make Fear Tests (see *AFMBE*, p. 96).

There are a few other kinds of unique zombies in between the alpha zombies and lesser zombies on the “butchness” scale—there are bound to be, with so many of them climbing up out of the rocks. Zombie Masters should consider this free reign to toss in a few exploding or flame-spewing zombies to keep the players on their toes.



Lesser Zombie

Strength 2

Dexterity 1

Constitution 2

Dead Points 15

Endurance Points n/a

Skills: Brawling 2

Attack: Bite D4 x 2(4), or by weapon

Weak Spot: Brain, Fire, Blessed Objects* [0]

Getting Around: Slow and Steady [0]

Strength: Dead Joe Average [0]

Senses: Like the Dead, Scent Tracking [1]

Sustenance: Occasionally, All Flesh Must Be Eaten [2]

Intelligence: Dumb as Dead Wood, Tool Use 1, Zombie Language** [4]

Spreading the Love: Only the Dead [-2]

Power: 10

* The blessed objects that work against these zombies are divine objects from religions directly descended from the ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians. From a practical standpoint, there are not a lot of those lying around in the Pulp Era, but hey, it’s something. The three artifacts recovered by the Cast Members are notable examples of objects in this class, but others exist in the world.

** The alpha zombies can communicate with lesser zombies as described in the text. This trait allows the lesser zombies to understand instructions, but not to actively communicate themselves.



Alpha Zombie

Strength 4

Intelligence 5

Dexterity 2

Perception 7

Constitution 2

Willpower 2

Dead Points 15

Speed 4

Endurance Points n/a

Essence Pool 22

Skills: Brawling 2

Attack: Bite D4 x 2(4), or by weapon

Weak Spot: Brain, Blessed Objects* [5]

Getting Around: Life-Like [3]

Strength: Strong Like Bull, Iron Grip [6]

Senses: Like Nothing You've Ever Seen, Scent Tracking [17]

Sustenance: Daily, All Flesh Must Be Eaten [0]

Intelligence: Zombie Language**, Tool Use 3, Long-term Memory, Problem Solving [33]

Spreading the Love: Only the Dead [-2]

Special: Command Zombies*** [20]

Power: 87

* As lesser zombies.

** Understood only by zombies with this skill.

*** As described in the text.

Once the Cast Members' initial contact with the zombies gives way to complete panic that they have hosed the world, the Zombie Master is on her own to keep things interesting. Shouldn't be too hard in a world where there are suddenly a boatload of zombies running around everywhere. Refer to any *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* scenario or zombie movie for ideas. Largely, the Cast Members should be left to their own panicked devices. This phase of the campaign can be as long or short as the Zombie Master desires.

There are a few plot points the Zombie Master must establish before the campaign can progress to the final stage however.

- Earthquakes like the one that shook the Cast Members' location when they acquired the final artifact have struck all over the world, with no seeming pattern. In all cases, the walking dead immediately issued forth. The issuance of undead from a given quake zone usually tapers off to a trickle after a time, but never completely goes away.
- The earthquakes are continuing unpredictably as time passes, creating new zombie holes.
- Putting the artifacts back where they came from has no helpful effect, but trying would definitely make for a couple of fun evenings of play. Especially since two of the three places where they would have to be returned are underground, where the menace is strongest.
- World leaders are completely off guard. While the armies of the world are fighting valiantly against the menace, they are gradually being overwhelmed in most places. Crusty scientific advisors the world over are struggling valiantly to discover the source of the menace and ways of dealing with it. They convene a conference in Geneva, and appeal widely for help from any quarter.
- If the characters know one or more members of the Society, they might be able to find out that the members of the Society have convened an emergency council to chart a course of action. They eventually decide to send a delegation including their most senior members to Geneva to lend whatever advice they can.

Stage Three: Into the Depths

In the big finale, the players go where no (living) man has gone before—to the center of the earth—to put an end to the zombie menace.

Meanwhile, In Geneva . . .

As the Cast Members have probably heard, the world's top scientific and political leaders are meeting in Geneva in an emergency session to solve the zombie menace. The united forces of many European nations' militaries have gathered to protect the august assemblage. Anyone who might have anything useful to say is invited—nay, implored—to attend. If the Cast Members are widely known for heroic exploits, they might be invited on general principle. The wide dragnet has also attracted a legion of complete crackpots, whom Zombie Masters would be remiss if they did not use for comic relief.

The conference itself continues in perpetuity, with no breaks for meals or sleeping. Heads of state stalk in and out with their large staffs. Military officials of the highest rank, decked out with every conceivable type of ribbon or medal, chomp cigars and predict the worst if something is not done. A parade of crusty academics present their theories—most of which are laughable—using a series of easels and filmstrips.

The Cast Members arrive on the scene just in time to hear a cabal of members of the Society spill the beans on their ages-old mission and what they know: that the catastrophe was caused by the theft of ancient protections—namely, the artifacts—stolen by Guy Cicero and the Cast Members. The room becomes

very quiet and everyone turns to stare at the Cast Members. Guy Cicero is nowhere to be found. This is what big shot Hollywood story consultants call “the low point.”

Assuming the Cast Members hand over the artifacts, the members of the Society examine them for a few minutes and shake their heads sadly. The magical power has gone out of them. The most senior member present explains that the magical power must be replenished before they will once again protect humankind.

“How can we do that?” asks one of the generals.

“They must be brought to the mystical locus of the Underworld.”

The Bowels of the Earth

This grim announcement floats on the silent air for a long moment and then the earth begins to shake. Heavy chandeliers fall and panic erupts! Zombies pour into the meeting hall! The head of the Society delegation presses the artifacts into the Cast Members' hands and declares that they must take them to the center of the Earth in order to revive their power. He points to a gaping chasm through which zombies are pouring and bids them good luck—“For all our sake!”—before one of the walking dead rips his head from his body.

Guy Cicero is still nowhere to be found (the little weasel), but the Cast Members are free to try to recruit helpers from among the Society members, military officials, and soldiers who are running every which way. They can even manage to assemble a sizable assault force to march into the gaping hole. No matter what they do though, as soon as they have managed to gain access to the underground caves, a tremor triggers the collapse of the ceiling and the Cast Members are cut off. Luckily, they have the artifacts, but they quite clearly have no choice but to press on alone.

Their march to the Earth's core can be as quick or time-consuming as the Zombie Master wishes. The caverns through which the Cast Members must travel are infested with zombies in some places and eerily empty in others. In some passages, the Cast Members must provide their own light, and in others, strange subterranean fungi provide ample illumination. They can always tell which way it is to the center, because

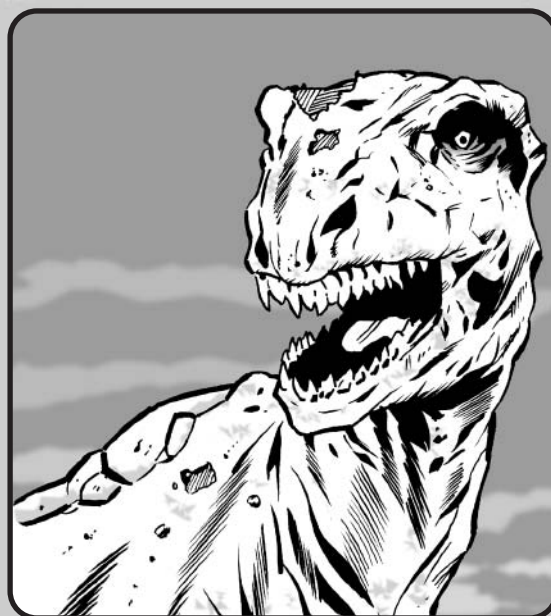
Debugging Wild Flight

If the Cast Members simply head for the hills to wait out the nightmare, the Zombie Master can easily segue into *Dawn of the Zombie Lords* (see AFMBE, p. 206). The Zombie Master could also rebuke the Cast Members for being feeble pulp heroes and would be perfectly justified if she brought down the next earthquake right on top of their secluded shack.

gravity pulls that way, but finding a proper route takes a lot of trial and error, since they have no map. Edible fungi can be found from time to time, as well as underground rivers and lakes, so at least they can avoid starvation, even if they did not bring their own food.

Here are some ideas for things that can happen while the Cast Members are *en route* from Geneva to the center of the earth. Zombie Masters with any sense of creativity at all will be able to easily think of many more.

- The Cast Members come across a cavern where hundreds of small shafts enter from the ceiling. Each shaft leads up to a grave—they are below a cemetery.
- The Cast Members come to a wide, deep chasm with a river of lava flowing at the bottom. They must cross to proceed, and luckily, a narrow bridge of rock reaches across. Zombies attack at the least convenient moment.
- In a dark section of the tunnel, the Cast Members see a moving source of glowing light ahead. As they grow nearer, they encounter an alpha zombie with an entourage of servitor zombies. They have all smeared themselves with the luminescent fungi (for no particularly easy to define reason), which makes for a very surreal battle.
- The Cast Members come across a number of enormous caverns the size of great metropolises where zombie “cities” existed. They are deserted now; all the zombies made a break for the surface when the dinner bell rang. Walking through the gigantic cavern produces an extreme attack of the willies at the scope of the zombie civilization that has been living beneath them all these centuries. Call for Fear Tests all around.
- While walking in an extremely wide tunnel that steadily slopes downward, the Cast Members hear a rumbling ahead. It is a tide of hundreds of zombies, stampeding toward the surface. If the Cast Members fight, it is quite clear that they will die horrible deaths, so they will have to find someplace to hide—and fast!
- A shaft gives way underneath the party, and they slide down a series of chutes for miles and miles and miles.



Zombie T-Rex

Strength 12	Intelligence -2
Dexterity 2	Perception 1
Constitution 10	Willpower 2
Dead Points 300	Speed 4
Endurance Points n/a	Essence Pool 25
Skills: Eating People 5	
Attack: Bite D8 x 6(42)	
Weak Spot: Fire	
Getting Around: Life-Like	
Strength: Off The Charts	
Senses: Like The Dead	
Sustenance: Daily, All Flesh Must Be Eaten	
Intelligence: Dumb As Dead Wood	
Spreading the Love: Only the Dead	
Power: 100	

Note: The standard rules for zombie creation do not really cover dinosaurs, so certain statistics have been fudged here. Zombie Masters should not be sullen, or worse, send irate complaints to Eden, when they realize they are unable to re-create this monstrosity using the regular rules.

- These subterranean tunnels have been around since the Jurassic period, and some of them are very large. Large enough, in fact, for . . . Zombie Dinosaurs!

At the Earth's Core

Once our heroes have done enough subterranean journeying (that is, whenever the Zombie Master decides the time is right to wrap things up), they reach the center. Presumably, it would take weeks to walk to the center of the Earth considering the distance involved, but the Zombie Master should feel free to telescope time as needed (“You trudge through dim caverns for three days, when suddenly . . .”).

When the time comes, the characters emerge from a wide tunnel into a cavern of enormous size. It stretches as far as they can see. The floor of the cavern, except for the narrow, rocky ledge that they come out onto, is made of an intensely bright yellow-white, plasma-like substance that looks like the surface of the sun. It is the brightest light they have seen since leaving the surface, nearly blinding in intensity.

Upon entering the chamber, the light flares even brighter, flooding the room until it is completely white and vision is quite impossible. All those present experience a sense of peace, then a feeling of urgency. When the light fades, after a moment of unknown length (seconds? minutes? years?) anyone who is carrying one of the artifacts becomes aware of a stone bridge, about one yard (meter) wide, which extends out over the yellow-white floor, stretching as far as the eye can see. While those who are not carrying

artifacts cannot see the bridge, it is safe for them to tread upon it, as long as someone who can see it guides them. (Anyone who steps on the blinding floor immediately catches fire, takes D6 x 4(12) damage, discovers that it has the consistency of quicksand, and is unlikely to try *that* again any time soon.)

The walkway continues for a long distance—far enough for the narrow ledge of rock to disappear into the bright light. The entire cavern seems to exist in a timelessness, and attempts to determine how much time has passed while traveling on the causeway are futile. Eventually, the causeway terminates, the end suspended only a few inches over a wide ring of blue-white in the surface of the “floor.” Those carrying the artifacts get the sense that they should be dipped into this circle. As that is done, everyone present is imbued with a sense of closure as the artifacts seem to glow with the same blue-white light for a few moments.

Denouement

Once the artifacts have been energized, the Cast Members can quickly and easily find a route back to the surface. Although it is a very long trip, the Zombie Master should gloss over it in a matter of seconds. No zombies are encountered whatsoever.

When they arrive on the surface, the Cast Members are immediately hailed as heroes. The zombies on the surface spontaneously melted down when the last artifact was dipped in the pool at the center of the earth and rebuilding has already begun. Parades and celebration ensue. But wait . . .



CHAPTER FOUR





ZOMBIES, INC.



The municipal docks. Night.

Fog rose off the water, which lapped slothfully at the scum-encrusted pier. Two seedy dock workers, the taller one carrying a duffel bag, approached a dapper fellow, well-dressed in a three-piece suit and stylish hat. He had his polished shoe up on a crate and faced away from them. The workers were not stealthy by any measure, yet the high-society stepper gave no sign that he was aware of their presence. The shorter dockhand shot his buddy a look and shook his head slightly. The only thing better than a rich man alone on the docks late at night was a rich man alone on the docks late at night who didn't know his arse from his elbow.

"Hey, buddy," called Lance the Toad to the well-dressed man. Lance's unfortunate nickname arose from his unfortunate complexion, which the kind would call unclear and the cruel would call grotesque. The man did not move.

Lance's partner in crime, Slick Jim, piped up imaginatively, "Hey, buddy." Slick was great in a tight spot. You never worried if he had your back and you could be sure he was going to go out swinging. His mouth—that was another story. He didn't always know when to keep it shut. Still, this "contact" had the air of a rube and it probably wouldn't be a big problem.

The man in the suit removed a Zippo from the pocket of his vest and lit the virgin cigarette that hung from his lips. He turned around to face the pair, taking his foot from the crate, which bore markings that identified its point of origin as Singapore.

No one spoke.

Lance and Slick glanced at one another.

The suited man's skin was pale, a fact that was clear even in the dim light. As he exhaled a stream of slow smoke, its dusky color almost matched the gray of his face. His eyes were different too. They were both dead and somehow light from within. The air around the two dockworkers also seemed suddenly different—more earthy and a little bit rotten. Something wasn't right.

"So, uh," said Lance, now not so sure of himself, "that's it?" He indicated the crate. Thankfully, Slick kept his trap closed.

The man nodded.

"We got the money right here," Lance continued. "So, let's get this through with."

The man stepped away from the crate and gestured to the two of them to take it. Slick Jim tossed the duffel bag at the man's feet and moved to the far side of the crate so he and Lance could each grab an end. As they both bent down, Slick decided to mask his unease with sarcasm, "I wish you wouldn't talk so—"

It would be Slick's last wise-acre remark. And he didn't even get to finish it because the man in the suit reached into his coat, and, faster than the speed of thought, retrieved an enormous nickel-plated automatic pistol. Then, he blew Slick's head clean off.

"What the—" was all Lance was able to stammer before his skin problems were rendered forever irrelevant.

The man in the suit looked around to make sure he had not been seen. Then he casually picked up the crate with one hand and heaved it off the edge of the pier. It sank like a stone—or, more accurately, like what it was: a crate full of stones.

He picked up the bag full of money, then tossed his cigarette to the ground and snuffed it with his shoe. He walked easily into the shadows and disappeared into the night.

Another successful caper. Two more potential recruits. More cash for Prime.

All in all, a fine evening for crime.



introduction

A demented criminal mastermind has figured out how to bring the dead back to life! Once properly organized, it's time for Zombies, Inc.

The crimelord is using the undead to embark on a global wave of crimes the like of which has never before been seen in the modern world: bank robberies, numbers rackets, assassinations, extortion, blackmail, money laundering, burglary, grand theft auto, counterfeiting, bookmaking—even tax evasion and moving violations. Name it and his agenda has a place for it.

This setting takes a team of pulp heroes across the United States and the world, following the trail of the living dead and trying to put a stop to the crime spree once and for all.

Staging

This setting is best run with a group of pulp heroes who have worked together before as a team and whose primary interest is in solving crimes and righting wrongs. If starting a fresh campaign with Zombies, Inc., the Zombie Master may wish to create and run one or two completely unrelated introductory adventures to get the characters accustomed to one another before diving in with what is described here.

Before beginning the Zombies, Inc. scenarios, the Cast Member crime fighters should become acquainted with an enigmatic yet legendary hero named Zaxor, often referred to as “the Pinnacle of

Humanity.” This *ubermensch* is played by the Zombie Master as a Supporting Cast Member/Adversary. In an ideal world, Zaxor is the nucleus of the Cast Members’ crime fighting group (see the Leader and Sidekicks section, p. 40). It is possible to leave Zaxor out of the Cast Members’ cabal of crime-fighters, but that diminishes the impact of the big, climactic twist—that Zaxor has gone bad, and that *he* is the criminal mastermind behind the global undead crime spree. So best to include him if there is any way it can be managed.

The Arsenal

Cast Members who have worked with Zaxor may have access to some of the gadgets he has constructed in the past, at the Zombie Master’s discretion. These include all of the gadgets in the Sample Gadgets section (see p. 48-49), as well as the additional gadgets described here.

Fish Pills

Gadget Rating: 2 (Complexity +2, Utility +0)

These small pills allow the ingester to breathe underwater for four hours. The pills do not affect the ability to breathe air normally.



Flaming Footwear

Gadget Rating: 2 (Complexity +0, Utility +0, Miniaturization +2)

A pair of comfortable shoes that have the flaming power of a full-on blowtorch concealed within their soles. At the flick of a switch on the heel of the right shoe, a white-hot flame that can be adjusted from one to twelve inches jets out the toe. It is powerful enough to cut metal, melt glass, set fires, and so on. Enough fuel is included to keep the torch running for about ten inch-minutes (see Cutting Torch, *AFMBE*, p. 131, for damage in combat). A common accessory to the flaming footwear (which has an additional gadget rating of 2 based on the same characteristics) is a chemical fire extinguisher in the left shoe.

Silent Airplane

Gadget Rating: 1 (Complexity +1, Utility +0)

An otherwise normal airplane that makes no more noise than a half-dozen purring cats when operating.

Book of Subdual

Gadget Rating: 2 (Complexity +2, Utility +0)

When an unfortunate individual picks up this handsome book, the flick of a switch on a remote device immediately brings about a chemical transformation that glues the browser's hands to the covers of the book, subduing him nicely until the same remote device is used to deactivate the book. These books can be created to mimic any volume or edition, but must be hardcover, and leather, in order to conceal the reinforced infrastructure which prevents the unhappy victim from simply ripping the book apart in order to escape.

Zaxor

Zaxor is referred to in every media story worth its column inches as "Zaxor, the Pinnacle of Humanity." Born to (now deceased) industrialist parents who maintained several important Eastern European monopolies, Zaxor spent his entire childhood and youth training and honing his mind and body in order to fight crime and injustice. His statistics reflect this single-minded devotion. Read some Doc Savage if

this all seems a bit ludicrous—if anything, Zaxor's statistics probably understate the powers of a Savage-esque superhero.

A few notes are in order, to explain a number of Zaxor's Qualities.

Contacts: Yes, Zaxor knows a law enforcement officer or criminal everywhere he goes. New York. Des Moines. Budapest. Outer Mongolia. *Everywhere.*

Multiple Identities: Zaxor is a master of disguise. He has five fresh identities that he can use in this setting to throw the Cast Members off his trail; he has appropriate, flawless disguises for each. The identities are:

- Clifton J. Brown, an international businessman and assimilated American.
- Saul Goldschmidt, a Jewish-American from New York and dealer in rare jewelry and antiques.
- Jerzy Wojciehowski, a minor but well connected government bureaucrat from Poland.
- Ranjit Dalal, an international construction contractor from Bombay who currently resides in London but is rarely there.
- Ewan McGillivray, the dilettante son of a prominent Scottish brewer.

He also has a number of other identities he has used in the past, when he was fighting crimes rather than perpetrating them. He will not use any of those in the course of this campaign though, because the Cast Members ought to be familiar with them.

Resources: Zaxor has everything, and everything he does not have, he can get.

Secret: Zaxor's secret is that he has clandestinely taken to a life of crime.

Status: Zaxor's reputation as an international crime fighter is worldwide. Any given person one runs into in any given city of the world is likely to have at least heard of his exploits.

Zaxor

The Pinnacle of Humanity

Strength 6	Intelligence 7
Dexterity 6	Perception 6
Constitution 7	Willpower 8
Life Points 77	Speed 26
Endurance Points 68	Essence Pool 50

Qualities/Drawbacks: Attractiveness +3, Charisma +4, Contacts (Law Officers and Criminals Everywhere), Fast Reaction Time, Gadgetmaster 3, Hard to Kill 5, Hyperlingual, Mentalism, Multiple Identities, Resources (Multimillionaire + 5), Situational Awareness, Secret, Status 10

Mentalism Powers: Read Mind Strength 3, Read Mind Art 2, Mind Control Strength 3, Mind Control Art 2

Skills: Acrobatics 4, Acting 4, Brawling 6, Disguise 5, Driving (Car) 4, Escapism 3, Guns (Handgun) 5, Guns (Submachine gun) 4, Hand Weapon (Staff) 6, Humanities 6, Instruction 4, Intimidation 4, Language (a dozen or more) 5, Martial Arts 6, Mechanics 3, Medicine 4, Notice 6, Occult Knowledge 5, Piloting (Propeller Plane) 4, Research/Investigation 3, Sciences 5, Sleight of Hand 3, Stealth 5, Surveillance 3, Trance 4

Gear: Three Spontaneous Gadgets and the resources of one of the wealthiest men on Earth.



Why, Zaxor, Why?

It may strike Cast Members and Zombie Masters alike as strange that the Earth's greatest paragon would take to such a despicable life of crime. How could the crimefighter of the century go so bad so quickly? Was it some special trauma, a long-standing erosion of morals due to his chosen work, a mind control spell, aliens . . . or worse? Nothing so complex (remember, this is Pulp not angsty undead). Eight words: the bigger they are, the harder they fall.

Zaxor, a scientific genius (as well as a genius in pretty much all areas of intellectual endeavor), one day discovered—quite by accident—the secret to returning the dead to life. This unhinged even his steel psyche. It went against everything he had ever believed in about the sanctity of life and the final reward due each law-abiding man, woman, and child.

In short, he snapped, and (come on, recite along with us at home, kids): “The bigger they are, the harder they fall!”



Setting the Stage

Before the first riddle is posed and the first criminal act foiled, the Zombie Master must get Zaxor out of sight and out of mind. Removing Zaxor has a number of purposes, the most important being to ensure that the Cast Members are free of a superior to whom they must always be answering. If the players themselves are convinced that Zaxor has been taken out of the picture for this “out of game” reason, so much the better—they will be even more surprised when the twist is revealed.

From time to time, Zaxor has been known to retire to a secret personal hideaway located somewhere in the Andes—no one but Zaxor knows precisely where it is. He is sometimes gone for months at a time, withdrawn from civilization to replenish his inner reserves and perform momentous research. In fact, it was at this secret hideout that Zaxor initially discovered the process by which corpses can be returned to life. This secret sanctum is the perfect way for the

Zombie Master to excuse Zaxor: he takes his leave of the Cast Members to retreat to his sanctum.

Zaxor should never appear as Zaxor once the campaign is in full swing. It may be tempting for the Zombie Master to thwart the Cast Members at some stage of the game by producing Zaxor, who promptly leads them down a false path. This, however, is too easy a clue that Zaxor has turned to crime, because as soon as the Cast Members realize they have been misled, they will immediately suspect Zaxor.

Zaxor in Play

The Zombie Master has two options for how to use Zaxor in *Zombies, Inc.* The first is for Zaxor to work behind the scenes, issuing orders to his lieutenants and foot soldiers and allowing them to carry out his dirty work. He lurks in his secret hideout, waiting for the Cast Members to either be slain by his lackeys or to come to him. The second option is for Zaxor to

constantly lurk in the shadows, menacing the Cast Members more directly but remaining anonymous through the use of shadow and disguise. The option the Zombie Master chooses should be decided by a combination of personal taste and how difficult the Cast Members are finding the setting without Zaxor's constant intervention.

Zaxor's Minions

When Zaxor devised his plan to create a global criminal syndicate, he at first envisioned his *sanctum sanctorum* in the Andes as its central nervous system. It would be the locus through which all information and resources passed. He soon decided, however, that in order to be successful in his criminal endeavors, his true identity would have to remain completely concealed from the criminals he would command. He had witnessed far too many times to the truth of the old saying, "There is no honor among thieves," to trust the truth of his secret evil to common thugs and footpads. He took the sobriquet "Prime" to signify his central importance in the organization. He signs all communications with that name and even his most trusted lieutenants have never seen anything but his backlit silhouette in the darkened room where they are briefed.

So Zaxor-as-Prime created a second hideout. He gave it the form of a floating island so he would be able to move about the oceans of the world and provide ready support to criminal activities anywhere around on globe. He dubbed it Transgression. It is from this location that all his minions—living and deceased—are trained (in the case of the former) and brought back to life (in the case of the latter). It is on this island and in no other place that his equipment for the "zombification" of the dead is located.

Zaxor's various minions are outlined below. Each section that follows describes a general category of minion rather than a specific, named individual. When a character of one of these types is called for later, sometimes he will be given a name. Other times he will not. In the latter event, Zombie Masters should feel free to embellish with additional details based on the general archetype.

The Undead

Any corpse with a brain can be animated, but this can only be done (as discussed above) at Transgression. Zaxor's "treatment" technique—the euphemism "treatment" is used universally throughout Zaxor's criminal empire—is capable of bringing the dead to life in such a way that, given a cadaver without obvious major trauma, they are, to a casual observer, indistinguishable from the living. While the skin pales, the heart does not beat, and the blood does not circulate, the walking corpse can generally think on its own and interact with living society in normal ways.

One way zombies can be told from regular folk is the horrible smell—there is no way to bring a zombie to life without the smell of the grave permanently attaching to him. (This only manifests as the full-blown Noxious Odor Aspect, see AFMBE, p. 158, in the worst cases, though.) Most zombies who operate in close contact with humans regularly apply perfumes to mask their otherwise distinctive stench. Of course, zombies who are posing as laborers, undertakers, and so on are expected to smell "earthy," so they do not have to worry about it as much.

Some zombies are driven immediately and completely mad when treated. Others come unhinged more slowly and unpredictably. Still others see little difference between their life and undeath, and remain perfectly stable. The zombies whose bodies were



best preserved and who had strong, stable personalities in life tend to be the most successful at adapting to unlife. Even so, predicting the mental state of a new zombie before his treatment is dicey, and there are plenty of counter-examples to the general rule.

Many zombies preserve notable traits they had in life, so the garrulous deceased generally blabber on in undeath, the strong remain powerful, the suspicious become more so, and so on. There is one exception: almost all new zombies—from police officers to used car salesmen—lose the moral sense they had in life. They just stop respecting the rules of society and ethics. This does not make new zombies automatically loyal to Zaxor, but their lack of any particular scruples makes it easy for him to buy their loyalty.

These factors have led to one of the most important directives Zaxor gives to his minions, both living and dead. It is, simply, that those with mighty capabilities who die, in any field of endeavor, are to be preserved and shipped to Transgression for treatment, after which they will swell the ranks of Zaxor's underground army of crime.

Zombie Thug: Zombie thugs are the strong, silent types who get into fistfights and gunfights, break legs, and get stuck burying the bodies for their more intelligent, higher ranking leaders. In short, anytime a normal syndicate might employ a breathing thug, Zaxor's organization uses a zombie thug.

Zombie Lieutenant: These undead order the zombie thugs around and sometimes operate on their own in situations that require intelligence and/or finesse (as in the fictional vignette that opened this chapter). They are extremely life-like and, as a general rule, completely amoral.

Zombie Shock Troops: Zombie shock troops are not widely deployed in Zaxor's criminal operations, except on Transgression itself, where they serve as guards and general purpose laborers. Most spent too much pre-treatment time without adequate preservation, and so are remarkably stupid. Many have obvious characteristics of the dead such as rotting skin, prominent head wounds, missing limbs, and so on. Zaxor keeps them around in case he ever needs a small army and it makes no difference what they look like.



Zombie Thug

Strength 4

Dexterity 2

Constitution 2

Dead Points 15

Endurance Points n/a

Skills: Brawling 2, Hand Weapon (choose) and/or Gun (Handgun) 3, Language (choose) 5

Attack: By weapon

Weak Spot: Brain [6]

Getting Around: Life-like Plus* [5]

Strength: Strong Like Bull [5]

Senses: Like the Living [1]

Sustenance: Who Needs Food? [8]

Intelligence: Intelligence: Language, Tool Use 3, Long-term Memory [15]

Spreading the Love: n/a**

Power: 45

*As Life-like (see *AFMBE*, p. 150) but with a full range of human-like running abilities and speed.

** Zombies cannot create other zombies.



Zombie Lieutenant

Strength 4 **Intelligence** 5
Dexterity 2 **Perception** 3
Constitution 2 **Willpower** 2
Dead Points 15 **Speed** 8
Endurance Points n/a **Essence Pool** 18
Skills: Brawling 2, Gun (Handgun) 5, Hand
 Weapon (choose) 3, Language (choose) 5, others*
Attack: By weapon**
Weak Spot: Brain [6]
Getting Around: Life-like Plus*** [5]
Strength: Strong Like Bull [5]
Senses: Like a Hawk [3]
Sustenance: Who Needs Food? [8]
Intelligence: Language, Long-term Memory,
 Problem Solving, Tool Use 3 [33]
Spreading the Love: n/a#
Power: 65+

*Zombie lieutenants usually retain most of the criminal skills they knew during life: Cheating, Intimidation, Lock Picking, Pick Pocket, and so on.

**Most zombie lieutenants carry Hand Cannons, and some are also issued Knockout Rounds and Model Six Tommy Guns (see p. 97).

***As Life-like (see AFMBE, p. 150) but with a full range of human-like running abilities and speed.

#Zombies cannot create other zombies.



Zombie Shock Troops

Strength 2 **Intelligence** -2
Dexterity 1 **Perception** 1
Constitution 2 **Willpower** 2
Dead Points 15 **Speed** 2
Endurance Points n/a **Essence Pool** 6
Skills: Brawling 2
Attack: Claw damage D6 x 2(6) armor-piercing,
 slashing
Weak Spot: Brain [6]
Getting Around: Slow and Steady [0]
Strength: Dead Joe Average, Claws [8]
Senses: Like the Dead [0]
Sustenance: Who Needs Food? [8]
Intelligence: Dumb as Dead Wood [0]
Spreading the Love: n/a*
Power: 32

*Zombies cannot create other zombies.

One in ten zombie shock troopers has one of the following special features in addition to their Noxious Odor. Roll D10 and divide by two or choose one of the following that will make the current situation especially interesting. The zombie's Power rating should be raised accordingly.

1. Diseased Corpse [3]
2. Nest [3]
3. Spitter [4]
4. Spew Flame [4]
5. Explosive Personality [2]

Living Thugs

Zaxor employs a great many living thugs in addition to the undead under his command. The same stats can also be used to describe the thugs employed by other mobs, as well as average police officers or FBI special agents pressed into service by the Cast Members for raids on gambling dens, illicit warehouses, and so on.

A Deadly Interlude

At some point, someone in Zaxor's organization—perhaps Zaxor himself—is going to become mightily annoyed at the Cast Members' meddling investigation. The typical procedure for dealing with such annoyances is assassination and such high-danger assassinations are the domain of Lucian Harkin.

Harkin is a meticulous stalker who carefully crafts his plans to make sure he gets his prey the first time. When he gets the order to eliminate the Cast Members, he begins by following them around for a few days to get a sense of their capabilities and routines. That done, he concocts a plan for their death that requires no knowing assistants and keeps him as far from the scene as possible at the time of death. No back-alley ambushes here; Harkin is more likely to arrange for the Cast Members' airplane to explode over the Rockies or their bedchambers to be flooded with poison gas.

Harkin's assassination attempt (or attempts) can be staged between other scenarios or occur while the Cast Members are actively working on something else. Harkin is quite portable and very capable of following the characters from city to city, waiting for the best possible moment of opportunity.

Harkin is not a zombie, though if the Cast Members should slay him in the course of defending themselves, other members of Zaxor's syndicate would definitely try to preserve him for treatment. Abbreviated statistics are provided (see p. 97). Zombie Masters should feel free to add additional Qualities, Drawbacks, or skills, as needed. Harkin has access to any gear that he needs, given enough time to arrange it.



Living Thugs

Strength 4	Intelligence 2
Dexterity 2	Perception 2
Constitution 4	Willpower 3
Life Points 34	Speed 12
Endurance Points 38	Essence Pool 17
Skills: Guns (Handgun) 4, Guns (choose, varies by individual) 3, Brawling 3	



Lucian Harkin

Strength 3 **Intelligence** 5
Dexterity 4 **Perception** 5
Constitution 4 **Willpower** 4
Life Points 47 **Speed** 16
Endurance Points 38 **Essence Pool** 25
Qualities/Drawbacks: Cruel 2, Hard to Kill 3,
 Humorless, Nerves of Steel
Skills: Dodge 4, Guns (any) 5, Hand Weapon (any)
 5, Notice 5, Stealth 4, Surveillance 4, Traps 5

Special Equipment

Zaxor's criminal minions have access to specialized equipment of Zaxor's own design. The gear here is listed in rough order of decreasingly common usage.

Hand Cannon: A modified automatic pistol of nefariously deadly construction. Even though the gun is not appreciably larger than a .45, it causes extreme trauma when it hits. Hand cannon attacks often blow limbs off their unfortunate victims wholesale. Use all the stats for a .45 automatic (see AFMBE, p. 134) but quintuple the damage. (Yes, you read that right. *Quintuple*. As in, "multiply by five.")

Knockout Rounds: These can be inserted into a hand cannon in the place of their regular ordnance, and are used to incapacitate characters who might later be sent to Transgression for treatment. Use the statistics for Mercy Bullets (see p. 49).

Smokescreen Zippo: Appearing as a common Zippo lighter, the inner mechanism of one of these devices can be removed and a secret lever tripped. When this is done, said mechanism releases dense clouds of billowing smoke—enough to reduce a room of moderate size to zero visibility. Smokescreen Zippos also light cigarettes, for zombies unworried about lung cancer.

Tommy Gun Model Six: This weapon appears to be a normal Thompson submachine gun (EV 6/3), but each one comes with three separate, color-coded ammo drums. The first is perfectly normal, and contains .45 caliber bullets. The second transforms the gun into a flamethrower (see AFMBE, p. 137; use the WW II era stats, but only eight bursts are available). The third drum transforms the gun into a "death ray" (15/75/250/1200/5000; D6 x 3(9); 20 shots).

Scenarios

Each of the following sections presents the seeds for an evening's adventure, focusing on a geographic location where the events take place.



Chicago

Summary: *One of Zaxor's undead lieutenants is cementing an alliance with Frank Nitti's Chicago mob in order to secure a beachhead in the Midwest and procure experienced leadership for criminal operations in other parts of the world.*

When forming an international conspiracy of crime, where better to start than Chicago, that infamous prohibition-era hub of corruption and villainy? Zaxor's objectives are two-fold: to take control of the mob in a major city and to recruit experienced gangsters for export to other parts of his organization.

With the infamous Al Capone incarcerated at Alcatraz for income tax evasion, Frank "the Enforcer" Nitti heads the most prominent Chicago mob. While the end of prohibition has eliminated their most profitable racket, bootlegging, they have no shortage of unlawful activities to pursue, chief among them gambling, prostitution, and extortion.

The Cast Members are initially attracted to Chicago by news of a series of gangland slayings that make the St. Valentine's Day Massacre look like a visit from the puppet wagon. If the Cast Members hesitate in packing their bags for Chicago upon reading accounts of the slayings in the papers, local (or federal) law enforcement officers request their help digging into the murders because of their known crime fighting expertise.

Casual investigation in Chicago reveals that the recent killings have consolidated most of Chicago's mob power in the hands of Nitti's group. Not surprisingly, deeper investigation points to known members of Nitti's organization as the killers, though no culpability can be traced to the important members of the mob, as is usual in gangland slayings. Word on the street is that Nitti ordered the hits personally, but at the behest of some third party about whom nothing at all is known.

This third party, of course, is the Zaxor organization, represented locally by a wily zombie lieutenant known as Salvatore Toro. Nitti visits Toro in his opulent hotel every few days so they can plan and confer, but such secrecy is observed that only Nitti's inner circle even knows of the meetings, much less anything at all about Toro's identity. Even Nitti himself knows next to nothing about Toro's backer. The color of Toro's money has, so far, proved convincing enough for Nitti.

The local police department's best—though completely incorrect—guess about the identity of the new force in town is the New York cartel that has been consolidating power across the United States, imposing a national order on local and regional crime families. This may lead the Cast Members to New York (see p. 100). In any case, no amount of Chicago investigation provides any concrete evidence that Nitti is taking orders from New York.

By following Frank Nitti (or carrying out some other clever plan), the Cast Members may find Toro. But since Toro has been keeping close tabs on the local cops (who are infiltrated by Nitti's organization), he will probably be forewarned. Whether the Cast Members are able to kill Toro depends entirely on circumstances, but the Zombie Master should make sure that eliminating him is anything but easy.

If it looks to Toro like the Cast Members are getting too much information about either himself or the Nitti mob, he first directs Nitti to have some boys take care of them. Presuming that does not work, he imports some zombie thugs to have a second go. If nothing is working and it looks like the Cast Members are going to crack the Nitti organization open, Toro either personally executes Nitti and his top lieutenants, or, more elegantly, sets things up so that the Cast Members gun him down. He then packs Nitti and friends in ice and ships them off to Transgression by boat for treatment. Their caskets—filled with rocks—are buried in elaborate funerals which Toro hopes will convince the cops that the situation is over. Toro himself disappears on a railcar.

Depending on whether he thinks it will do him any good before skipping town, Toro might plant clues suggesting that the deaths of Nitti and company were carried out by members of the New York cartel.



Frank "The Enforcer" Nitti

Strength 3

Dexterity 4

Constitution 4

Life Points 38

Endurance Points 44

Qualities/Drawbacks:

Adversary (Law Enforcement), Contacts (Criminals), Cruel 2, Humorous, Paranoid, Resources (Rich), Status (Mob Boss) 4

Skills: Brawling 5, Cheating 4, Driving (Car) 4, Guns (Handgun) 7, Guns (Submachine gun) 6, Language (Italian) 5, Notice 5, Questioning 4, Smooth Talking 5, Stealth 5, Streetwise 7

Gear: Whatever he wants.

Intelligence 4

Perception 5

Willpower 6

Speed 16

Essence Pool 26



New York

Summary: While following up on Chicago clues, the Cast Members make contact with the New York cartel, making either vehement enemies or uneasy allies.

In the Pulp Era, New York sees the genesis of a national over-mob—an informal (but nevertheless formidable and potent) organization of mob bosses who govern various regional mobs and who dispense street justice to all those who fail to abide by their dictates. The *capo di tutti capi* (“boss of all the bosses”) in New York is “Lucky” Luciano, though he has never officially claimed the title. Luciano and his close associates are pragmatic men with little use for mob war. As far as they are concerned, it cuts into everyone’s bottom line. He would prefer to use the central cartel to solve disputes and settle differences without resorting to the type of bloodshed recently seen in Chicago. All of this information is easy to come by, either by putting an ear to the ground in the gang neighborhoods in New York or by asking around at the FBI or New York police departments. Any of these avenues, however, also gets word back to Luciano that people have been asking around about him.

If contacted personally or through intermediaries, Luciano denies any involvement whatsoever with recent Chicago activities (“What do I want with mob war? Eh? I have no use for chaos”) though he does spout bile about Nitti’s recent attacks on rival gang leaders, which “don’t do any self-respecting businessman one whit of good, if you know what I mean.” He did not order Nitti’s gratuitous hits, nor has he recently been involved with Chicago gangland politics in any way. While he does not care for Nitti on a personal level (“He’s an asshole and a psychopath, if you’re asking me what I think”), he was more than happy to deal reasonably with him as the legitimate successor to Al Capone.

Luciano or his designated intermediaries try to deal “reasonably” with investigators. While they are cold-blooded criminals, they have much more in common with Wall Street bankers than with the leg-breakers and prostitutes they employ. They are accustomed to doing business with lawmen through

bribery, intimidation, and blackmail (usually in that order). If they begin to see that there is a major new crime faction coming into prominence, they may actually propose an alliance of sorts with the Cast Members, to preserve a status quo that everyone can live with.

In fact, if pressed hard enough about the identity of a new party on the scene, Luciano (or, more likely, one of his bright lieutenant assistants) might remember a brief encounter several months ago with a Cuban named Vicente Delgado. Delgado came to New York promising vast wealth and power if Luciano would ally himself with Delgado’s boss, a guy known as Prime. Delgado was laughed out of New York. While someone remembers that Delgado was Cuban, no one remembers anything more precise than that about where he can be found now.

If Salvatore Toro framed one of Luciano’s hit men for slaying Frank Nitti, the killer in question is Wojciech “the Pole” Halwic. Simple investigation into his whereabouts and activities, however, easily disqualifies him from the Nitti hit. At the time, he was in a county jail, charged with petty burglary. In fact, he is still in prison, having been convicted in the interim, though he has been moved to an upstate facility. Wojciech is happy to talk to the Cast Members about anything at all. In fact, he is likely to invent stories in order to keep questioners around—his associates inside the prison are boring him to tears.

All of this is not to say that Zaxor’s underworld has no presence in New York. Quite to the contrary. Alexo Carras, one of Luciano’s lieutenants, was actually killed several months ago by Lucian Harkin (see “A Deadly Interlude”) and given the treatment in order to install someone loyal to Zaxor in the Luciano cartel. When the Cast Members come to town, Alexo may very well try to contact the Cast Members and play the turncoat, offering to help them get rid of Luciano. He wants to get Luciano out of the picture and install a Zaxor-friendly figure as the head of the national cartel. Of course, the Cast Members do not know that.



Havana

Summary: The Cast Members are not able to track down Vicente Delgado, but do manage to stumble upon one of Zaxor's major criminal operations.

The Cast Members may try all sorts of strategies to track down Vicente Delgado. Zombie Masters should play things by ear and allow any reasonable strategy—pounding pavement in New York, checking FBI known criminals files, or going to Cuba and poking around in the underworld, for example—to work. However they manage to come by the information, Vicente's last known whereabouts are Havana, where he was staying at a boarding house run by an aging Spanish lady named Eloisa.

The boarding house in question is a dive populated by small-time hoods and thugs. Vicente has moved on recently. Although neither Eloisa nor any of the other boarders know his current whereabouts, at least one of the boarders can say that he was involved in something illegal—smuggling, he thinks—and knows that he often went to a particular warehouse near the docks. He also had a girlfriend, recalls Eloisa, by the name of Candelaria Villacorta (she thinks the name is absolutely lovely, which is why she remembers) who lives near Cathedral Plaza.

The Cast Members can easily find Villacorta—upon giving assurances they will not cause her any trouble—by asking around near Cathedral Plaza. She is willing to talk about Vicente; if she can get the Cast Members to buy her dinner, so much the better. She was dating him for a while, though it was not particularly serious, from her description. They broke up after he went away to visit relatives in the Philippines—this was about six or eight months ago—and came back changed. For one thing (she says) he smelled terrible, all of the time, and was very sensitive about it. He was also more irritable and had become less polite and conscientious. She has not seen him since she broke their relationship off and has no idea where he is now. She knows nothing about any illegal activities he may have been involved with, though she does know about the warehouse on the docks where he went often, “because he was a foreman there, or something.”

At the warehouse, the Cast Members find a den of vice and corruption. The main warehouse contains all manner of stolen, smuggled, and illegal goods from the four corners of the Earth. This is Zaxor's staging area for physical commodities going to and coming from the Gulf coast of the United States. Underneath the warehouse, in a series of secret passages and basements which branch out and burrow beneath other warehouses in the area, is a den of gambling and prostitution with thick cigar smoke and all manner of unsavory folk of all nationalities.

Of course, the Cast Members can approach this situation in any number of ways, from tipping off the local police to engaging in covert surveillance to burning the whole place to the ground. Zombie Masters will have to play things by ear. Within the warehouse are several filing cabinets worth of incriminating evidence which describe shipments of illicit goods. These files, once sifted for an hour or so, can be used to determine that the goods in the warehouse come from all over the world and are going to locations that are also all over the world. Directions to the warehouse workers about what goes where are apparently delivered in thick packets of papers which go into great detail about individual shipments, sometimes down to individual cartons. The papers originate at a place called “Transgression” and are crafted by an individual who is called “Prime.”

The Cast Members, if they watch the warehouse long enough, may eventually be able to determine that couriers arrive with these instructions approximately weekly and that the same couriers are rarely used more than once. All of the couriers are, in fact, zombies in the employ of Zaxor, who travel back and forth between Transgression and Zaxor's strongholds around the world, delivering his directives in person. The directions are transported in metal suitcases that are set to self-destruct if the proper combination is not entered before they are opened.

If a courier is intercepted or the information in the warehouse's files is sifted over the course of several days, a general picture of Prime's criminal activities around the world comes into focus.



General Purpose Locations


The scenario descriptions in *Zombies, Inc.* give general plot-related outlines, but are short on specific locales and cool things that can happen at them. The following list can be used by *Zombie Masters* to avoid falling into ruts where all clandestine meetings occur in faceless greasy spoons and all shootouts happen in dusty warehouses of (yawn) no particular distinction.

- A beautiful (brilliantly worked hardwoods, thousand-dollar chandeliers) bar/nightclub that was a speakeasy during prohibition. It might be difficult to simply find the door, as it was quite well concealed in the dry days. All sorts of expensive damage could be done during a brawl or gunfight. This is a good place for powerful mob bosses to arrange meetings with Cast Members or their underlings, since the expensive surroundings are naturally intimidating to those from more pedestrian backgrounds.
- A rusting railroad trestle, where fights are made more dangerous by the fact that anyone who makes a false step is going to fall into a river or gorge. *Zombie Masters* who fail to use this opportunity to send a locomotive barreling down on brawling Cast Members will certainly be punished in whatever afterlife is reserved for *Zombie Masters*.
- A brothel, decorated for the benefit of patrons to look like an Old West saloon and whorehouse. Costumes are even available to patrons, complete with fake six-shooters. The bartender (garter on his sleeve and everything) is a particularly fun conversationalist, happy to talk to anyone who is not a complete pervert.
- An underground bolthole where things are hidden: hot goods, criminals on the lam, and so on. This was once an old mine and the roof might give way if someone started a gunfight or used any kind of explosive to open the door.
- Once Nitti and his inner circle have been treated, they might want to break Al Capone (and perhaps a handful of other criminals) out of Alcatraz and give him the same opportunity for treatment they had. *Zombie Masters* who have no interest in staging a pulp adventure on Alcatraz Island are hereby ordered to turn in their *Zombie Master Screens* and dice.

Further Adventures

Once the Havana files or a courier's papers have provided the Cast Members with wide-ranging information about what they are up against, a world (literally) of possibilities opens up to them. With crimes and criminals all over the world waiting to be thwarted, there is as much to do as the *Zombie Master* is in the mood to allow. The following list offers very brief ideas for sessions of game play. The *Zombie Master* should feel free to include other ideas of his own devising.

- The Philippines are home to a nefarious and cruel gang that is allied with Prime. They kidnap young girls and export them to Zaxor's houses of ill repute throughout the world, where they are forced into lives of prostitution.
- A series of freighters smuggle opium from China and other points in the Far East to dens throughout the Americas. One of the zombie sea captains is horrified by his own state of undeath and wants to sell his master out—if anyone can think of an appropriate price and guarantee his safety.
- A Middle Eastern extortion operation run by a small cabal of zombie lieutenants places rich potentates and their families in compromising positions and then blackmails them for vast fortunes.

- 
- A network of European operatives financed by Zaxor alternately incites the right and left wing in unstable states to bring about political upheaval and general chaos. Through a different network of operatives, Zaxor proceeds to arm both sides for maximum damage.

Once the globe-hopping becomes stale, the Cast Members should finally be pointed toward Transgression—the secret stronghold of which they have heard only tantalizing whispers—and its nefarious master, Prime.

Transgression

Summary: The big, climactic showdown.

Transgression is a volcanic island blown free of its earthly moorings and held afloat by Zaxor's unholy science. Zombie Masters with a well-developed sense of cheese may wish to describe the peak of the island as bearing an uncanny resemblance to Zaxor's own visage.

Finding the island and making landfall undetected is difficult, for two reasons. The first is that the island can go just about anywhere in the world by means of enormous engines, which makes finding it hard. The second is that the island is protected by many lookout posts which boast powerful telescopes and advanced (for the Pulp Era) radar and other scientific marvels.

Once the Cast Members gain access to the island, they will have to find whatever it is that they are looking for. Presumably they will be seeking the mysterious "Prime," but they may also be looking for further clues as to the extent of his criminal empires, his mad plans, or something else. The island itself is teeming with all manner of tropical plants and wildlife, deadly poisonous and very real dangers to infiltrators. It is also riddled with secret entrances which lead to an underground complex of caves and passageways. Together these form the central cortex of Zaxor's criminal enterprise. Finally, everywhere—above and below ground—is teeming with zombie shock troops carrying things around, patrolling, guarding, and doing things that are completely indecipherable.

When Zaxor is personally present on Transgression (there is no shortage of work for him to do), he lives within a series of rooms where no one else is allowed. The walls of his suite are all brushed metal and have ridiculously high ceilings. The suite contains an exhaustive library, scientific workshop, opulent bedchamber, and anything else the Zombie Master thinks would be appropriate.

While Zaxor's suite would be a great place to stage a final, climactic battle, the Cast Members may stumble across some other pulpy places on Transgression, such as:

- The series of laboratories where dead bodies undergo the treatment that transfigures them into zombies.
- A room the size of a football field where an army of zombie clerks and accountants working at identical desks arranged in a neat grid keep track of all the resources at Zaxor's disposal.
- The engine room, where the power of the sun and surf is harnessed to turn the largest marine engines in the world. This would be an ideal place to rig the whole island to blow up, if the Cast Members were feeling destructive.

Just before his mad plans are scheduled to be foiled, Zaxor must have the opportunity to spill any beans that remain unspilled. Preferably, the Zombie Master can arrange for this to happen while the Cast Members are trussed up and set to be imprisoned within some nefarious death trap or another.

Wrapping it Up


Once Zaxor has been defeated, things are pretty much over. If the island is sinking in the wake of his downfall, escaping before it goes down may be difficult. Still, Zombie Masters should beware of creating anticlimax by extending things too far past Zaxor's demise. Assuming he's actually dead . . . you never can tell with master criminals.

CHAPTER FIVE





THEY WANT OUR WOMEN!



“They have the Earth surrounded, Mr. President!”

The President of the United States sat, grim-faced, in his military command center deep within the bowels of the White House. His closest advisors were with him, arrayed around a large, round table whose top was a map depicting the entire hemisphere. Small, moving lights within the table displayed the locations of the armies and navies of what—for the moment, anyway—was the mightiest force on the planet.

The tension was oppressive. The room stank of sweat; some of those present had not left the chamber in the three days since astronomers had first spotted strange objects leaving the surface of Mars and traveling towards Earth.

The President focused his intense gaze on the speaker, General Jack Boomhauer, the blustery, impulsive leader of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He had, unsurprisingly, spent the last forty-eight hours advising all manner of hawkish and improbable strategies for dealing with the aliens about whom nothing was even known. The most powerful man in the Free World remained quiet but intense for an uncomfortable moment while the rest of the high officials present looked back and forth, from him to Boomhauer and back again.

“Mr. President, if I may—,” began Boomhauer, but the President cut him off with an abrupt wave of his hand. The President glanced meaningfully at Fritz Haley, his Chief of Staff.

“General,” said Haley reasonably. “Jack.” He steepled his fingers, then separated them and shrugged broadly. “We have no idea whatsoever as to their intentions or even their basic nature.”

The General turned his harsh glare on the bookish Chief of Staff and opened his mouth to retort violently. The President cleared his throat with meaning, stopping the tirade before it could begin. Boomhauer

swung his gaze back to the President, but before he could speak, the room’s heavy doors swung wide and a gaggle of scientists dressed in rumpled white lab coats flooded into the room, two of them pushing a metal cart upon which was piled a questionable electronic device which featured a host of knobs, tubes, dials, and glowing gauges. It was topped by a spinning dish.

“Mr. President!” exclaimed the one in the lead breathlessly. “We’ve finally—,” he stopped, looked around the room and took a moment to compose himself, taking a deep breath and smoothing his lab coat. “This device will allow us to decipher the signal they have been broadcasting.” The lab rats cleared a path as their leader reached for the largest knob on the machine, which he spun all the way to the right.

The machine’s spinning dish increased its speed; its glowing gauges and indicators went crazy. Then, through a speaker on the box’s top, a noise. First static, then, as the scientists made minute adjustments, the sound of a voice.

“People of Earth,” it began. “Attention, people of Earth.”

A low murmur went around the room through the President’s assembled advisors. It was abruptly suppressed by a serious, disapproving glance from the Chief of Staff.

“We are the representatives of the mighty Martian Empire of Ogzoxx.” The voice was flat and eerie, totally devoid of accent. It was impossible to tell whether that characteristic originated in the machine or the alien speech itself. “We have surrounded your planet with our whirling disks.”

“Obviously,” fumed General Boomhauer.

“But what do they want?” mumbled the Chief of Staff. “Why are they here?”

“We have come,” intoned the flat voice, as if in answer,
“to take your women.”



Introduction

Martians have come to Earth.

Evil Martians.

They have fantastic technology at their disposal—
flying saucers, death rays, teleporter devices.

They have advanced mental powers. They can bend bars of steel with their thoughts, read the minds of humans with a glance, and drive men mad—even kill them—with a gaze.

Their history is unknown. Their motivations are unclear. But one thing is certain.

They want our women.

A Very Brief Note on Tone

Those playing this setting without their tongues lodged firmly in their cheeks are doing it all wrong.

Backstory

Alien spacecraft were first spotted leaving Mars by American astronomers three days before the alien armada arrived in Earth's orbit. At first, the developments were kept top secret to avoid causing panic. The President was briefed and his closest advisors prepared as best they could for every eventuality they could think of. Scientists made wild guesses about who the aliens were and what they looked like, where they originally came from and what they wanted. The leaders of the various armed forces put their armies on alert.

Governments outside the United States were quick to catch on and the same developments repeated

themselves around the world in every civilized nation. No one had any idea what would happen when the flying saucers arrived—or knew for sure that they were headed for Earth, for that matter—but everyone was preparing for it.

Journalists caught on quickly even in the absence of official reports; there was simply no containing the biggest story of the century. A day and a half before the aliens arrived in orbit, every newspaper and radio station in the land had proclaimed the wonder, mystery, and/or horror (depending on the editorial slant of the outlet in question) of the impending arrival of the extraterrestrials.

Every possible public reaction took place in one area or another. Some municipalities closed the roads into and out of their city limits. Some religious groups gathered in their churches in preparation for the arrival of space angels. Some stockpiled weaponry, others stockpiled food. Some people just waited for the news bulletins to end so they could finish listening to The Shadow.

About the time the alien armada arrived in orbit, American scientists finally managed to decode the message they had been broadcasting since they left Mars:

“Attention, people of Earth. We are the representatives of the mighty Martian Empire of Ogzoxx. We have come to take your women.”



The Aliens

Whether they originally come from Mars is unknown and also completely irrelevant. Presumably, the aliens have culture, history, blah blah blah blah, and so forth. Who cares? They have death rays and they are here to take our women! Those are the important factors before us! The following sections focus on how they plan to take our women, what tools they will use to do it, and what happens to the unfortunates they manage to nab.

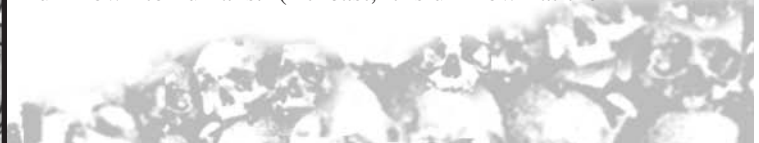
Appearance

The Martians are spindly, greenish humanoid creatures with enormous heads. Individual Martians vary widely in height, ranging from four to eight feet (130 to 260 centimeters) tall. Height does not seem to correlate with age, rank, or strength. Regardless of height, all Martians are comically skinny (except in the head). All Martians have four fingers and an opposable thumb on each hand, but only four toes on each foot. Weird.

All Martians appear to be men. (What do you mean “how do we know”?!! Gads! This is a family game! Ask your father!)

The Martians’ heads are enormous. Those with the smallest heads still have noggins the size of a big ripe watermelon. In the case of the larger-headed ones, their brains are visible through the skin on the back and sides of their heads. Outside their ships, Martians almost always wear glass-domed space suits. Then again, some appear undomed, and others have glass embedded in the head tissue behind the eyebrows (well, Martians lack eyebrows, but where they would be) and ears (they do have ears), and at the nape of the neck. This looks a lot like a motorcycle helmet crossed with a goldfish bowl and permanently affixed to the head. What, you were looking for scientific consistency!

With regard to Martian heads, size matters. The gross size of the Martian head is directly related to the Martian’s standing in the Martian hierarchy. Or so it seems, since those with smaller heads always defer to those with larger heads. Why this is so is unknown to humans. (At least, it is unknown at the



outset. In fact, those with larger heads *are* more potent, and thus, they are able to impose their will upon the others. This will eventually be figured out by human observers, but at the moment, human observers have more important things to do. Like protecting Earth women from Martian depredations.)

The average Martian usually wears utilitarian clothing consisting of a jumpsuit covered with belts and pouches which contain all sorts of Martian technological widgets. All Martians also appear to have formal attire—this consists of sparkly jumpsuits and/or robes in a variety of colors—which they can produce from their pouches whenever high-ranking Martians appear, or at certain other times that appear to coincide with particular social incidents which humans have yet to identify.

Martian Guts

Martians bleed in technicolor. Depending on where a given Martian is shot or stabbed, he might ooze blue, green, or yellow, in any number of consistencies. Martian insides are nothing like human insides. Martians have all kinds of weird organs which come in all kinds of weird colors and do all kinds of weird things. If the Cast Members decide to dissect one, the Zombie Master should use her imagination when describing its innards, holding nothing back whatsoever.

Martian Mind Death

Martians can cause horrible physical trauma to people just by looking at them and focusing the power of their minds. A Martian Mind Death attack is resolved by a Resisted Task between the Martian's Willpower and Martian Mind Death Art Task and the victim's Willpower and Constitution Test. If successful, the Martian attacker inflicts damage as described in the Mind Death Strength table. Note that a lower form of attack can always be chosen. For example, a Martian with Martian Mind Death Strength 5 can choose to inflict simple damage (as per Strength 1) or pain (as per Strength 3) rather than the "exploding organs" effect associated with Strength 5.

Mental Powers

All Martians have mental powers which they derive from their huge brains. All of the Mentalism Powers (see pp. 52-58) are possessed by some Martians, though very few Martian individuals possess all of them, and certain Powers are much more common than others.

The Martians also have one additional, unique Mentalism Power: Martian Mind Death. It is not described in **Chapter Two: Pulp Fles**, because it requires a huge Martian brain to use.

Martian Mind Death Strength Table

Strength	Effect
1	One Life Point or Endurance Point inflicted per level of Martian Mind Death Strength.
3	Pure pain causes the loss of one Endurance Point per level of Martian Mind Death Strength in addition to a -1 penalty to all of the victim's Tasks and Tests for one Turn per three Success Levels of the attack Task.
5	A small body part (hand, foot, eye, ear, spleen, or similar) of the Martian's choice explodes, causing Martian Mind Death Strength x 2 Life Points of damage and (obviously) preventing the victim from using that body part for anything. Exploding body parts make a big mess on nearby people and things.
7	A large body part (arm, leg, kidney, lung, or similar) of the Martian's choice explodes, causing Martian Mind Death Strength x 5 Life Points of damage and (obviously) preventing the victim from using that body part for anything. Unless the victim gets some major medical attention but quick, she dies. Even then, she will be handicapped for life.
9	A vital body part (head, heart, or similar) of the Martian's choice explodes, causing the victim to die. This is a very messy business.

Resisting Martian Mind Death: Martian Mind Death can be resisted using the Mentalism Powers Telepathy, Read Mind, and Mind Control, as noted in the appropriate “Defenses” section. The relevant formula replaces the victim’s Willpower plus Constitution Task, as described above, if this increases the victim’s chance of resistance. As usual, the Inspired can resist the effects of Martian Mind Death by making a Simple Willpower Test.

Martian Mind Death Defenses: Martian Mind Death is useless for resisting other Mentalism Powers.

Society

Martian society is split into four groups. These groups are distinguished by head size. So too are the capacities of the Martians within the groups.

In general, small-headed Martians are about five times as common as medium-headed Martians, which are five times as common as large-headed Martians, which are about five times as common as enormous-headed Martians. Thus, there is one enormous-headed Martian over-commander for every five hundred (or so) of the small-headed buggers.

Small-headed Martians are the foot soldiers and lackeys of Martian society. They carry heavy things, perform menial tasks, and swarm *en masse* over all who would oppose Martian supremacy. Medium-headed Martians generally have two functions: to oversee the small-headers and to perform skilled technical tasks. Large-headed Martians oversee the Martian bureaucracy, make long-range plans and order medium- and small-headed Martians around. Enormous-headed Martians are distant and aloof figures who rule from afar, sitting in obscure councils and receiving tribute from their inferiors, often paid in Earth women.

Appropriate statistic ranges are given for all but the most potent level of Martian to reflect the spectrum of “Martianity.” The numbers in parentheses reflect statistics for an average Martian of the type. No statistics are given for enormous-headed Martians, for each one is truly unique. Consider the high-end large-header as a baseline and go up from there.



small-headed Martian

Strength 1-3 (2)

Dexterity 1-3 (2)

Constitution 1-2 (2)

Life Points 1-3 (2)

Endurance Points 14-29 (23)

Essence Pool 14-25 (20)

Skills: Brawling 1, Gun (Death Ray) 4, Martian Tech 3

Mentalism Powers: Read Mind Art 2, Read Mind Strength 2, Mind Control Art 1, Mind Control Strength 1

Gear: Death Ray Mark II

Intelligence 2-4 (3)

Perception 1-3 (2)

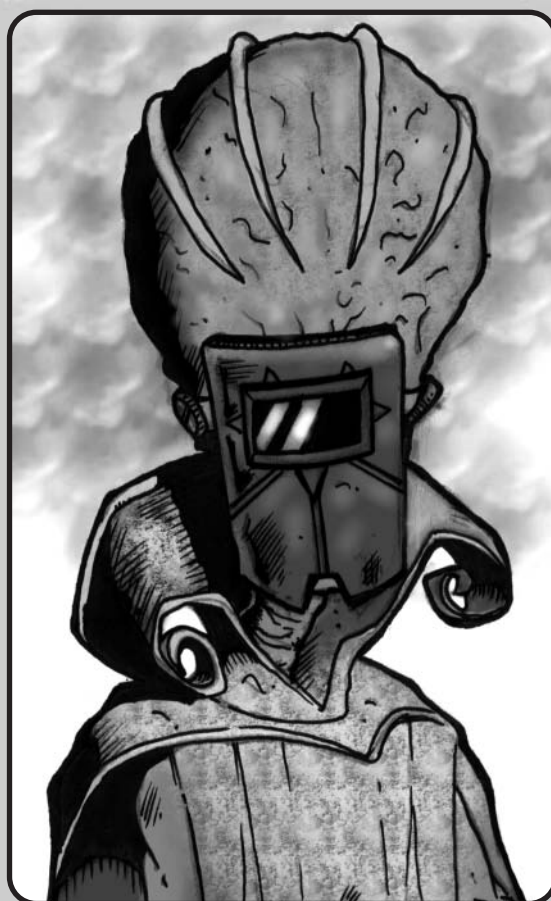
Willpower 1-3 (2)

Speed 4-10 (8)



Medium-headed Martian

Strength 3-5 (4) **Intelligence** 4-6 (5)
Dexterity 2-4 (3) **Perception** 3-5 (4)
Constitution 3-4 (4) **Willpower** 3-5 (4)
Life Points 34-46 (42) **Speed** 10-16 (14)
Endurance Points 32-47 (41)
Essence Pool 34-45 (40)
Skills: Brawling 3, Gun (Death Ray) 4, Martian Tech 5
Mentalism Powers: Read Mind Art 4, Read Mind Strength 4, Mind Control Art 2, Mind Control Strength 3, Martian Mind Death Art 1, Martian Mind Death Strength 2
Gear: Death Ray Mark III, Universal Spanner, Teleporter Pad (if situation warrants)



Large-headed Martian

Strength 5-7 (6) **Intelligence** 7-8 (8)
Dexterity 5-6 (5) **Perception** 6-7 (7)
Constitution 5-6 (6) **Willpower** 6-8 (7)
Life Points 34-46 (42) **Speed** 20-24 (22)
Endurance Points 50-62 (58)
Essence Pool 53-68 (62)
Skills: Brawling 3, Gun (Death Ray) 6, Martian Tech 4, Bureaucracy (Martian) 5
Mentalism Powers: Read Mind Art 4, Read Mind Strength 4, Mind Control Art 4, Mind Control Strength 4, Martian Mind Death Art 4, Martian Mind Death Strength 4
Gear: Death Ray Mark III, other gear based on situation may include Martian Torture Device or Martian Hat Mask



Technology

The Martians have every weird science-fiction gizmo imaginable. The following sections describe some particular items that will certainly come up, but Zombie Masters should feel completely free to introduce any new items at all, especially if their introduction would be dramatic or comical. Actually, that goes double if it would be comical.

Death Rays: These babies range from micro hold-out pistols the size of pens to giant artillery-looking behemoths that are mounted on flying saucers. Some look like guns, some look like wands, some look like spheres with a little hole on one side. All work pretty much the same way—they shoot visible beams of colored light that have ragged edges as they fly through the air. They do damage by the scientific principle of [cough, cough] which causes flesh to bubble, physical objects to catch fire, combustible materials to explode, and so on.

Death Rays are energized by power packs, which are easy to loot from dead Martians. All power packs are pretty much interchangeable, unless differentiating them would make a given scene more exciting or provide the Cast Members with motivation to do

something the Zombie Master wants them do to. (“You must get to the other side of town to find power for the tripod-mounted death rays you have looted or all will be lost!”)

Teleporter Pads: A Teleporter Pad consists of a smooth black disk about as thick as a piece of plywood and as big around as a hula-hoop, and a control panel the size of a smallish tackle box. The two are attached to one another by means of a yard-long (meter-long) cord. A tripod folds out of the bottom of the control box, which allows a standing alien to access the controls.

Any Teleporter Pad can be used to transport whatever is on top of the pad to any other Teleporter Pad anywhere in the universe. The controller simply dials up the number of the target pad and whisks the payload away. The controls of a Teleporter Pad should only be operated by skilled Martian technicians with years of training and experience. Cast members who monkey around with the controls are liable to wind up in all sorts of inconvenient places.

A Martian Teleporter Pad can be folded up and, along with the control panel, stored in a pouch the size of a small backpack. That is pretty convenient for the Martian on the go.

Martian Death Rays

No Cost or Availability is given, because death rays cannot be purchased. Cast Members who want death rays will have to loot them from cold, dead Martian corpses. Capacity is the number of shots that can be fired before a standard power pack is used up.

Size	Range	Damage	Cap	EV	Object of Similar Size
Mark I	1/5/10/30/60	D4 x 2(6)	100	0/0	fountain pen
Mark II	3/10/20/60/120	D6 x 3(9)	75	1/1	wooden spoon
Mark III	4/15/30/90/180	D8 x 4(16)	50	1/1	croquet stake
Mark IV	10/50/150/600/1000	D10 x 5 (25)	35	2/1	racquetball racquet
Mark V	15/75/250/1200/5000	D12 x 6 (36)	20	6/5	baseball bat
Mark VI	20/100/400/2000/8000	D20 x 7 (70)	10	16/8	bazooka

Larger Death Rays are mounted on vehicles and flying saucers. They automatically kill people when they hit and do grievous damage to human-made vehicles.



Flying Saucers: Called “whirling disks” in Martian-translated-to-English, these are intergalactic spacecraft by which the Martians travel around the universe. They come in all manner of sizes, but are always saucer-shaped, with their height usually about one quarter of their diameter. Flying Saucers come in three colors: dull black, shiny silver, and metallic red. It seems as though the colors have some social meaning to the Martians. Martians from different colored ships sometimes compete on a friendly basis with one another, though there does not seem to be any physiological difference between Martians from different colored ships.

All Flying Saucers seem to have Death Rays mounted on them, in the center of the top and bottom surfaces. These are retracted inside the vehicle when not in use, but can be deployed through sphincter-like ports nearly instantly.

Flying Saucers spin while they fly through space (or through the atmosphere—they are perfectly capable of landing on Earth), but this speedy rotation is not noticeable by those inside. If it were, they would get really dizzy and while that might be humorous, it would make the Martians much less formidable.

Martian Torture Device: Martians torture humans (men only—women are too valuable) for no particularly good reason, and Martian Torture Devices are the tools they use to do it. Each device consists of a control panel connected to a goofy looking helmet, which is in turn covered with strange protuberances of Martian technology. By strapping the helmet onto the victim and manipulating the controls, he can be made to feel all manner of unpleasant sensations.

Universal Spanner: Universal Spanners come in a variety of sizes and shapes, but all are basically Martian Swiss army knives. They can be used to perform pretty much any Martian maintenance task. Cast Members who get hold of these can screw screws, turn nuts, cut things, and so forth.

Hat Mask: The Martian Hat Mask is a nefarious device that lets the Martian wearing it assume a wildly different appearance. Physically, the Mask looks like a welder’s face shield—albeit with all sorts of technological protuberances. When the faceplate is in its up position, the Martian looks like a Martian with a funny hat. When down, however, the Martian takes on the physical appearance of pretty much any vaguely humanoid entity it wants, Martian, human, or otherwise. The appearance can be specific



(“FDR”) or generic (“a female Mexican in her forties”). The hat is not visible while the Martian is disguised (that would make the whole thing pretty pointless, right?).

While a Hat Mask cannot make a Martian appear to be of smaller physical stature than he actually is, it can generate a taller or larger appearance. The extra portions, however, have phantom characteristics. For example, a four-foot tall Martian masquerading as a six-foot tall human would be unable to head butt anyone with his “human” head because it simply is not there.

Martians are good at seeing through hat mask disguises, so they rarely try to use these against each other. Humans can see through Hat Mask disguises on a Difficult Perception Test. If the Martian is disguised as someone the human in question knows well, however, it is a Simple Perception Test. “Seeing through” a disguise does not mean that the underlying Martian is perceived, only that the viewer knows something is not right. Whether that something suggests a disguised Martian depends on whether the viewer has any experience with this particular Martian technology.

Martian Hat Masks have a half-assed voice-mimicking function, and the mimicked voice invariably comes out sounding flat and inhuman. When a Martian in a Hat Mask speaks, it becomes easier to pierce the disguise: Difficult Perception Tests become Simple, and Simple Perception Tests are automatically successful.

A human cannot wear a Martian Hat Mask as anything other than a fashion statement. They are only capable of disguising Martians.

Martian Weaknesses

Martians have only two exploitable weaknesses. (That is, other than the fact that, just like any other living organism, they can be blasted to smithereens with the average shotgun, run over with the average pickup truck, blasted to kingdom come with the average dynamite, and so on.)

The first (and predictable) weakness is that they want our women. Young women, old women, thin women, fat women, pretty women, ugly women.

Any woman will do. Whenever a Martian is faced with a choice between pursuing a female or doing something else, the Martian must make a simple Intelligence Test to forego the woman.

The Martians' second weakness is that they like JELL-O. Actually, they do not just *like* JELL-O, they *love* it. On second thought, "love" may be too weak a word. Any Martian (even the ones with heads the size of Winnebagos) who sees JELL-O can do nothing *at all* but move towards and consume it until it is gone, either eaten or removed from the premises. Gelatin, pudding, unflavored, even uncooked—the type of JELL-O matters not. The brand name is what counts, and the Martians can tell JELL-O brand from fakes by sight. (Little known Pulp Era JELL-O fact: Cola-flavored JELL-O was marketed at kids in 1942, but was discontinued the next year, presumably because cola-flavored JELL-O is completely disgusting.)

Players who have seen *Mars Attacks!* (the 1996 film directed by Tim Burton) and think they are pretty smart may try to queue up some Slim Whitmanesque yodeling on a phonograph in hopes that it is the Martians' secret weakness. It is not. Slim affects the Martians not one whit, though especially evil Zombie Masters may want to penalize Cast Members who act while trying to keep the yodeling from driving them mad. (Although Slim Whitman will not begin recording until 1962, it is possible to find similar caterwauling in the Pulp Era.)

Martians and Our Women

As has been previously mentioned so often that the joke is no doubt becoming tiresome, the Martians are here for our women. When a single Martian manages to corner a single human female alone, circumstances transpire that render the woman zombie-like and increase the head size (and thus, the overall power) of the Martian.

What circumstances, precisely, transpire? Never you mind. The zombification of Earth women happens off-stage because that is the way things went in the spicy pulps. Pulp Era social mores would not allow it any other way. This can actually be a fun recurring joke in a *Pulp Zombies* game—no matter

how hard the Cast Members try to find out what happens behind those closed doors, something always prevents them from doing so.

If, by some chance, a female Cast Member gets trapped alone with a Martian, roleplay a physical struggle (presuming, of course, that the character resists—and why would she not?). If the Cast Member manages to escape or pummel the Martian into unconsciousness, she survives with her facilities intact. On the other hand, once the Martian is on the verge of immobilizing his victim, everything fades to black and the character becomes zombified (and, sadly, unplayable).

Zombified women lose all sense of their identity and motivation to do anything other than lie around, drool, and carry out the bidding of their Martian masters (said bidding usually being to lie around and drool). In mechanical terms, Earth women who have befallen this unfortunate fate take on the statistics of a basic zombie (see *AFMBE*, p. 146), save that they do not need human flesh to survive and they cannot spread the love.

The condition of female zombification is not reversible, save through a great quest to the center of the largest whirling disk in the Martian orbital fleet, where a gigantic machine covered with flashing lights is capable of re-uniting a female with her mind.





Scenarios

The following sections present brief ideas for adventure in this setting.

Where Were You When the Aliens Landed?


Most people remember where they were when they first learned that JFK had been assassinated, or that the Challenger had blown up, or that similar mammoth events had rocked the world. What bigger life-time event could there possibly be than the arrival of Martians on Earth?

In this scenario—which is really the best lead-off for this setting—the Cast Members are doing something completely normal when the Martians arrive and begin wreaking havoc. It is important that the Martian threat be immediate. It is not exciting for cattle farmers in Iowa to hear about a Martian landing taking place in New York. It *is* exciting if the Martians land right next to the barn and begin setting the cows aflame with their death rays.

Here is a short list of staging ideas.

- The Cast Members are minor functionaries in the White House who hear only the craziest of rumors about why the President has been locked up with his military advisors for the past three days. They have just stepped out onto the National Mall to fetch coffee (or whatever) when the Martians blow up the White House behind them.
- The Cast Members are the police officers, local officials, and leading citizens in a swampy backwater of a Florida town who must deal with the Martian landing.
- The Cast Members are far removed from civilization on a church counseling retreat for couples in troubled marriages. The Martians arrive when the men are all off in the woods doing manly things. The Martians manage to zombify the women after overpowering the minister, who remained behind with the females. The men return to discover this disaster and must decide if they love their spouses enough to pursue their unzombification, which could be the goal of an entire campaign.





No matter which particulars are involved, the Cast Members' initial challenge is to survive the preliminary incursions—finding out what the Martians are up to and how they can be stopped should be deferred for the future. In the immediate term it is survival, survival, survival.

Jail House Rock

While traveling from one place to another, for whatever reason, the Cast Members are stranded in the middle of nowhere when their conveyance breaks down. There is only one building in sight: a huge brick structure surrounded by high, wire fences. When they arrived there, they discover that it is an all-female penitentiary.

The Martians have already taken the facility over, though their presence is not evident. The inmates (save perhaps a valiant few) have all been zombified, though those not familiar with the typical behavior of the incarcerated may just assume that they have been pacified and demoralized by their jail sentences. The guards and administrators have been vaporized by Death Rays (there are strange, sooty marks on some of the floors and walls around the prison) and their positions taken over by Martians who wear Hat Mask disguises so the state authorities continue to deliver shackled women on a regular basis.

Zombies Stole My Girlfriend

It is largely inevitable that the Martians eventually zombify a woman important to one of the Cast Members. In fact, if such an event does not otherwise transpire in the course of play, the Zombie Master should taken proactive steps to make sure it does. At that point, the character affected probably begins to seek some method of undoing the process. As mentioned previously, the only possibility (unless the Zombie Master is particularly weak-willed) is to take the zombified female to the largest whirling disk in the Martians' orbital fleet and use the big time Martian technology there to return the victim(s) to her normal state.

Cast Members attempting to do this face two major obstacles (not including the army of Martians standing in the way).

The first obstacle is simply finding out about the possibility. Cast Members who are scientifically astute may be able to piece this together from examining other Martian technology. ("Such a device is a theoretical possibility given what we know of these Martian devices, but would require a Martian apparatus of gargantuan proportions—one that could only fit within the confines of the largest of their flying saucers!") The Cast Member might also manage to get the information by capturing and interrogating a Martian of large head size. Offering JELL-O in exchange for the information would definitely work.

The second obstacle is getting into space. Taking a human-made device into space is not completely out of the question in a Pulp Era that contains gadgetmasters, but keep in mind that manned space flight did not occur in the real world until the 1960s. Stowing away aboard a flying saucer might work, as might simply taking one over and trying to learn how to fly it. Using a Martian Teleporter Pad would probably be the simplest method.

Of course, the Mother of All Whirling Disks will certainly be a dangerous place, and the Un-zombification Device does not come with a handy manual . . .

A Brief Note on History

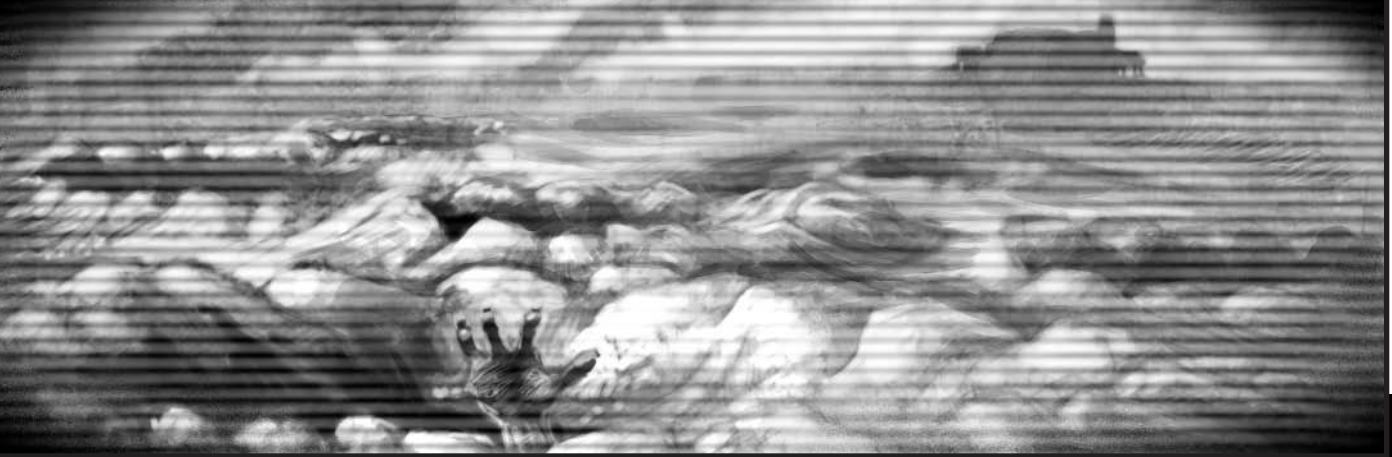
Those familiar with "real" history may feel we are overstating the power of the U.S. during the '30s. Certainly, there was no U.S. dominance such as exists today, or existed in the Eisenhower era when this Martian plotline would fit best. Britain still ruled the waves, and Germany and Japan were building vast military machines. Still, the flavor of this setting is lost somewhat if such geopolitical realities are factored in. We want to remind you of the historical winking that goes on in Pulp Era stories (see p. 23). Don't concern yourself so much about making it real; focus more about making it fun.

CHAPTER SIX





SCATTERED PULP



War of the Worlds, Part II

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and Gentlemen, we interrupt the Lucky Strike Hour to bring you a special news bulleting from Phineas Talbot, reporting on developing news in Parker's Grove, Virginia.

PHINEAS TALBOT: Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm here in Parker's Grove, where a local club of amateur astronomers have reported a very unusual phenomenon in the night sky. They report that dozens of unidentified objects are entering Earth's atmosphere, trailing brilliant streams of fire. I'm in a field near the University with Thomas Dougherty, Professor of Astronomy, a number of members of the University's astronomy club, and a few dozen local lookers-on. The view is quite spectacular and dozens of objects, each clearly visible in the night sky from this vantage, trail streams of red fire across the horizon. Professor Dougherty, do you have any idea what these objects are?

THOMAS DOUGHERTY: This type of phenomenon is caused by particles—asteroids and such—from outer space entering the Earth's atmosphere and burning up. We're essentially in the middle of an meteor shower.

TALBOT: Are we in any danger?

DOUGHERTY: Not at all. These asteroids are almost always burn up completely in the—

:: SURPRISED WOMAN'S SHRIEK ::

TALBOT (EXCITED): A number of the red streaks just shot across the sky directly above us! They looked very low to the ground, and crashed into the far side of the field. As they passed overhead, it sounded like—

DOUGHERTY: Amazing! This is completely phenomenal!

:: RUNNING AND HEAVY BREATHING ::

TALBOT: I'm moving across the field here with the rest of the crowd . . . as we move across, I can see a crater . . . several actually, perhaps more than a dozen . . . Professor Dougherty, are these asteroids that weren't destroyed by entry into the atmosphere?

DOUGHERTY: Good Lord!

TALBOT: We've reached the edge of one of the craters, and—holy smokes! There's a—a man in the center of the crater!

:: A HALF DOZEN MIXED VOICES SCREAMING AND YELLING ::

FAINT, FLAT VOICE: Braiiiiiiins . . .

TALBOT: He's standing up, reaching around! He's completely covered with black soot—I don't know if he was hit, or—wait! He's saying something . . . "Brains." It sounds like he's saying "Brains!" What is he . . . now he's walking unsteadily up the side of the—

:: SCREAMING ::

DOUGHERTY: Good Lord!

TALBOT: The man from the crater is attacking the—my God! He's biting . . . Mary Mother of God protect us, there are more of them, falling from the sky!

:: SOUNDS OF FALLING ZOMBIES, SCREAMING "BRAAAAAIIINS" AS THEY DESCEND ::

TALBOT: More! There are more falling from the sky, and—

:: STATIC ::



Introduction

History

War of the Worlds—a radio play whose concept and content needs no rehashing here—was broadcast one Pulp Era Halloween by Orson Wells on the NBC network of radio stations. In this setting, corpses harvested and experimented on over the last several years by visiting aliens have just been jettisoned into Earth's orbit by the aliens, who are in the process of dumping trash before entering hyper-space to visit the next inhabited solar system on their inter-galactic route.

Due to the aliens' experiments, the harvested corpses have attained not only post-death sentence but also a level of super-endurance completely unheard of, to the extent that they are able to survive *re-entry into Earth's atmosphere*.

Having recently been "tricked" by the *War of the Worlds* broadcast, however, the dispassionate citizens of Planet Earth are not about to be fooled twice—even if it is real this time and Phineas Talbot *was* just killed by a corpse travelling at several hundred miles per hour.

Staging

This setting—which is really little more than a single night's scenario—is best played on overdrive. When the radio broadcasts begin—perhaps even while the Cast Members are in the middle of or finishing up a totally unrelated scenario—they should be greeted with complete skepticism by the normal folk around them. "Give me a break," they opine. "I heard *War of the Worlds*. Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me."

Nevertheless, the broadcasts continue, professing the truth of it all. The skeptics are staunch, though,

See Also "Backstory, Irrelevance Thereof"

Where did these aliens come from? Why did they steal corpses instead of live humans? By what process did they make these zombies so tough? None of this is relevant, so let's not get caught up in pointless backstory, hmm? *Zombie Masters* who feel the need to provide an explanation for their players might insert a news story about UFO sightings into the mix, but frankly, zombies falling from orbit is so completely outside the realm of sane possibility that providing a reasonable rationale for all of this is just wasted time that could otherwise be spent standing on one's chair making zooming sound effects and yelling "Brallllins!"

to the extent that rival broadcasts on other radio stations denounce the "news" as faked. "Experts" testify about the similarity of the *War of the Worlds* hoax, and how the current story could not possibly be real.

This goes on for a few hours and then the zombies begin falling wherever the Cast Members are. For maximum excitement, they fall onto the Cast Members' cars and houses. Near misses kill people that they are talking to in the street. It's real! All real! And they are screaming for brains as they fall to Earth!

The first order of business is to survive the crashing zombies, which is fairly easy to do. Cast Members might want to take cover, try to spot incoming zombies and avoid them, or whatever. No matter what they do, no Cast Members will actually be hit by zombies on re-entry. No Cast Member could survive such an impact, but let them think that their clever actions have saved their lives.



Once the zombies have hit, they get up out of their craters and go looking for dinner. The Zombie Master can either decide how many zombies will fall in advance by comparing the zombies' Power to the Cast Members' character points, or just keep the zombies popping up at a challenging rate. In any case, the ensuing mayhem is standard *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* fare. The zombies walk up and down the streets, arms outstretched, howling for brains. The difference here is that they are not scared of much of anything and they are pretty much impossible to kill.

Bullets? No help at all. But thanks for playing.

Hacking? Slashing? Pounding? See Bullets, above.

(What, you were expecting a shotgun to take down a zombie that survived *atmospheric re-entry*?)

Now to begin phase three—the search for a useful weapon or tactic. Truth be told, there are actually a number of things that can take the zombies down and resourceful players might think of any of these. If they do not, but come up with some other clever or funny idea, run with it, as long as everyone is having a good time.



Possibilities For Dealing With Zombies

- A direct hit from an artillery shell will blast a zombie to smithereens. Luckily, there is a national guard barracks just outside town.
- It takes about two dozen sticks of dynamite to blow up a zombie, or slightly less, if they can somehow be affixed to the creature or their force otherwise optimized. (And sticking it in his pants is not going to cut it—largely because no zombie's pants managed to stand up to the heat of re-entry.)
- Any number of chemical compounds might be concocted with the help of scientists from a local commercial concern or professors from a local college. Likewise, a Gadgetmaster could probably whip something up that will take down a zombie. Zombie Masters who want to make things difficult might want to require some strange and difficult-to-acquire ingredient in the mix. A chemical distilled from the blood of another zombie would be a particularly diabolical requirement.
- Zombies are extremely tough, but have human-range strength. That means they can be locked up without them simply pulverizing whatever they are imprisoned in.
- Acid might work, but it would have to be pretty powerful stuff.

Cool Scenes

The characters have to spend a lot of time physically dealing with rampaging zombies at all stages of the scenario. Here are a number of cool things that could happen. Keep the fights fun and light or things will really bog down.

- A helpless individual (old woman, young kid, college co-ed, pudgy blubbery banker in a bad suit) is trapped in a high place (a tree, the second story of a building, on top of a clock tower, perched on top of a billboard) menaced by zombies from every side. The Cast Members are his only hope.
- Something catches on fire (dry goods store, automobile, big pile of dry brush) which puts some-

thing else nearby in danger of explosion (gas station, chemical plant, oil refinery). And while the Cast Members are trying to make sure the whatever-it-is does not blow them all to kingdom come, there are zombies running around trying to kill them. No doubt some of the zombies will catch fire and not care about it one whit.

- One of the brighter zombies figures out how to use the gun some irate local was trying to kill him with. Or double the fun and make it a flamethrower.
- A farmer from outside town drives down Main Street wildly in an old pickup truck. A half-dozen zombies hang onto the outside of the truck, trying to bust in and get him. The weaving truck is a hazard, as are any of the zombies that fall off. Maybe there is a load of wood in the truck's bed and heavy logs fly out from time to time. Or maybe it is an Okie truck stacked fifteen feet high with some family's every worldly possession.
- A local snaps and becomes unable to tell the difference between people and zombies. As luck would have it, he is also heavily armed.
- A band of hoboes (Okies, striking unionists, Communists) decides to take advantage of the situation and storm the local bank. If the Cast Members need any motivation to try to stop the robbery, tell them the bank in question holds their life saving and remind them the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation is not created until after the Pulp Era.

Ask the Author

Q: This is absurd. Zombies that can survive re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere? Puh-lease.

A: What, you've never seen an absurd zombie movie? Refer to the Golden Rule of Pulp Zombies (see p. 30). Sheesh. God save us from the humorless.

Wrapping It Up

Once the characters have managed to deal with the local menace, Zombie Masters essentially have two options. First, they can end it and move on to the next scenario or setting. If the characters seem to have had a good time but things are wearing thin, this is the best plan. On the other hand, if everyone is still having a riot, there might still be fallen zombies in other cities and towns across the country or even the world. If the Cast Members have come up with some genius method of taking them out, they will be in high demand.

The bottom line: Keep going until it's not fun anymore. Then stop and move on.



Re-Entry Zombies

Strength 2

Dexterity 1

Constitution 2

Dead Points n/a

Endurance Points n/a

Skills: Brawling 2

Attack: Bite D4 x 2(4), or by weapon

Weak Spot: None [10]

Getting Around: Slow and Steady [10]

Strength: Dead Joe Average, Damage Resistant Beyond All Reason, Flame Resistant [20]

Senses: Like the Dead [0]

Sustenance: Daily, Braiiiiiiins [-3]

Intelligence: Dumb as Dead Wood [0]

Spreading the Love: None

Special: None

Power: 42

Intelligence -2

Perception 1

Willpower 2

Speed 2

Essence Pool 11



The Chinese Menace

Chinatown was, as usual, full of Chinese. It made my new partner crazy. He honestly believed that all of the Asians in the world were united in the abominable purpose of destroying western civilization as we know it. Or something. Fifteen years of patrolling Chinatown had taught me at least one thing about the Chinese: they just want to get along like every other Joe in these hard times.


"Just look at that guy over there," he was saying as we walked down a block of restaurants, groceries, and laundries. "What is that guy all about?" The young Chinese man in question was bent over, hauling a hefty bag of grain on his back. "Is he really gonna eat that much rice? Who needs fifty pounds of rice?"

"That's Xiong Kaobong," I sighed. "He works for Tehuai Hsiu at the Golden Dragon, and a Chinese restaurant needs fifty pounds of rice."

He made a grunting noise. "Well, they all look alike to me." I swear; this kid is going to be the death of me.

"Did I tell you what my cousin said?" he asked. "He was talking to this guy who works for the railroad, who told him that all these Chinese guys who put in the railroad tracks across the Rockies, that they . . ." I tuned him out. He had already told this story to me at least three times and the wisdom of his cousin involved a nefarious Chinese conspiracy to sink California into the ocean. Or something.

"Hey!" he was saying, when I tuned back in. "Hey! You paying attention? I said, 'That guy over there looks really queer.'" I followed his pointing finger to a Chinese man who was standing at the curb on the other side of the street, holding a pair of chopsticks loosely in one hand. An upset bowl of food lay in the street at his feet. He did look kind of strange, actually. His eyes were bugging out and he was shaking his head from side to side, like he was trying to clear cobwebs out of it. He was completely oblivious to the world, and he started to stumble around, stepping squarely in his stir fry.



"Come on," I said to my partner as I hastened across the street. "Sir!" I called out to the man as we neared. "Are you alright?" He didn't seem to hear me. As we arrived at his side he seemed to get over his disorientation, though something about him still didn't look quite—.

"Hey, buddy," began my partner, "you're gonna hafta—" His pronouncement ended in a bloody gurgle as the man embedded his pair of chopsticks in my partner's throat. I backed away and drew my revolver for only the second time in my long career as a policeman. As it turned out, I would use it a lot that day.

History

In Chinatowns all over the United States, respectable, well-mannered Chinese are turning into blood-crazed zombies. Something in the water? Not quite—it is something in the rice.

For decades, the nefarious Chinese criminal mastermind Kang Ming has plotted and schemed, representing the greatest secret threat to civilization in history. While his motivations are unknowable, it is clear that he is diametrically opposed to all that is Good and Right and American.

While Kang Ming's criminal scheming has gone on since before anyone can remember, his typical modus operandi involves striking at the powerful and unique on a limited basis, assassinating heads of state and heisting the treasures of Europe, for example. (Attention, Zombie Masters! Those were adventure seeds!) Nevertheless, he has secretly thirsted for some masterstroke of much greater magnitude—a scheme that would bring the West to its knees once and for all.

Kang Ming has, in his employ, a cabal of sorcerous henchmen who have devised a way to enlist every yellow-skinned man, woman, and child on the planet in a killing rampage that will bring about, once and for all, the dawn Kang Ming's new world order. The secret is rice.

For several years, a new international trading company, K.M. Multinational Foods, has been stockpiling rice. Run behind the scenes by none other than Kang Ming himself (betcha didn't see that coming), this company's goal has been to create reserves of the grain that could be enchanted over time in depraved rituals and then suddenly released throughout the Western world wherever Chinese immigrants are found. When the time was right it would be flooded through the marketplace at low prices—given away, even—in order to assure rapid circulation.

Regular shipping channels would not work quickly enough, so Kang Ming has also been expanding his magically-linked network of underground warrens. Once, they linked only the major cities of China, but now, by following his system of underground basements, sub-basements, sewers, and caves it is possible—through the enchantments that have been embedded in the caves themselves—to travel from San Francisco to Hong Kong (for example) in a matter of hours, completely beneath the Earth. This will enable him to simultaneously introduce the tainted rice to dozens of Chinatown marketplaces around the world.

Don't Eat the Rice

When consumed, the tainted rice provided by Kang Ming's trading organization turns those of Asian descent into rampaging monsters who seek the blood of any non-Asians they can find. As long as they continue to kill and drink the blood of their victims, the killing continues. If they go for more than a few hours without nourishment, though, they revert to their former, mild-mannered selves with no memory whatsoever of their activities while under the influence of the demonic grain. They are not impervious to reason—those who regain their rational conscience in blood-soaked clothing will certainly realize something is up, but nevertheless retain no memory of any atrocities they committed. They can, however, be re-infected by eating the rice again.

The tainted rice has no effect at all (other than providing completely mundane nourishment) on non-Asians.



Chinese Rice Zombies

Strength 4 **Intelligence** 1
Dexterity 1 **Perception** 2
Constitution 2 **Willpower** 2
Dead Points 34 **Speed** 2
Endurance Points n/a **Essence Pool** 12
Skills: Brawling 2
Attack: Bite D4 x 2(4), or by weapon
Weak Spot: All, Blessed Objects* [-4]
Getting Around: Slow and Steady [0]
Strength: Strong Like Bull [5]
Senses: Like the Living, Life Sense** [5]
Sustenance: All the Time***, Blood [-4]
Intelligence: Tool Use 1 [3]
Spreading the Love: None
Power: 10

*While Chinese rice zombies take no additional damage from religious artifacts, the magic that controls the zombies is countered and repelled by locations and objects of Judeo-Christian faiths. Therefore, the zombies must flee from blessed objects, cannot enter churches, and so forth.

**This "Life Sense" detects only those of non-Asian descent.

***If they do not consume a portion of recently-slain blood every four hours, the rice zombies revert to normal humans.

Staging

This setting is completely open to many different types of characters—the only real requirement is that they find themselves in the Chinatown of a largish city when the rice begins to arrive. New York, Washington D.C., and San Francisco are just three of a dozen or more possibilities. This setting is also one of the easiest *Pulp Zombies* settings to insert into an ongoing campaign, as it is easily scalable to many different Cast Member power levels by simply increasing the number of Chinese victims in the immediate vicinity of the Cast Members.

Scenarios


The following sections describe a number of possible scenarios for this setting. The order in which they are presented here also suggests an order in which events can transpire to build increasing tension.

The Dinner Bell: Zombie Masters should conspire to put the Cast Members in the most compromising position possible when the dinner bell rings—say, a Chinese restaurant deep within the heart of Chinatown. Naturally, they are the only non-Asians present. Matters are made even more dangerous by a street festival that is happening outside, which features throngs of festive Chinese, oriental dragons winding their way through the crowds, and copious firecrackers and other pyrotechnics. Of course, the ubiquitous festival street vendors have also recently begun to serve the tainted rice.

Clearly, the thrust of this scenario is survival—what will the Cast Members do when their fellow diners are suddenly interested in dining on them? And what next, when they escape to the street to discover things are no better there?

Dramatic things that could happen include:

- One of the cooks was the first to be infected. He has a bunch of large knives, he knows how to juggle them, and he is not afraid to use them . . . on the characters.
- As the fight moves outside, an old man pushes a rickshaw full of fireworks by.

- 
- A family of Iowan tourists that includes a pair of cute identical twins obliviously wanders the streets of the festival, snapping pictures with their Kodak Brownies. They must be saved from what would otherwise be sure death.
 - The Cast Members duck into a temple. Those Easterners inside seem unaffected by the rampant blood-madness. They are on a fast, and thus, have not eaten the tainted rice. This may be the Cast Members' first clue about the cause of the problem.
 - The National Guard (or simply a large posse of locals who are armed to the teeth) arrive on the scene. They open fire on anyone that looks even vaguely Eastern, even those who have not eaten the rice and who are not exhibiting homicidal tendencies. The Cast Members must decide whether to help save the innocent from the gunmen. If the incursion has been going on long enough that some of the zombies have recovered, they must also decide whether those who are currently rampaging, but who will recover if starved of blood, deserve to be slain.

No matter how things transpire, this scenario should neatly dovetail with the next scenario, as the Cast Members try to determine why the Chinese are turning into blood-crazed killers and how, precisely, the zombification runs its course.

What Nefarious Mind?: The focus of this scenario is investigation, as the Cast Members try to figure out what is causing the mass madness. They might choose to follow any number of different investigative paths. Likely options are described below. Of course, investigating the situation is a difficult endeavor, since the streets of Chinatown, where all the clues can be found, are swarming with blood-mad Chinamen.

If the Cast Members try to determine what those with the madness have in common, it is extremely easy to figure out that all those who have turned into zombies are of Asian descent. (There does not appear to be any clear pattern regarding those of mixed blood—some turn, others do not.) Further investigation of why some Asians transform and others do not

is also pretty simple—all those who transform into killers have recently been eating, and eating some meal containing rice, at that. *Zombie Masters* who wish to confuse the issue a little bit may introduce some apparently conflicting evidence: some Chinese who have eaten rice recently have been unaffected by the outbreak. They, of course, have been eating rice from sources other than K.M. Multinational.

If the Cast Members investigate the rice, trying to determine its origins, it is easy to find out that a new foodstuffs distributor—K.M. Multinational—has been deep discounting its supply in order to gain new customers. In some cases, they have even been giving away large sacks of the grain as free samples. The rice just began arriving this afternoon, though some businesses placed orders several weeks ago.

The Cast Members will likely seek out representatives of K.M. Multinational upon finding out about it. They are suspiciously hard to find. Having made their initial deliveries, most of Kang Ming's operatives have disappeared back into the underground warrens. If the Cast Members poke around for long enough, though, they eventually find some, since Kang Ming needs to keep up the deliveries to continue to cause the widespread carnage he is pursuing.

Once they are found, Kang Ming's delivery boys and rice salesmen are none too interested in answering questions about the origin of their products. In fact, many of them are completely ignorant of the truth. They simply sell and deliver rice and collect their paychecks. Their contacts and managers one level up the chain of command—those in on the nefarious plot—are likely to invite the Cast Members into their offices, shocked at suggestions their rice is anything but good and wholesome, and proceed to bushwhack them.

If the Cast Members investigate the corporation through business channels, they discover a surprising lack of transportation infrastructure for a company that appears to be selling foodstuffs on such a large scale. While it is true enough that they are a new company and may be starting small, there is nothing to indicate the origin of the rice they have been delivering all over Chinatown (and in other Chinatowns in other parts of the country, if the characters do any



investigation into areas outside their own municipality). In fact, there is no evidence—no manifests, no dockworker eyewitnesses, no nothing—that all this rice originated anywhere outside Chinatown! This is, of course, because it was transported to the United States (and other parts of the Western world) from China through Kang Ming's underground.

Eventually, the Cast Members' investigations should lead them to stumble upon the underground warrens of Kang Ming, where the next phase begins.

The Underground Warrens: Hey—has anyone here seen *Big Trouble in Little China*? Yeah, figured that was a safe bet.

Once the Cast Members descend into Ming Kang's underworld, they have the globe-spanning underground lair of the world's greatest Chinese menace to investigate and fight their way through. This portion of the setting could easily last for a half-dozen play sessions as the Cast Members explore the underworlds of various cities where Kang Mind has strongholds. Of course, it could also be limited in scope if the Zombie Master would prefer for the trail to lead more directly to Kang Ming himself.

Zombie Masters should feel free to let their imaginations go totally gonzo, introducing all manner of ancient Chinese strangeness. Here are three suggestions, to which Zombie Masters should add their own ideas.

- The Cast Members are ambushed by strange creatures from Chinese myth summoned by Kang Ming's sorcerous henchmen. Indeed, the henchmen should be an interesting melee encounter.



- The Cast Members become lost in the warrens and surface in some faraway city—say, Barcelona or Mexico City. This might be the characters' first disorienting clue about the magical nature and extent of Kang Ming's operations.
- The Cast Members arrive at the central rice processing facilities. These consist of enormous caverns where Kang Ming's slaves bring great containers of rice before sorcerers who enchant them with nefarious rituals before they are hauled out to their final destinations.

The climatic final scene, of course, should be a showdown between the Cast Members and Kang Ming himself. While the ultimate battle rages, the Zombie Master should keep in mind that, in a game of true pulp sensibilities, Kang Ming's defeat must leave some doubt about his demise. Is he truly gone for good, or did he manage to escape his fate in order to perpetrate further depravities in the future?

Kang Ming and His Henchmen

Unfortunately, a full presentation of sorcerous magic is beyond the scope of this book. Thus, it is not possible to detail the precise powers and capacities of Kang Ming and his sorcerous henchmen. Zombie Masters should use their imaginations when the Cast Members confront the mages. Animated furniture, poisonous fogs, deadly fireballs, will-sapping charms and more are all possible. Play as the scene demands, but make sure the Cast has a chance to beat the sorcerers.

For those who want more detail, the AFMBE supplement *Enter the Zombie* has basic rules for ancient Chinese sorcerers. Also, the complementary Unisystem game, *WitchCraft*, has four complete magic systems to draw from to flesh out Kang Ming (at least 30 Metaphysics character points) and his henchmen (at least 20 Metaphysics character points).



The Maltese Zombie

I am wearing my best suit, even though I know the oppressive heat and humidity are going to make my face slick like a wet leech inside five minutes. What choice do I have? I'm calling on eight million dollars.

The cab drops me off in the little circular drive in front of the enormous mansion built with railroad money in the not-so-distant days of the robber barons. I have a hunch that those little circular driveways have a snooty name, but I have no clue what it might be. I'm a private investigator and I don't have much call to associate with people who would.

I tug at my collar and wipe the shine off my face with the little handkerchief that goes in the pocket of your suit. Then I remember that the little handkerchief that goes in the pocket of your suit isn't actually supposed to be used for anything. I cram it into my pocket with annoyance.

I ring the doorbell. I figure that it probably takes about ten minutes for whoever is supposed to answer

the door to get from one end of the mansion to the other to let me in, but I am wrong. The door opens about two seconds after I rang it. I'll be honest—that's just eerie. I guess they pay somebody to stand there and just wait for it to ring.

The guy who answers the door is . . . well . . . actually, that's the heart of the whole problem. You've probably guessed by now that I do not rake in the big simoleons as a private dick because I dress to the nines and talk all Harvard-like. Nuh-uh. I'm the best man south of the Hollywood Hills because I can tell things about people by looking at them. My partner on the force used to say that it was weird. Supernatural, almost. That was before he died and I quit, of course, but I digress. This guy who answers the door, though? Nothing.

Now, I understand that servant types are supposed to be all—oh, what's that word—stoic. Yes sir, if you please sir, can I fetch you a cocktail sir, and all that. I've never



been to London, but that's how I like to imagine the British. Anyway, I can read nothing about this guy.

"Come in," he says. "Mr. Gustavus has been expecting you."

When I get inside, I can see that my sources have misinformed me. This guy is not eight million rich. This guy is crazy rich. Out of hand rich. He's gotta have three times that much moolah.

"Follow me," says the guy, and leads me up a staircase as wide as my apartment. As I'm going up the stairs, I notice two things. First, there's a chair right inside the front door, which is not all that unusual all by itself. This guy can probably afford to stack four thousand chairs by his door if the mood strikes him. Secondly, though—and this is the weird part—this other guy dressed just like the guy who answers the door sits down in it as we're leaving and just waits. Like he's waiting for somebody to answer the door. So then it occurs to me that this guy who is leading me up the stairs was probably sitting there when I rang, which is how he answered the door so fast. And then it occurs to me that this Gustavus must be a real stickler for answering the door right away if he pays two guys to take shifts doing nothing but sitting by the door waiting for the bell to ring. For a brief second, I wonder what would happen if two more guys showed up in rapid succession before the guy that's with me can make it back to the door, but I dismiss that as a waste of brainpower. I mean, really—who the hell cares?

But to say the least, the door-answering thing is uncanny and weird, especially since I still can't get a read on this guy who's leading me up the stairs. Which we have been climbing for a really long time by now, I'll have you know.

We finally reach the top of the stairs, and the servant throws open a pair of doors onto this huge library with a fireplace the size of my office and bookshelves that reach up two stories, easy. Right in the middle of all of it is this guy in a wheelchair, bundled up with blankets, sitting right in front of the fireplace. Because, hey, when you're rich, apparently the weather that's drowning the rest of us in our own perspiration doesn't affect you.

"I'm glad you've finally arrived, Mr. Slade," he says. "I have a job for you."

History

An ancient relic from the Malta has the capacity to bring the dead back to life. For the past century, this icon—a grotesque statuette of a walking corpse—has been in the possession of the Gustavus family, a wealthy clan of businessmen whose success at commerce has been due—at least in part—to their capacity to create and to command the undead. Imagine, for example, the benefits of laying railroad track with a workforce that does not require pay, food, or clothing.


But now the Maltese Zombie has gone missing—stolen, presumably, by enemies of the family. Lucius Gustavus, Pulp Era scion of the Gustavus family and last surviving member of the clan, wants it back. While its theft is an affront, he is also worried because he is old and ill. As he has produced no offspring to carry on the family name, he plans to use the powers of the Maltese Zombie to bring himself back from the dead after his demise—which cannot be too far off, considering the progress of the wasting disease which is killing him.

Staging

The Maltese Zombie is intended to be a hard-boiled detective story in the film noir genre, so Cast Members who fit film noir stereotypes are best for this setting. Nevertheless, less noir-ish stereotypes should also have plenty of fun trying to solve the mystery of the Maltese Zombie, though the flavor will certainly be different when gadgeteering-mad scientists replace hard-boiled gumshoes.

The setting begins very simply when the Cast Members receive a request from Lucius Gustavus to assist him in solving a case of theft. He offers whatever cash is necessary to pique their interest. It is just money to him and the statue is much more important.

This remainder of this setting is a bit different from the others in this book and those in other *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* supplements. Rather than describing a number of scenarios that might take place, the remainder of this setting's background material consists of descriptions of the various non-Cast



Members who drive the mystery. A few important locations are also described in sidebars. Instead of running linear scenarios from front to back, the Zombie Master must keep the motivations of all the individuals and factions in mind to determine what all the various non-Cast Members are doing and how they react to the actions of the Cast Members.

The Zombie Master will certainly have to improvise many minor players in this setting and should feel free to add layers to the mystery as it improves the experience for the players.

Lucius Gustavus

Gustavus has been rich all his life. Although he inherited his family's wealth, his canny business decisions have ensured that the family fortune is as robust as ever. Of course, the fact that he has had it—until recently—within his power to create and command the undead did not hurt his chances.

Gustavus is physically ill and his wasting sickness has all but confined him to his wheelchair. He was once a vigorous man, but his infirmity has made him bitter and spiteful. He snaps at servants and visitors alike, though if he believes a more syrupy approach will get him what he wants, he remains capable of turning on his old charm. Said charm seems insincere to those who are perceptive about people; Lucius never really cared about anyone but himself, which probably explains why he never married.

Lucius is motivated by an increasingly frantic sense that his death is coming. He absolutely needs to recover control of the Maltese Zombie so he can return himself to undeath when that time comes. He does not want to involve the police or other relevant authorities at all in the matter of the missing statue, because he does not trust them. For the same reason, he absolutely forbids those whom he hires to work on the case to cooperate with the authorities, or to tell them anything at all about what they are working on.

The Servants

The servants on the Gustavus Estate are all zombies. Each was once a living servant of the family. Some died while working on the estate under Lucius Gustavus' grandfather, others under his father, and

The Gustavus Estate

The Gustavus Estate is a sprawling manor of completely grotesque extent. At its center, at the end of a long private road, is its sixty-room main house. The main house is surrounded by garages, greenhouses, stables, tennis courts, swimming pools, a private race-track, an enormous garden which includes a hedge maze, and so on, all radiating outwards in orbit around the main house. Any type of real estate or building that a Zombie Master could imagine a rich person having can be found on the Gustavus Estate.

The whole estate seems to be decaying at an almost visible rate. It truly operates on a skeleton crew, as the family has not been large enough to actually put the extent of their holdings to use in decades. Thus, many of the buildings have not been occupied—or even entered—for years. At night, the whole estate takes on a particularly eerie character, as does the main house itself.

still others in his own younger years. In the present day, no living servants remain, but that is of no concern to Lucius, since the household continues to run to his satisfaction. The undead servants do not frequently complain to him, so he has had no interest in hiring new help—living or otherwise. In fact, the undead servants are quite angry about their lot in unlife and it is they who have stolen the Maltese Zombie in hopes of unlocking the secret of its magic so they can finally be released from the magical forces that lock them in unlife.

Most of the zombies look, even upon careful visual scrutiny, like they could be alive. Only the fact that they do not respire or circulate blood distinguishes them from the living. Some have even learned to fake breathing so they do not look out of place when guests call on Gustavus Manor. The zombies remain in this life-like state because the magical power that sustains them also regenerates any damage that befalls them, returning them to the state that they were in when they were animated to begin with. Because of this, only those servants who



died of natural causes that left their bodies intact are allowed to serve in the house. Some of those who serve on the grounds, on the other hand, have gruesome injuries which remain in perpetuity.

The undead are “led” by the oldest among them, Hiram, the old Negro groundskeeper. While this leadership is nothing like an officer who leads soldiers, the other undead look to him for guidance and know him to be the wisest of their number. Hiram lives in a shed on the grounds, which keeps him out of sight of Lucius unless one actively goes looking for the other. This may be one reason Hiram has managed to be so successful in his covert insubordination. Hiram is assisted in keeping up the grounds by a staff of a half-dozen zombies of varying age.

The indoor staff of more than a dozen officially report to Edgar Braithwaite, the butler. In matters that concern them as a body of rebellious zombies rather than as a group of Gustavus’ servants, however, they accept leadership from Bobby, an adolescent serving boy who has gained an almost preternatural canniness, as—even though he appears no older than fifteen—he has served the family for almost as long as Hiram. Even Bobby looks to Hiram for leadership, though. The indoor staff and outdoor staff do not represent different factions.

The zombies are all motivated by the desire to die; they just want to go to their eternal reward. They are slow to upset the status quo, as they have all become very accustomed to it and it took them literally years to agree on the course of action they are currently pursuing. This makes it unlikely they will confide in the Cast Members or work with them, even if they see common ground.

The zombies are likely to be suspicious of the Cast Members from the start. They are not fools and will figure that Lucius has hired them to find the missing Maltese Zombie. They are not interested in harming the Cast Members, but may try to intimidate them anonymously by vandalizing or destroying their property in an attempt to drive them off the case. If necessary though, they are willing to eliminate the characters if that is what it takes to free themselves from their bondage.

Peter White

Peter White is a local criminal of no particular distinction whom Hiram hired through an intermediary to steal the Maltese Zombie from Gustavus. He knows nothing of the identities of those on whose behalf he worked; his sole contact on the operation was Little Slim. He was able to succeed easily in the caper because the servant staff worked behind the scenes to provide him easy access to the house and make sure Gustavus was not present when he arrived to do the burglary. The only thing they could not do for him was provide access to the safe where the statue was kept, because only Lucius knew the safe’s combination. White, however, is a passable safecracker and he was able to employ his own skills on that front.

Safecracking ability notwithstanding, White is essentially an alcoholic bum with little in the way of redeeming qualities. His motivations are to get as much money as easily as possible, and to maintain a perpetual drunken buzz.

Many local criminals are familiar with White, and inquiries about safecrackers will produce lists that include his name. His fingerprints can also be lifted from the safe. Those same fingerprints are on record with the state because of his status as a convict, providing another route that could be followed to track him down.

Little Slim

Little Slim was a caddy at a nearby country club in the 1880s who made friends with a number of the Gustavus servants. He is the only outsider who knows the full extent of their secret, for as he continued to visit his friends throughout his life, they did not age while he himself passed through the stages of life. Although he is no longer little, or slim, all of the servants continue to call him by that name.

Little Slim is now near the end of his life, and though he is still vigorous, he has a hacking cough from years of smoking cheap, unfiltered cigarettes. He will do literally anything he can do, including laying down his own life, to make sure that his undead friends are freed to meet him in the afterlife when he is finally buried himself.

The Maltese Zombie

The Maltese Zombie is a small stone statue of a decomposing human about a foot high. While it is repugnant to look at, its appearance is certainly not enough to, say, drive viewers insane. We shall leave such objets d'art to Call of Cthulhu.

The Maltese Zombie can be used to turn corpses into zombies. To do this, someone with knowledge of the proper magical rituals (which are the heritage of the Gustavus family, but which could also be divined by others with magical training and the opportunity to experiment on the statue over the course of weeks) need simply spend the appropriate amount of time and physical components in weaving a horrid spell of reanimation.

The zombies created with the Maltese Zombie can have any number of characteristics, depending on the magical power and wishes of the one who uses it. These characteristics essentially span all the possible permutations described in *All Flesh Must Be Eaten*. For balance, the Zombie Master may rule that the more deadly characteristics require especially rare material components.

Those animated by the Zombie can never touch the Zombie itself, nor physically harm the wizard (or wizards, or descendants of the wizard or wizards) who cast the ritual that brought them to unlife. Furthermore, they are bound to follow the express verbal commands of those wizard(s) and descendant(s). Thus, the current crop of zombies can secretly plot against Lucius Gustavus, but if he were ever to command them to confess any secrets they have (like, say, that they are plotting against him), they would be compelled to comply.

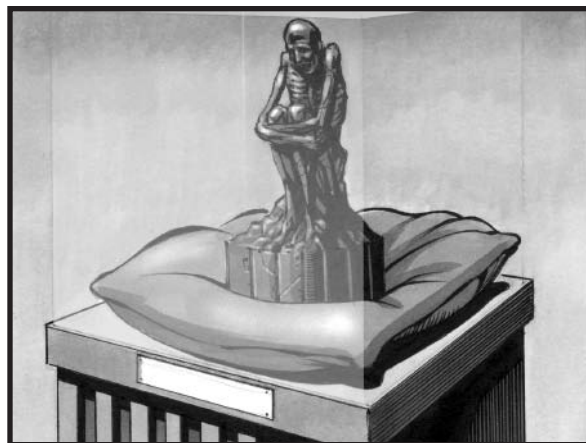
A determined vandal would find it no more difficult to destroy the Maltese Zombie than it would be to destroy any similar piece of mundane statuary. If not destroyed in accordance with proper ritual however, those whom it has brought to unlife would remain in their state of living damnation forever.

It was Little Slim who acted as the intermediary to hire White, and he who managed to track down Old William and convince him to investigate the Maltese Zombie.

Old William

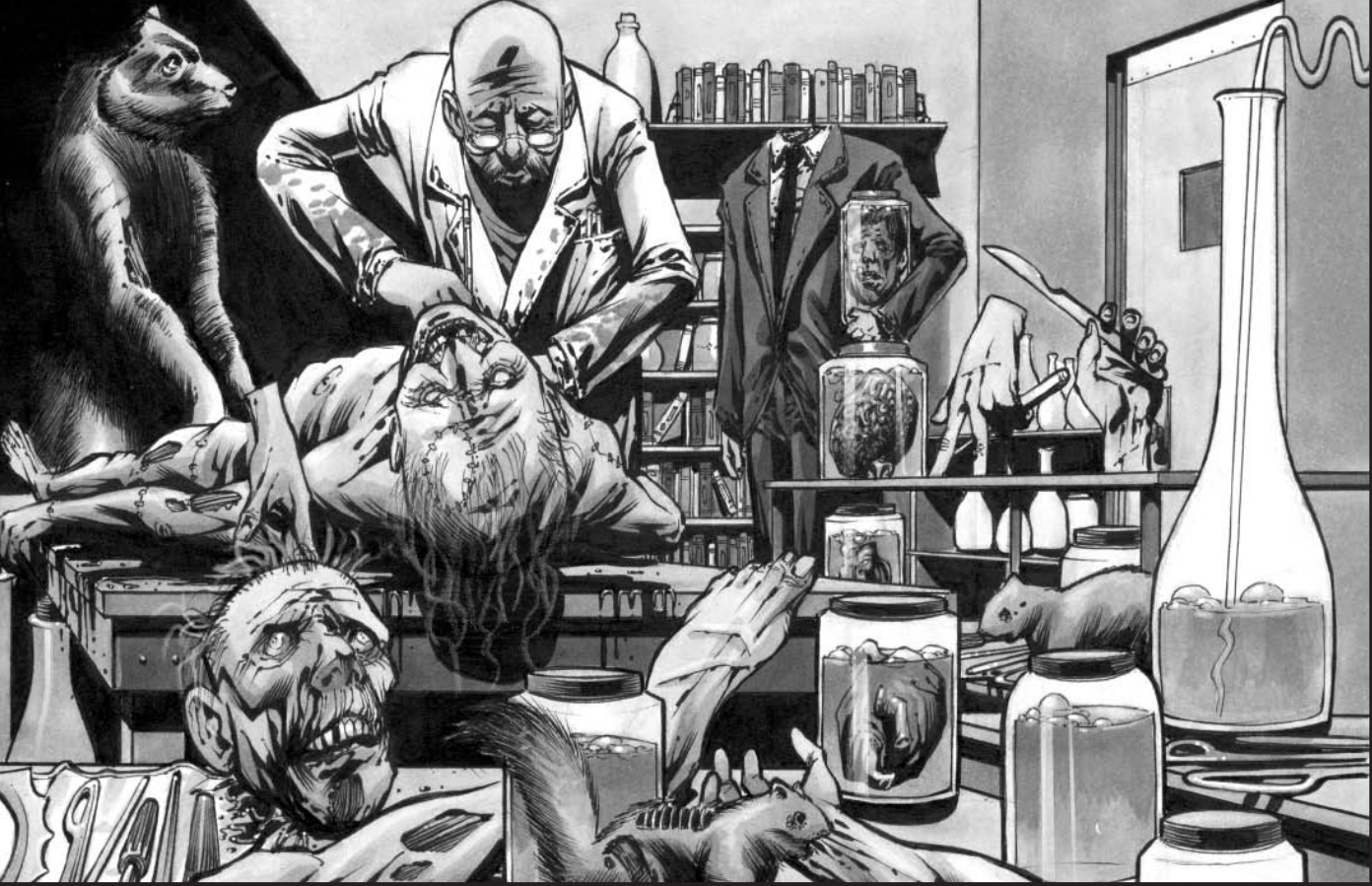
Old William is a crusty old fellow who runs a magic shop (stage magic, that is) and knows a thing or two about real magic besides. Little Slim is a friend of his, and managed to convince him to look at the Maltese Zombie once it was stolen to try to find out how it works and if it can be used to dispel its own effects.

Old William has been led to believe that a friend of Little Slim's fell under the curse of the Maltese Zombie while travelling in South America and that he is currently in hiding. Little Slim is not sure if knowing the truth would change Old William's interest in continuing to investigate the artifact, but is unwilling to risk allowing others to know of the zombies at Gustavus Manor.



The Maltese Zombie, Part II

What's a good zombie scenario without a cheesy exploitation sequel? Once the Cast Members have returned the Maltese Zombie to its rightful owner, Lucius will want them dead so no one finds out what they know. To that end, he will use the Maltese Zombie to craft zombies more martially capable than those who populate his servants' wing and send them after the Cast Members.



Hannibal East: Re-Animator

"Of my associate Hannibal East I can tell you this: he has outward appearances most normal—close-cropped brown hair, an unassuming posture, a plain face. His eyes of bright blue are his most stunning characteristic, and even though they only glint with his particular brand of intensity when he is at his work, they even then only provide a merest hint of the fervor that . . ."

"That he believes it possible to quicken the cadavers of the deceased is common enough knowledge at the University where we are both medical students. That our experiments continue even after forbidden by the Dean of the school . . ."

". . . this because as our need for fresh cadavers has increased, I fear that East's methods . . ."

". . . beams, rays—none of these have had the effect hoped-for, and our requirements for electrical power have passed those that can be supplied by . . ."

". . . and even moderate success has produced more horror than hope. East believes that the escaped horrors have been . . ."

". . . has finally hit upon a serum that he believes will have the desired effect in combination with . . . quickening with the . . . sheer and horrifying madness that has so far . . ."

". . . the love of God. I must escape from under the influence of this madman before he manages to . . ."

—Excerpts from the partially burned journal of Bartholomew Sedgewick



History

Hannibal East, a medical student at a small town university, has a theory: dead bodies do not lack anything living bodies have except a driving force. There is no soul at work in the living according to his suppositions—no supernatural impetus, no means of quickening that science cannot understand. Even though he is relatively young, he has made it his life's project to understand the science at work in death and restore that which departs at life's end.

East's associate in this crazed course of research has been Bartholomew Sedgewick, a fellow medical student at the university. Sedgewick combines an unfortunate propensity to see the best in others with the tendency to easily and solidly attach himself to those who are kind to him. Slowly but surely he was drawn into Hannibal East's web of madness.

The success of Hannibal's experiments to date has been debatable. There is no doubt that there have been clear victories over death. The rays and serums East has devised have succeeded in bringing a life-like state to the cadavers he has stolen from local cemeteries and morgues. The question is whether this state can really be called "success." Does success howl like the damned, perpetrate unspeakable acts of violence, and plot in secret to destroy the agent that brought it to unlife?

The Zombies

East's experiments have been multitudinous, and he has succeeded in returning many different species of dead animals to a lifelike state. His experiments have also worked on humans, as well as on individ-

ual human organs and body parts. No single procedure has met with complete success in all cases and different methods have worked to varying degrees on different specimens.

Once a given experiment has met with success—or failure—East typically stops taking notice of it. Because of this lack of attention, many of his successful experiments have managed to escape into the larger world, where they hide out, completely incapable of interfacing with society in any meaningful way but nevertheless shackled in a state of unlife. Many of these zombies have found one another and live together on the rural outskirts of town.

What the diverse zombies (and sentient parts thereof) all have in common is complete and unquenchable hatred of Hannibal East for causing their plight. All of them want to kill East. Those who have a more highly developed sense of vengeance also want to reanimate him, bringing him into their own painful, miserable state of unlife in "eye for an eye" style justice. What will be done with him after that has been given little thought, but will not be pleasant by any stretch of the imagination.

Fortunately for East and unfortunately for the zombies, none of the zombies animated so far have the capacity to handle the reanimation. They do know that Bartholomew Sedgewick could probably handle East's reanimation and one of their options is to force him to help them. On the other hand, several of the zombies were intelligent enough in life that they could probably follow East's lab notes closely enough to reanimate him, if they could get access to the notes, so that is another possibility.

As a diverse lot, the zombies in this setting are the perfect bunch to sic on experienced, jaded *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* players. Since the zombies in most settings tend to be roughly similar, experienced players are likely to assume that if they encounter slow, stupid zombies at first that all of the zombies to follow will be slow and stupid. Surprise! Further, since the "typical" zombie is quite intelligent, the possibilities for manipulation of unsuspecting players are practically endless. A completely honorable Zombie Master would never stoop to using out-of-game knowledge to hose his players, but then again, is anyone *completely* honorable?

Location Scouting

While the story on which this setting is based takes place in H.P. Lovecraft's fictional New England town of Arkham, Massachusetts, these events can be set in any smallish town large enough to have its own university. There is nothing magical about New England. In fact, changing the location can easily change the flavor of the scenario without altering the basic premise at all.



Basic Reanimated

Strength 2 **Intelligence** 2
Dexterity 2 **Perception** 2
Constitution 2 **Willpower** 2
Dead Points n/a **Speed** 4

Endurance Points n/a **Essence Pool** 12

Skills: Brawling 2

Attack: As normal human or by weapon type.

Weak Spot: None, Chemicals* [10, -3]

Getting Around: Life-like [3]

Strength: Dead Joe Average [0]

Senses: Like the Living [1]

Sustenance: Who Needs Food? [8]

Intelligence: Teamwork, Problem Solving [19]

Spreading the Love: None**

Special: Detachable Body Parts [10]

Power: 53

*A character with Sciences and either Sedgewick's assistance or access to East's lab notes could create a chemical compound that, when injected into one of the zombies, would kill it within D4(2) turns. Either method requires a Difficult (-2) Sciences Task. A generous Zombie Master might also allow a similar ray or beam to be created.

**East's zombies cannot Spread the Love, though East can create as many zombies as he has time and cadavers. Sane people, of course, might *stop* making zombies when the earlier ones began stalking them, but East is obsessive beyond any hope of reason.

In any case, the typical zombie described nearby only scratches the surface. There is no room to stat out the dozens of different permutations on the theme that East has reanimated, so, in combination with the single set of stats presented, consider the following permutations. The Zombie Master should feel free to invent his own additions, either in advance or on the spur of the moment.

- The Dean of the Medical School, recently deceased and stolen from his grave, has been reanimated for several months. An unfortunate lab accident resulted in his being beheaded before he could be reanimated, and the zombie-Dean carries his head around in hand to keep it close by. If the zombies have a "ringleader," the Dean is it, though his destruction will not stop them from continuing on with their plans. His statistics are as a typical specimen, though he has also retained some of his medical knowledge.
- East's largest successful reanimation was a large brown bear whose brain was half-eaten by scavengers before being reanimated. It is slow but essentially impossible to take down. Triple the number of hit points normally required to completely destroy a zombie (see *Other Damage*, *AFMBE*, p. 147). Use the stats for a typical specimen, but increase Strength to Monstrous Strength (Strength 7) and reduce Getting Around to Slow and Steady (Dexterity 1, Speed 2).
- The reanimated corpse of a travelling electronics salesman has retained knowledge of electricity and how to manipulate it, which could allow him to set all manner of devious traps and perhaps learn how to use East's rays and beams. He is otherwise a typical specimen.
- A pack of desiccated campus squirrels attack as a swarm. The Zombie Rat statistics are appropriate (see *AFMBE*, p. 169), save that they need no Sustenance and may not Spread the Love.
- There is a trio of *Addams Family* style hands (all right hands, from different corpses) that move with completely unnerving speed.
- There is also a reanimated snake that is still poisonous as hell.

The State of Things

About one week ago, Bartholomew Sedgewick finally had enough when East procured (Sedgewick thought better of asking how, though his suspicion about East's methods of collection have been mounting) the extremely fresh cadaver of a pregnant local teenager for reasons that Sedgewick has blotted from him mind. Sedgewick fled in the middle of a fire he set to mask his escape. He currently lives outside town, having taken up a reclusive existence, fearful that East will find him and equally fearful that East's zombies will manage to determine his location and kill him or (worse) force him to help them wreak revenge on East or (worse still) kill him, reanimate him, and *then* force him to help them in their mad schemes.

Sedgewick's cousin, Randall Sedgewick, recently came to town to make a surprise visit only to discover that Bartholomew was nowhere to be found. Randall reported this to Bartholomew's parents in far-off Wichita (or some other far-off location, if the university is set in the Midwest), who have become worried about him.

East, essentially alone, has taken extreme precautions against attack from the monsters. He knows his creations are plotting against him, having seen them following him and heard a few of the less intelligent ones scratching against his door and window in the middle of the night. His campus quarters are dead-bolted and barred with the entire security stock the local hardware store could provide. He only travels from his rooms to get food and visit his secret laboratory. He has stopped attending classes at all. Nevertheless, he remains motivated by his extreme obsession to keep animating new zombies. Some people never learn.

Getting Involved

Cast Members can get involved in this setting in all kinds of ways. Here are four ideas. More are certainly possible and are left to the enterprising Zombie Master.

- Bartholomew Sedgewick's parents might hire the Cast Members to look into his disappearance. Similarly, one of the Cast Members might be a friend or relative whom they ask to look into matters because of regional proximity to the university or a reputation as an investigator of some sort.
- Cast Members who are local law enforcement officers or perennial local do-gooders may read about Sedgewick's disappearance in the local press and take it upon themselves to solve the mystery.
- Cast Members (of the officer or do-gooder varieties described above) may be called upon (or become curious) when a spate of grave robberies and missing persons cases are reported in the local press.
- Pulp heroes who travel the world looking for zombies to slay could easily be made aware of the local state of affairs by reading of East's work in some less-than-reputable medical journal, through reports of sightings of the walking dead from some local source, or through a barely-coherent letter from Bartholomew Sedgewick, who has read in some newspaper or magazine that the Cast Members have experience dealing with zombies.





The Developing Story

The point at which the Cast Members become involved in the ongoing events and what their goals are depend entirely on how they are introduced to the story and by whom, so it is difficult to provide a concrete list of how this story might progress in play. With any luck, however, the following list of scenes, clues, and possibilities will be useful no matter how the Cast Members approach the setting.

- Characters investigating strange happenings at the medical school (where Sedgewick is known to have been a student) hear of a fire that broke out recently in one of the medical school's dissection rooms. That day was the last anyone heard from Sedgewick. If they poke around a little more, they might manage to find the burned fragments of Sedgewick's journal. (Hand out copies of the textual fragments which appear on p. 134.)
- Many students and faculty at the medical school know East was fascinated with the idea of bringing the dead back to life. They also know Sedgewick and East spent a lot of time together. Most believe East and Sedgewick gave up their experiments when they were forbidden by the Dean, though they are, of course, dead wrong.
- Characters who investigate with the power utility or ask around about power outages can find out that there have been a number of brown- and black-outs over the last six or eight weeks. Most occurred in the area around East's secret lab. Cruising around and checking out the power lines might be one way of locating the secret lab—an improbably huge transformer can be found on a pole nearby, indicating above average power consumption in the area.
- East's secret reanimation laboratory lies in an abandoned mill near the largest cemetery in town. The mill consists of two stories. The ground level is completely empty of furniture. The second story contains all of East's reanimation equipment. All manner of scientific and pseudo-scientific apparatus snake and twine around the room. East's lab notes can also be found here, in a large binder on a reading lectern;

he does not bother hiding them. The basement, with its earthen floor, is where East and Sedgewick buried the experiments which did not run away first. Many of the burial pits have been emptied from the inside, and East has given up on worrying about which of the basement graves are empty and which are full. He just keeps burying, and brings a shotgun along, just in case.

- If East finds out the characters are investigating him, he has no compunctions whatsoever about killing them. In fact, killing them is doubly convenient, since he needs a steady supply of fresh cadavers, anyway.
- Characters blundering around in the areas outside town (woods, bluffs, open desert, or whatever, depending on the setting) may manage to catch a glimpse of one of the zombies, who hide out together on the outskirts.
- If the characters do not manage to find Sedgewick's hideout first (which should luckily not be too difficult for seasoned investigators), the zombies will find him within a few days. In that event, the local newspapers report the beating and abduction of a local vagrant, as reported by a hobo who was sharing Sedgewick's squat with him, but there is no mention of Sedgewick by name.

Required Reading

"Herbert West—Reanimator," by H.P. Lovecraft. Available in the must-have Lovecraft compilation *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* (Arkham House) and as a paperback from Necronomicon Press. Also check out the video adaptation *H.P. Lovecraft's Re-Animator* (1985) and the sequel, *Bride of Re-Animator* (1989).



The Classics (P)reborn, or, Why Stop Here?

In the words of Porky Pig, “That’s all, folks.” After seven Pulp Era settings, *Zombie Masters* are on their own from here.

Well, not entirely on their own. For *Pulp Zombies* *Zombie Masters* who—for whatever reason—are not interested in creating whole plot lines from whole cloth, here’s a little secret. Steal story lines from other zombie literature to use in a *Pulp Zombies* campaign. As the long list of sources in *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* suggests, there is no shortage of stories about zombies that can be pressed into service as roleplaying scenarios.

The classic problem with adapting the plots of movies and books into roleplaying game scenarios, however, is that the players—who take the roles of the protagonists of the stories—have probably seen a lot of the same movies and read a lot of the same books the *Zombie Master* has. Roleplaying is not any fun if the players know how the story ends before it starts.

The classic method for resolving this inherent problem with borrowed material is to add twists to plundered story lines in order to disguise their ori-

gins. Inserting new twists into complete stories, however, can sometimes be difficult, especially if the story already makes sense as a complete whole. Adding plot-related twists can often unravel the entire tapestry, leaving a mess at the *Zombie Master*’s feet. It can be done, but *Zombie Masters* must be careful when trying.

When stealing story lines for Pulp Era games, however, this problem practically solves itself. As the background of the story is translated from modern times (or from whatever historical or future period it takes place in) to the Pulp Era, the origins of the story are practically disguised automatically. The juxtaposition of a different story’s plot and the Pulp Era setting make for brand new adventures with a minimum of fuss.

Of course, when borrowing plots from other zombie stories, the *Zombie Master* must also keep in mind that the protagonists of Pulp Era stories are more capable than many zombie story main characters. Small changes may have to be made so that the story is not easily solved because the opposition is overmatched.

With these ideas in mind, go forth in search of story inspiration, remembering always the Golden Rule of *Pulp Zombies*! Too much is never enough!

Appendix

Pulp Era Firearms Chart

Weapon	Range	Damage	Cap	EV	Cost	Aval	Notes
Remington Double Derringer	1/3/5/10/20	D4 x 2(4)	2	1/1	\$12	C	hold-out
Smith & Wesson .38 revolver	3/10/20/60/120	D6 x 2(6)	5	1/1	\$25	C	cops, feds
Mauser “Broomhandle”	3/10/20/60/120	D6 x 4(12)	10	1/1	\$30	U	Germans
Colt .45 semi-automatic	3/10/20/60/120	D8 x 4(16)	7	2/1	\$40	U	military sidearm
Colt .45 revolver	3/10/20/60/120	D8 x 4(16)	6	2/1	\$35	C	the western classic
.22 bolt-action rifle	110/50/150/600/1000	D4 x 4(8)	1	8/4	\$12	C	kids, target shooting
.308 bolt-action rifle	10/50/150/600/1000	D8 x 6(24)	1	8/4	\$20	C	hunters, military
.30-06 bolt-action rifle	10/50/150/600/1000	D8 x 6(24)	5	8/4	\$75	U	hunters, military
Thompson Submachine Gun	3/15/30/100/200	D8 x 4(16)	*	6/3	**	U	gangsters, law enforcement, military
12-gauge shotgun	(varies)	(varies)	1-2†	8/4	\$40	C	1 or 2 barrels
—buckshot	10/30/50/100/200	D8 x 6(24)					
—slug	5/50/100/200/300	D8 x 5(20)					

* 20 and 30 round box magazines are available, as are 50 and 100 round drums. Using either of the drums increases EV to 8/4.

** Generally not available to civilians in automatic mode. Assume \$75 for non-automatic, or \$100 and up for illegal automatic models.

† Slide and lever-action versions also available, holding up to five rounds.

Dynamite: This explosive comes in sticks that may be light with a wick or detonated electronically. The explosive areas are the same as a Defensive Grenade. Damage is the same as an Offensive Grenade; increase the multiplier by one per additional stick. Tossing sticks works just like tossing grenades (see *AFMBE*, p. 136)

New and Modified Qualities and Drawbacks

Animal Companion	1- to 4-point Social Quality	p. 41
Force of Law	1- to 4-point Social Quality	p. 41
Danger Sense	1 point/level Supernatural Quality	p. 42
Gadgetmaster	3 points/level Supernatural Quality	p. 42
Hyperlingual	1 point/level Variable Mental Quality	p. 41
Mentalism	2-point Supernatural Quality	p. 42
Minority	3-point Social Drawback	p. 41
Resources	Variable Social Quality or Drawback 2 points/level, positive or negative	p. 41
Trademark	1-point Mental Drawback	p. 41

Gadgets

Complexity Level

Gadget Rating Modifier

Pulp Era Technology	+0
Modern Day (2000 AD) Technology	+1
Futuristic Technology	+2

Utility Level

Gadget Rating Modifier

Average Consumer/Normal Purposes	+0
Technical User/Specialized Use	+1

Other Modifiers

Gadget Rating Modifier

Miniaturization	+1 per quartering
Onerous Requirements	+1 per requirement
Horrible Consequences	-1
Dangerous Side Effect	-1
Combination	+1 per device combined



Works Consulted

The following is a list of the works that were consulted, read, skimmed, and/or purchased and then ignored while I was writing *Pulp Zombies*. It does not include an exhaustive list of pulp era fiction by any means, because it only includes what I read while writing this book. You should be reading James Lowder's excellent introduction to that subject on p. 143 if you are looking for something like that to sit down with, anyway.

This list should provide a useful starting point for other non-fiction reading on the pulps, as well as pulp era writing that has already been done in gaming. Rather than listing the books in no particular order within each category, I put them in rough order based on how useful they were in the preparation of *Pulp Zombies*. I doubt the Modern Language Association would approve, but then again, I doubt they will be reading this any time soon.

The Pulps

The Great Pulp Heroes. Don Hutchinson. Buffalo, New York: Mosaic Press. 1996.

The Shadow Scrapbook. Walter B. Gibson. New York: Harvest/HBJ. 1979.

The Period

The New York Time Chronicle of American Life: From the Crash to the Blitz 1929-1939. Cabell Phillips. London: Macmillan. 1969.

The People's Chronology: A Year-by-Year Record of Human Events from Prehistory to the Present. James Trager, ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. 1979.

This Fabulous Century. The Editors of Time-Life Books. Vols. III (1920-1930), IV (1930-1940), and V (1940-1950). New York: Time-Life Books. 1969.

A Century of Wonders: 100 Years of Popular Science. Ernest V. Heyn. New York: Doubleday. 1972.

Richard Halliburton's Complete Book of Marvels. Richard Halliburton. New York: Bobbs-Merrill. 1960 edition consulted, first published in 1937.

Collier's World Atlas and Gazetteer. New York: P.F. Collier and Son Corp. 1937.

Other RPG Works

Forbidden Kingdoms. Dave Webb and Hyrum Savage. Santa Monica, CA: Otherworld Creations. 2002.

Justice Inc. Aaron Allston, Steve Peterson, and Michael A. Stackpole. San Mateo, California: Hero Games. 1984.

GURPS Cliffhangers. Brian J. Underhill. Austin, Texas: Steve Jackson Games. 1989.

Call of Cthulhu. Sandy Petersen and Lynn Willis. Edition 5.5. Oakland, California: Chaosium. 1998.

1920s Investigator's Companion (for Call of Cthulhu). Volume 1: Equipment and Resources and Volume 2: Occupations and Skills. Keith Herber. Oakland, California: Chaosium. 1993.

Gangbusters. Rick Krebs, Mark Acres, and Tom Moldvay. Lake Geneva, WI: TSR. 1982.

Pulp Fiction

The Mystic Mullah. Kenneth Robeson. New York: Bantam. 1965.

Invisible Death. Lin Carter. Popular Library. 1978.

The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu. Sax Rohmer. Bath: Chivers Press. 1994.

"Herbert West—Reanimator," in Dagon and other Macabre Tales. H.P. Lovecraft. Arkham House. 1965.

Defying Convenient Categorization

Britannica.com

The Everyone Everywhere List. Second Edition. Minneapolis: Magic & Tactics Unlimited. 1997.

The Ancient Egypt Site
(www.geocities.com/~amenhotep)

Roots of the Western Tradition: A Short History of the Ancient World. Fifth Edition. C. Warren Hollister. New York: McGraw-Hill. 1991.

The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia for Macintosh. Release 6. Grolier, Inc. 1993.



How to Find Out More

The original pulps were printed (for the most part) more than fifty years ago, and on really cheap paper to boot. Even though they were as popular as MTV in their day, they can be kind of hard to find now. Tons of pulp magazines and books were thrown out by overzealous mothers cleaning college-bound kids' bedrooms. Some are still sitting in attics and basements gathering dust. Some just plain disintegrated and there are probably a lot of them hiding out wherever lost car keys go.

To make matters worse, the ones that survive are often collectors' items. While collecting pulp stories can certainly be a fun hobby, no one should have to shell out hundreds of dollars to read the exploits of Doc Savage or the Shadow.

Unfortunately, there is no room for a complete primer on how to find and/or collect pulp stories here in *Pulp Zombies*. However, the list of resources provided next, along with the resources of a favored web search engine, friendly local librarian, or surly sci-fi bookshop owner (and they all seem to be surly) should suffice.

Finding Pulp

Contributed by James Lowder

Budding pulp-hounds with Internet access will want to start researching the topic at ThePulp.net (www.thepulp.net), a great basic site that offers a brief history of the pulps, links, wallpaper, and lots of other goodies. The site also houses the FAQ (frequently asked questions) for the pulp-dedicated Usenet newsgroup, alt.pulp. Those particularly interested in the exploits of Doc Savage, the Spider, the Shadow, and the other proud champions of the hero pulps will also want to drop by Chris Kalb's Hero Pulp Web Site (<http://members.aol.com/heropulp>).

The paper-and-ink reference works available about the pulps are even more impressive. Scholar Robert Sampson penned a number of excellent books on the subject, all published through Bowling Green State University's Popular Press. *Deadly Excitements* and the six-volume series *Yesterday's Faces* are more general in their approach, but Sampson wrote monographs about the Shadow (*The Night Master*) and the Spider (*The Spider*). Popular Press also published the entertaining reprint collec-



tion *Selected Tales of Grim and Grue from the Horror Pulps*, edited by Sheldon Jaffrey.

Author and editor James Van Hise helmed two useful anthologies of essays harvested from various pulp fanzines—*Pulp Heroes of the Thirties* and *Pulp Magazine Thrillers*. Don Hutchison's *The Great Pulp Heroes* is a readable, but uncritical look at the most popular crime-smashers, while Ron Goulart's *The Adventurous Decade* offers up a much more opinionated survey of pop culture in the 1930s. Though a bit harder to come by than other reference books, Robert Kenneth Jones' excellent work, *The Shudder Pulps*, examines the less commonly discussed weird menace magazines.

For first-hand reminiscences about the publications and their editors, one can do no better than *Magazines I Remember* by Hugh B. Cave, published by Tattered Pages Press. Cave's pulp prose has also seen a number of terrific reprints of late, most notably from Tattered Pages Press and Fedogan & Bremer.

Two recent titles do a fine job of presenting the artwork of the pulps. Robert Lesser's *Pulp Art* can sometimes be found on remainder shelves. The more comprehensive *Pulp Culture: The Art of Fiction Magazines*, by Frank Robinson and Lawrence Davidson, remains an expensive, but worthwhile addition to any pop culture library. The latter does an especially nice job reminding modern readers that the pulps consisted of more than heroes and horrors.

So, too, with the most far-reaching fiction reprint collection, *The Pulps*, edited by Tony Goodstone. The 200+ pages in this oversized hardcover (now, sadly, out of print) offers up full-color cover reproductions, solid introductory text, and stories by Hammett, Burroughs, Bradbury, and more, covering the genres of adventure, sports, mystery, aviation, romance, and horror. Goodstone only presents fragments of pulp hero tales, but the Shadow and his kin have been well represented in other formats.

In the past thirty years, reprints of the hero pulps have been offered by various traditional publishers, including Bantam (Doc Savage, the Shadow, the Avenger); Berkly (G-8 and his Battle Aces); Corinth (Phantom Detective, Secret Agent X, Doctor Death,

Dusty Ayes, Operator 5); Carrol and Graf (the Spider); and others. Most of these paperbacks are now considered collectors' items, sometimes fetching as much as a lesser valued original pulp.

Much more reasonably priced are the recent reprints offered by small specialty presses. Pulp Adventures Press (PO Box 45495, Madison, WI 53744; <http://members.aol.com/pulpadventures/home.html>) is home for two excellent series, one which will eventually encompass the entire run of *The Spider*, the other a master edition of the myriad Zorro novels, novellas, and tales.

Over on the East Coast, Adventure House (914 Laredo Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901; www.adventurehouse.com) is home to *High Adventure* magazine. This bimonthly digest reprints a variety of hero and adventure pulps, including *Operator 5*, *G-8 and his Battle Aces*, and various Yellow Peril magazines. As with Pulp Adventures Press, the Adventure House web site also sports links and even occasional books for sale from publishers without a web presence.


There are a number of 'zines that also reprint pulp tales. Fading Shadow, Inc., run by Tom and Ginger Johnson (504 East Morris Street, Seymour, TX 76380-2212), produces some of the best, including *Behind the Mask* and *Action Adventure Stories*. These titles, and the now-defunct *Thrilling Novels*, highlight such comparatively minor characters as Captain Future, Lone Eagle, and the Candid Camera Kid.

Back on the Internet, Pulp Fiction Central at the Vintage Library site (www.vintagelibrary.com/pulp) offers up a wide variety of electronic reprints, available at fairly reasonable prices. The site will likely be joined by many more such e-publishers as commerce on the Web increases and more of the pulp stories and artwork pass into public domain.



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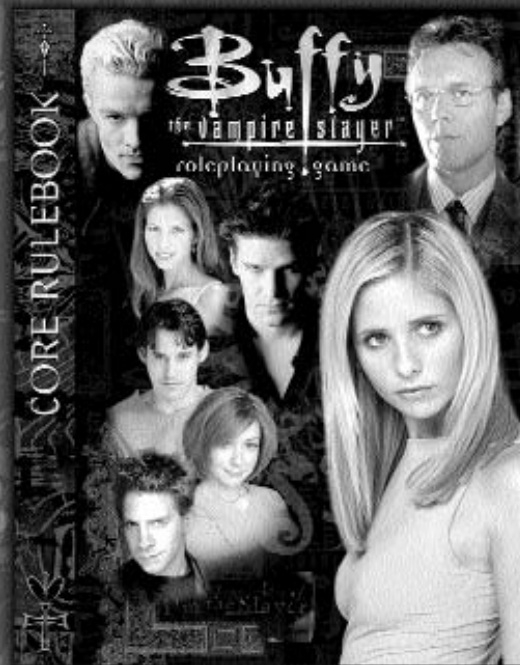
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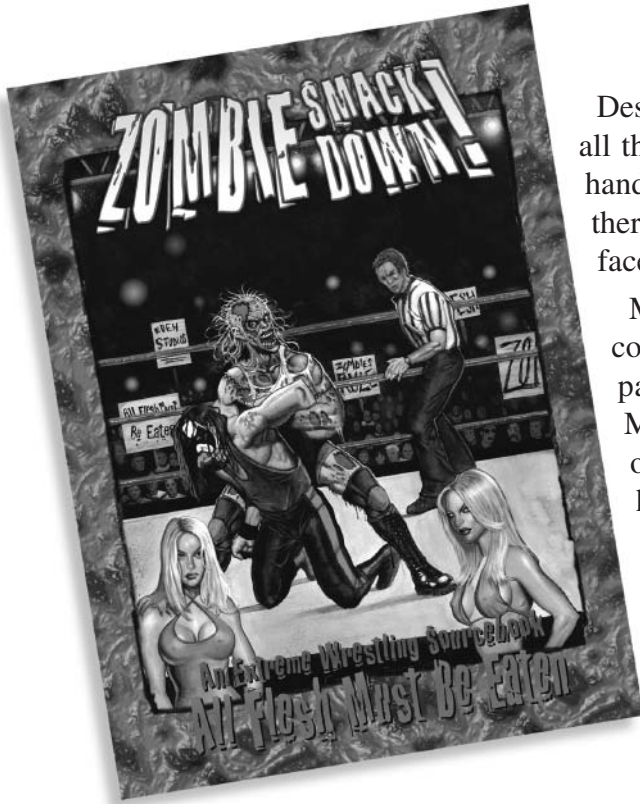
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