

# PYRAMID

Issue 3/53 March '13

# ACTION

## BUDDIES AND LONERS

by Sean Punch

**EXTENDED ACTION!**

by Phil Masters

**HELL ON WHEELS**

by Hans-Christian Vortisch

**THE RED SWORDS**

by J. Edward Tremlett

**I'VE GOT A GREAT IDEA**

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**FORTUNATELY,  
I SAW THIS COMING**

by Jason "PK" Levine

**DEALING WITH THE LAW**

by Jason Brick

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## Article Colors

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

- Pale Blue:* In This Issue
- Brown:* In Every Issue (letters, humor, editorial, etc.)
- Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features
- Purple:* Systemless Features

**COVER ART**  
Alan Rabinowitz

**INTERIOR ART**  
Greg Hyland

Get ready for action! This month's *Pyramid* runs on caffeinated adrenaline as we look at the high-octane world of action-adventure – including a briefcase full of **GURPS Action** goodies.

Most action movies involve *Buddies and Loners*. Sean Punch, the shadowy mastermind behind the **Action** series, shows you how to emulate blockbuster hits with only a couple of players and a GM. You'll explore the assumptions, adventure tips, and **GURPS** lenses for four common small-group tropes, plus a couple of new advantages to give your lone-wolf heroes the edge.

Action movies have been around since cinema began, and action stories are even older. Phil Masters – the mysterious masked man of **GURPS Thaumatology: Age of Gold** – looks beyond the modern-day flicks with *Extended Action!* You'll get tips and lenses for several alternate themes of the past and future, plus new optional rules for chases on horseback.

Does your mercenary team need a heavy-duty ride? **GURPS Gun Fu** co-author Hans-Christian Vortisch has you covered, with *Hell on Wheels*. This detailed description of the Cadillac Gage Commando gives you the history, features, campaign suggestions, and **GURPS** stats for two versions of this versatile vehicle.

Take the mission from the highway to the runway with *Dogfight Action!* This issue's Eidetic Memory by David L. Pulver – author of **GURPS Mass Combat** – expands the **Action** chase rules to air combat. You'll also get **GURPS** stats for some common fighters and their weapons.

When things go wrong in an action-hero's life, you may find yourself *Dealing With the Law*. Whether the setting is historical fantasy or modern action, this six-step process provides systemless ideas for avoiding arrest.

If you're prone to over-planning, or you know someone who is, *I've Got a Great Idea*. This optional **GURPS** rule rewards players who speed up the pre-mission planning process with bonuses they can use to enhance the mission itself.

When the situation is too dangerous for mundane humanitarian efforts, call in *The Red Swords*. This fictional secret organization of well-armed medics takes their services to places where no one is willing to go – and makes sure that no one interrupts their work. Its medipack comes complete with suggestions for **GURPS Action** character creation and adventures.

*Fortunately, I Saw This Coming* . . . and you can, too, with these optional "retroaction" rules from **GURPS Monster Hunters** author Jason "PK" Levine. Benefit your **GURPS** heroes with a new advantage, new twists on existing ones, or bonuses from high skill scores.

You've got incredible grit, impeccable skills, and an impossible mission. All you need is an edge to get in the action . . . with *Pyramid!*

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## A WORLD OF (VARIABLE) ACTION

One of the truths of the action genre is that modern-day action adventures – especially where the heroes aren't part of an organization or larger hierarchy – have perhaps one of the widest ranges of adventure possibilities imaginable. Really, the entire modern world is its domain . . . and countless scriptwriters and cinematographers have viewed pretty much every corner of creation and thought, "What would it be like if a fire-fight were here?"

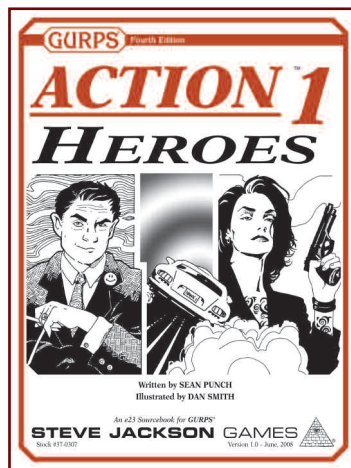
As I uncovered while writing my column this month (pp. 35-36), this goes doubly so when it comes to motivations. Really, an adventure can revolve around something nearly "inconsequential" like a watch (see *Pulp Fiction*) or focus on unfathomable billions of dollars (such as the central core of *Entrapment*). If you can think of it, people have been willing to kill – or die – over it.

In an ongoing **GURPS Action** campaign, this "anything can

be important" aspect can be vital to maintaining long-term interest. In fact, great action adventures can exploit the fact that missions can be moving goalposts: Sometimes the object turns from "gargantuan heist" to "try to escape alive," while at other times, a seemingly inconsequential mission can offer up something *much* more lucrative.

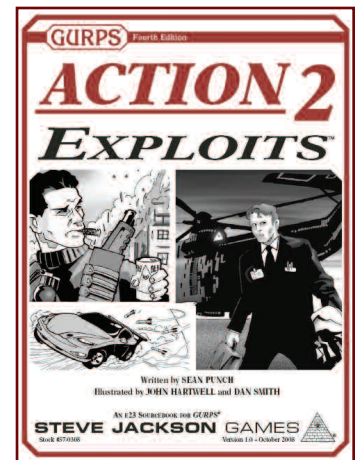
As a final note, action adventures are notoriously forgiving . . . especially if the adventure is moving fast enough. Did the final climactic battle start in the tunnels underground and end minutes later on a bridge? Go with it! (Is that an airship coming this way?!)

It is in this spirit that we present this month's dazzling dossier. If *Pyramid* is a place where anything can happen so long as it's exciting, then that fact is doubly true this issue. We hope you'll enjoy this action-packed installment. Be careful when reading it; it seems there *might* be some shadowy agents nearby, looking over your shoulder with interest . . .



## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Speaking of action-packed, how well did we do this month? Were things so exciting that even your stuntmen demanded stuntmen? Or did the mysterious message self-destruct before you could fully enjoy it? Our operatives await your post-mission reports privately at [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com), and you can always take part in a gathering of like-minded daredevils in the friendly bars of [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).



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# NEW TEMPLATE: HORSEMAN

250 points

*There was one time in New Mexico, was being pursued by seven men. I turned Bo around and taken them reins in my teeth and rode right at them boys firing them two navy sixes I carry on my saddle. Well, I guess they was all married men who loved their families as they scattered and run for home.*

– “Rooster” Cogburn, *True Grit*

In worlds where warriors, wanderers, and the rich travel on horseback, some people specialize in fighting that way – and you’re one of the best. You are really good with horses – riding them, of course, but also getting them to do what you want, and looking after them. Just as importantly, you can handle weapons appropriate to that situation. You can fight on foot, of course, and you know how to operate in rough country.

Because of all that, you’re a useful messenger, scout, or explorer, sharp-eyed and alert. Your horse may carry you into trouble, so it helps to know when to turn and ride hard out of there – and get home with word of what you saw.

This template mostly suits historical campaigns, as heroes have been riding into action for thousands of years, but don’t do so very often today – but a campaign doesn’t have to go very far back in time to justify using it. Even the most sophisticated armies were still training cavalry for battle up to around the First World War (although by then, they were *mostly* expected to function as mounted infantry and scouts – the idea of cavalry charges against entrenched modern firepower was pretty obviously stupid). Even in the Pulp Era of the 1930s, cowboy heroes were still regarded as potentially contemporary figures – after all, horses were still in plentiful use on ranches “out west.”

**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 15 [100]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 12 [20].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 15 [15]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 7.00 [5]; Basic Move 6 [-5].

**Advantages:** Animal Friend 2 [10]; Good with Horses† [1]; and Luck [15]. • A further 30 points chosen from among lens advantages, ST +1 to +3 [10/level], DX +1 [20], IQ +1 [20], HT +1 to +3 [10/level], HP +1 to +3 [2/level], Will +1 to +3 [5/level], Per +1 to +3 [5/level], FP +1 to +4 [3/level], Basic Speed +1.00 [20], Absolute Direction [5], Acute Senses [2/level], Alcohol Tolerance [1], Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5] or Very Fit [15], Gun Perks [1/perk], Gunslinger [15], Hard to Kill [2/level], Hard to Subdue [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Higher Purpose (Get the Message Through or Keep the General Informed) [5], Night Vision 1-6 [1/level], Outdoorsman 1-4 [10/level], Peripheral Vision [15], Rapid Healing [5] or Very Rapid Healing [15], Serendipity 1 or 2 [15/level], Signature Gear (Horse and/or arms and armor) [Varies], Weapon Master (Horseman Weapons) [30], additional levels of Animal Friend [5/level], replace Good with Horses [1] with Animal Empathy [5] for 4 points, or replace Luck [15] with Extraordinary Luck [30] for 15 points.

**Disadvantages:** -20 points chosen from among Code of Honor [-5 to -15], Duty (Agency, gang, service, or similar; Extremely Hazardous; 9, 12, or 15 or less) [-10, -15, or -20]; Fanaticism (Employer, nation, or service) [-15], Greed [-15\*], Intolerance (Rival nation, “savages,” or other large group) [-5], Loner [-5\*], Phobia (Claustrophobia) [-15\*], Secret (Roving

spy) [-10 to -30], or Sense of Duty (Team or nation) [-5 or -10]. • Another -25 points chosen from among the previous traits or Bad Temper [-10\*], Bloodlust [-10\*], Bow-legged [-1], Callous [-5], Compulsive Carousing [-5\*], Easy to Read [-10], Impulsiveness [-10\*], Insomniac [-10 or -15], Jealousy [-10], Nightmares [-5\*], No Sense of Humor [-10], Oblivious [-5], Odious Personal Habits [-5 to -15], Overconfidence [-5\*], Paranoia [-10], Post-Combat Shakes [-5\*], Selfish [-5\*], Shyness (Mild) [-5], Stubbornness [-5], or Truthfulness [-5\*].

**Primary Skills:** Acrobatics (H) DX-1 [2]-14; Animal Handling (Equines) (A) IQ+2 [2]-14‡; Riding (Horse) (A) DX+2 [2]-17‡. • Spend 12 points on appropriate horseman weapon skills (see below).

**Secondary Skills:** First Aid (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Naturalist (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Teamster (A) IQ+2 [2]-14‡. • Five of Brawling or Jumping, both (E) DX+1 [2]-16; Lance, Lasso, Stealth, or Whip, all (A) DX [2]-15; Armoury, Cartography, Forward Observer, or Navigation (Land), all (A) IQ [2]-12; Packing (A) IQ+2 [2]-14‡; Tactics (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Veterinary (H) IQ+1 [2]-13‡, Intimidation (A) Will [2]-12; Observation or Tracking, both (A) Per [2]-15; or +1 to Acrobatics, Animal Handling, Riding, or any secondary skill, for 2 points.

**Background Skills:** Choose a 20-point lens (*Heroes*, pp. 4-5, or pp. 11-12).

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

† From *Power-Ups 2*. The same as Animal Empathy, but only works with horses.

‡ Includes +2 for Animal Friend.

*John Reid: If we ride together, we ride for justice.*

*Tonto: Justice is what I seek, Kemosabe.*

– *The Lone Ranger*

## Horseman Weapons

The template calls for 12 points to be spent on “horseman weapon” skills, which depend heavily on period, location, and character background. The following are some suggested packages – feel free to adjust them to taste, but remember that effective melee or missile weapons skill while on horseback can never exceed Riding skill.

*Knight:* Axe/Mace (A) DX [2]-15; Broadsword (A) DX+1 [4]-16; Flail (H) DX-1 [2]-14; Lance (A) DX [2]-15; Shield (E) DX+1 [2]-16.

*Samurai:* Bow (A) DX+1 [4]-16; Broadsword (A) DX+1 [4]-16; Spear (A) DX+1 [4]-16.

# HELL ON WHEELS

BY HANS-CHRISTIAN VORTISCH

*The Commando V-100 has been designed and engineered to perform a variety of roles and perform each one well. Whether the use is military, police or rescue, the Commando has proved itself in millions of miles of rugged use.*

– Cadillac Gage catalog (1971)

The Cadillac Gage Commando is a four-wheeled armored car that has seen extensive use with dozens of military and police services around the world. It's perfectly suited for **GURPS Action** campaigns, requiring a two-man crew and being able to carry a small team of operatives. It can be deployed by the opposition or relied on by the PCs.

The Commando can also be used in many other campaigns, for example for straight-forward military or police action with **GURPS Cops**, **GURPS SEALs in Vietnam**, **GURPS Special Ops**, or **GURPS SWAT**. An obsolete Commando can play a role in dystopian near-future campaigns based on **GURPS Autoduel**, **GURPS Cyberpunk**, or **GURPS Reign of Steel**. Of course, such a vehicle is also perfect to fight your way through a zombie horde with **GURPS Monster Hunters** or **GURPS Horror** . . .

*I've never crashed  
one before.*

– Yates, in *The Last Castle*

## CADILLAC GAGE V-100 COMMANDO (USA, 1964-1971)

The V-100 Commando is the first of a series of armored cars built by the Cadillac Gage Company of Detroit. It is a 19' long, four-wheeled, amphibious vehicle with heavily sloped armor. Among the dozens of minor models, the one described here has been the most numerous. It has a small one-man turret and is armed with several machine guns. Crewed by two, it can seat seven passengers.

The V-100 was adopted by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in 1964. The U.S. Army introduced it as the **XM706** in 1967 and used it heavily in the Vietnam War, primarily for convoy escort and military police duties. In American

service, it was known as the "Duck" or "V." After the war, the U.S. Army Military Police continued to use it stateside during the 1970s, but other than that it was removed from service. Most were destroyed. Some surplus vehicles were cascaded to police departments and sheriff's offices. The Los Angeles Police Department's SWAT platoon (**SWAT**, p. 13) employed two V-100s (with the turret machine gun mounts welded shut) from 1985 to 2003.

As many original users phase these vehicles out of service, they are bought by collectors and often lovingly restored. Roadworthy Commandos in private hands can be encountered in American traffic sometimes – giving both heroes and villains theoretical access. While most collectors – many of them veterans – rebuild them to their former (but unspectacular) glory, others convert them to veritable "Batmobiles," with upgraded engines, modern electronics including thermal sights, etc.

Close to 1,000 were manufactured until 1971, when production switched to the improved V-150 (pp. 17-18). The V-100 is currently used by Bolivia, Lebanon, Thailand, and Venezuela. Former users include Cameroon, Ethiopia, Oman, Somalia, and Sudan. Generally, military police or paramilitary/law enforcement units have these vehicles, rather than front-line military forces.

### *The V-100 Commando in Detail*

The Commando is welded up from multiple plates into a single hull, not unlike a turtle shell. Its high-hardness armor steel is 0.25" thick on the sides, sloped at an average of 30° to increase its protection value. It's 0.25" thick on top and 0.375" on the underbody. The numerous vision blocks are made of 3"-thick armor glass. This armor protects against small-arms fire and hand grenades, but not against heavy machine guns or LAWs. The main weak spots (p. B400) of the Commando are the wheel wells. The T-50 turret has the same armor as the hull.

The V-100 has a 142-kilowatt gasoline engine in a separate engine compartment on the rear left. The engine compartment is fitted with three integral one-shot fire extinguishers (**GURPS High-Tech**, p. 229), which are manually initiated by the driver.

The V-100 has two fuel tanks located in the front left and right corners. These hold 80 gallons of fuel (0.26 tons of gasoline). This gives the vehicle a cruising-speed endurance (p. B463) of 13 hours and 25 minutes. Its Range is 400 miles off road. Two five-gallon fuel cans are normally carried in external racks on the rear. Five gallons increase endurance by 50 minutes and Range by 30 miles.

# FORTUNATELY, I SAW THIS COMING

BY JASON “PK” LEVINE

Johnson was the last man to walk through the gate, but instead of doing so, he slammed it shut; the lock clicked into place. Now separated from the rest of the group by iron bars, he held up the case and sneered at Vincenzo. “Hey, pug-face! Don Giuseppe says thanks for the paper.”

The con men reacted to the sudden betrayal with shock and dismay – all but Vincenzo, who just smirked. “I had a feeling about you, Johnson. You never smelled right. You honestly think I’d trust you with the *real* bonds?”

Frowning, Johnson cracked open the heavy briefcase, finding nothing but a tasteful selection of interior-decorating magazines. “What? But I – I’ve been with you this whole time!”

“Even a careful man gets distracted. Remember when we hid in the break room from those guards? That’s when I stuffed the bonds into my jacket and replaced them with some light reading material. By the way, don’t forget about the tracking device on the briefcase. *Your* fingerprints are on the handle, too. You might want to see to that before the cops show up, while we make ourselves scarce. Ciao!”

Action stories, especially capers, are often filled with impossible examples of foresight and planning. The antagonist has the heroes over a barrel, but *ah ha!* It turns out that one of them saw this coming and had planned for it the

whole time. Unfortunately, even the most insightful player is unlikely to achieve such a ridiculous level of awareness. But this doesn’t mean it’s impossible to represent in a game – it just means it’s best modeled *retroactively*.

## RETROACTION TRAITS

There is one existing way to accomplish things retroactively in **GURPS**: the Gizmos advantage. For 5 points per use, the player can effectively “go back in time” by stating that his character had thought to bring a piece of gear. Gizmos can be treated as a specialized version of a broader advantage, leading to the following new trait.

### Foresight

5 or 10 points/level

You plan so well that you can declare yourself to have taken retroactive actions. You may do this once per game session for each level of Foresight. The action must be something you did in the past that has a specific result *right now*. There are some limits on this, however.

1. *It must be an action you could realistically have taken.* If you’re whisked away to a secret headquarters for the first time, you cannot say that you’ve previously disabled the alarm system, because you’d never been there or even known where “there” is. You *could* say that you thought to bring along electronics tools with which to do so now, though. You also must possess all of the skills and abilities necessary to have accomplished the task (see below), though you may rely on skill defaults, if applicable.

2. *It cannot directly contradict any established facts.* If you’re being shot at, you cannot say that you decided to wear full body armor today, as no one could have overlooked that! You *can* say that you put on a concealed Kevlar vest this morning, but only if you haven’t taken your shirt off recently. However, if you’ve been injured by previous shots, the “sudden reveal” of your vest doesn’t change your previous injuries! Reconcile this however you can (e.g., the previous bullets must have missed the vest); if you cannot, this is not a legal use of Foresight.

*It just happened that  
I know Mariella in Records,  
who just happened to have  
one, and I happened to  
borrow it. Just for backup.*

– J.D. Robb,  
*Time of Death*

## ABOUT *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by email: [info@sjgames.com](mailto:info@sjgames.com). Resources include:

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*Errata.* Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases are available on our website – see above.

*GURPS* rules and statistics in this magazine are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book.

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