GURPS® Fourth Edition

# GIRL GENIUS

## SOURCEBOOK AND ROLEPLAYING GAME



By Jason Andrew, JN Childs, Kaja Foglio, Phil Foglio, Victor Foglio, Jason ("PK") Levine, and Jimmy Reckitt

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

# A GASLAMP FANTASY – WITH ADVENTURE, ROMANCE, AND MAD SCIENCE!



The ***Girl Genius Sourcebook and Roleplaying Game*** brings the world of Phil and Kaja Foglio's *Girl Genius* comics and graphic novels to your gaming table. Its lavishly illustrated contents include:

- A detailed description of the setting and its history that draws upon all available sources . . . compiled with input from the creators themselves, meaning these pages reveal some secrets and truths for the first time!
- A complete roleplaying game covering character creation, equipment, combat, and dramatic situations and tasks – including *inventing,* of course! To play, just add paper, pencils, and six-sided dice.
- Biographies and character sheets for all the major characters and many minor ones, plus notes on supporting cast.
- Game stats for a wide range of clanks, constructs, and other creatures unique to *Girl Genius*.
- Tons of helpful advice on establishing mood, accurately emulating the comics, and running and playing the game.

*The **Girl Genius Sourcebook and Roleplaying Game** is **Powered by GURPS** but does not require **GURPS**. It is a complete, standalone game.*


By **Jason Andrew, JN Childs, Kaja Foglio, Phil Foglio, Victor Foglio, Jason ("PK") Levine,** and **Jimmy Reckitt**

Edited by **Steve Jackson** and **Sean Punch**

Illustrated by **Kaja Foglio** and **Phil Foglio**

Cover Illustration by **Phil Foglio**



STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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***GURPS*** System Design ▌STEVE JACKSON
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## About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of ***GURPS*** players. We can be reached by email: **info@sjgames.com**. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

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

# Introduction

*Adventure! Romance! Mad Science!*

Imagine a version of the Victorian era in which the wildest dreams of early science-fiction writers are a reality. A talent known as the Spark inspires great, if not always sane, minds to reshape the world via technology. Noble houses jockey for influence and power while common folk keep their head down to avoid the crazed inventors and their crazed inventions.

Mad Science creates hybrid warriors built from animals, plants, and clockwork. Human troops wield lightning cannons and sonic guns that can blast sound and level countrysides. Airships the size of cities darken the sky.

In this world, a scion of the legendary Heterodyne family – Sparks, rulers, and madmen – is making herself known. The forces that sought to use her as a pawn are finding out that she's a player. She has friends and allies, and she's not yet done learning the full extent of her powers.

That Spark is Agatha Heterodyne, and this is the "Gaslamp Fantasy" world of *Girl Genius*.

### *Gaslamp Fantasy*

When the *Girl Genius* stories were just starting out, Kaja coined the term "Gaslamp Fantasy" to describe the universe she and Phil were creating – one where impossible invention meets with fantastical style in a medley of alternate history and gothic "mad science" inspired by Mary Shelley and H. Rider Haggard. It blurs the lines between mythic and magical creations and steampunk-inspired elements like clockwork cyborgs.

## About the Comic

*Girl Genius* was created by Phil and Kaja Foglio; the first print issue was released in 2001. It went online in 2005, and since then has been updated with full-color pages three times a week, like (dare we say it?) clockwork. The comic has won five WCCA awards, including 2008 Outstanding Comic, and been nominated twice for an Eisner Award; in 2009, 2010, and 2011, it won the Hugo Award for Best Graphic Story. It was one of the first webcomics chosen for permanent archive by the Library of Congress. It has also spawned a card game – ***Girl Genius: The Works*** – as well as a ***Girl Genius Munchkin*** expansion for ***Munchkin Steampunk.***

The story so far can be found at **www.girlgeniusonline.com.**

## About This Book

The ***Girl Genius Sourcebook and Roleplaying Game*** is a guide to the world of Agatha Heterodyne. Players and GMs can follow Agatha on her adventure of self-discovery and mad invention while she claims her Spark heritage. They can also strike out on adventures of their own . . . pursuing the secrets of Europa and beyond, creating new faces in the ongoing conflict, or digging into the mysteries of a world where magic and science often seem the same.

This book is a standalone resource for the *Girl Genius* setting and contains the tools necessary to play in that world – including all the required characters, creatures, and rules.

## Spoiler Alert

**Warning!** This supplement contains information about plots, history, and concepts behind the universe of *Girl Genius*. It includes materials from the entire series. If you don't want any spoilers, catch up on your reading before continuing.

## About the Creators

This book has been a long time coming, and a lot of people were involved in making it happen . . .

### *Kaja Foglio*

Kaja has illustrated numerous cards for ***Magic: The Gathering,*** as well as several book covers and magazine interiors. In 1993, she and Phil started writing *Girl Genius,* and began publishing the story in 2001. She regards this as the worst "get rich quick" scheme *ever.*

### *Phil Foglio*

Phil won a couple of Hugo Awards for Best Fan Artist in 1978 and 1979, and is still waiting for the wealth and power he was told this would provide. He began working in comics and the gaming industry at the exact same time, when "What's New With Phil & Dixie" began running in *Dragon* Magazine in 1980. Since then, he has worked for numerous comic-book companies, a few of which are still in business. Some titles he's known for include

*MythAdventures, Buck Godot – Zap Gun For Hire, Stanley and His Monster, Angel and the Ape,* and *XXXenophile.*

In 1993, he began writing *Girl Genius* with Kaja, and began publishing it in 2001. To his surprise, they won three Hugo Awards in the newly created category of Best Graphic Story.

He has done a lot of work for Steve Jackson Games.

## Jason Andrew

Jason Andrew is a writer, editor, and game designer. He lives in Seattle, Washington, with his wife, Lisa; his Pug, Otter; and his American Bulldog, Stella. He writes in several genres and styles, including contemporary fiction, historical fiction, young adult, science fiction, fantasy, and horror. In 2011, his story "Moonlight in Scarlet" received an honorable mention in Ellen Datlow's List for Best Horror of the Year.

Jason is a rabid gamer, having written for several roleplaying games, including ***Call of Cthulhu*** and ***Shadowrun.*** He serves as Line Developer for ***Mind's Eye Theatre,*** for By Night Studios, producing a number of ***MET*** products including ***MET: Vampire: The Masquerade, MET: Werewolf: The Apocalypse,*** and the upcoming ***MET: Changeling: The Dreaming.*** He also serves as Developer for Mighty Narwhal, shepherding in their first new game, the ***Morra Cinematic Universal Game System.***

## JN Childs

JN Childs is a horror and roleplaying game writer, experimenting with their life and horror fiction. They live in Southern Ohio with their family, eight cats, two parakeets, four rats, and one idiot doge. They write stories of Old Gods, anguished spirits, and terribly unfortunate people.

They have an M.Ed. in Instructional Design, and focus on creating memorable learning experiences using roleplaying, board, and card games. Currently, their work can be found in *Under the Stairs, Apotheosis: Stories of Human Survival After the Rise of the Elder Gods, Immersion Secrets,* and the Mind's Eye Theater framework for ***Werewolf: The Apocalypse.*** They are also working on ***Mind's Eye Theatre: Changeling: The Dreaming*** and the ***Morra Cinematic Universal Game System.***

## Steve Jackson

Steve has been making games since the late 1970s and is not slowing down. He was the original creator of the ***GURPS*** system. He gleefully admits to being a *Girl Genius* fanboy, and is so, so glad that this book has come to the end of its first adventure and made its way into your hands.

Steve is a citizen of the Internet, or a Texan, depending on who's asking.





## *Jason "PK" Levine*

PK Levine loves roleplaying (especially ***GURPS***) and comics (especially *Girl Genius*), and is honored to have contributed to this work. In his spare time, he plays board games, cuddles his wife, and runs the fan site **mygurps.com.**

## *Jimmy Reckitt*

Jimmy Reckitt is a writer and developer who integrates his favorite themes from mythology and archetypal psychology into his approach to game design. He works as a developer for By Night Studios, on projects for ***Vampire: The Masquerade, Werewolf: The Apocalypse,*** and ***Changeling: The Dreaming.***

With a unique eye for conflict as a part of storytelling, he has created memorable experiences as part of large-scale LARP events, including the ***Blood and Betrayal*** and ***Rage and Retribution*** featured games. He lives in Chicago, where he is finishing his MBA at the University of Chicago.

## *Victor Foglio*

Victor Foglio is one of the children of Kaja and Phil Foglio, and has literally grown up with *Girl Genius*. Therefore, he has a unique take on various aspects of the series, and is not shy about sharing them.

## You There! The Time Traveler With the Top Hat and Goggles From 1876. No Doubt You Are Asking "What is a Roll Playing Game, Sir, and How Far Will I Have to Roll?"

Role Playing Games ("RPGs" in modern parlance – sometimes called "Table Top" or "Pencil and Paper" RPGs by those who have no respect for the King's English) are quite different from Whist, or even the heathen Back Gammon brought back from foreign climes.

They were first invented in one of The Future's lost Golden Ages which spanned the nineteen hundred and seventies. Role Playing Games are classified by scholars as "collaborative improvised theater": A group of sober and educated people congregate in a special performance space, and assume the roles of various characters. The Impresario in charge, known colloquially in the American colonies as a "Game Master" (GM), creates a scenario and allows the Player Characters (PCs) to choose their course of action. The Game Master then describes the consequences of these actions, and helps to move the story along. Among other things, the GM plays all the Non-Player Characters (NPCs), giving them dialogue and personalities. A GM is not unlike the director of a stage drama, except they play characters – often *many* characters – and they don't have the right to *tell* anyone else what to do, although they do reserve the right to make rules decisions and steer events to keep the story interesting.

Those who have studied the history of theatre will immediately recognize these games' direct linear progression from the medieval Italian theatrical form known as *commedia dell'arte*. The primary difference appears to be that these shows are performed solely for the actors themselves. We suspect that the imbibing of alcohol is involved.

Further distinguishing it from its predecessor is its beloved system of accounting. While the Game Master has a great deal of leeway when it comes to spinning the immersive narratives, there are set rules and pre-established graphs and charts to determine whether the Player Characters succeed or fail at certain actions. Usually these determinations are made by tossing misshapen dice. Thus we can see that there is obviously an element of gambling inherent in the rules, which no doubt explains its hold upon some of its adherents.

Unlike more codified games, there is a constant element of serendipity. Since the Game Master is free to make decisions and improvise on the fly, the players can diverge from the main story or try unexpected tricks – but because there are rules and systems, things are fair and the players' successes have the taste of real victory. You can fight monsters if you want, or you can talk, invent, trade, or sneak around . . . and it's just as important as fighting.

As an experience that constantly offers surprises, you will find Role Playing Games an excellent test of a person's mettle, and, as in life, those who can keep a cool head and respond to crises like proper Ladies and Gentlemen will rise to the top.

across Europa. The opera is best known for the prophecy aria, sung by the Spirit of Europa: "Peace will only be found when the Storm King and the Heterodyne princess are wed."

For many, Andronicus Valois was the first and the last True King of Europa, and before the similarly messianic cult awaiting the return of the Heterodyne Boys began to flourish, many people held out hope that Andronicus, or a descendant, would one day return and bring peace to the land.

## The Knights of Jove

The Knights of Jove were the Storm King's honor guard. They continued to serve his descendants after he vanished, waiting for both the proper man and the right time to reestablish the Storm King's throne.

However, it was never the "right time," or if it was, there was never a "proper" candidate. Thanks to the vicissitudes of genetics, whenever a Man of Action was needed, the available heir was never quite up to the task; there was, according to one source, "a long line of sots, imbeciles, and – God forbid – females." Not to mention at least one reported werewolf.

Thus, the Knights of Jove gradually stagnated into little more than a "brandy and cigars" club with fading dreams of glory.

At least this is what most people believe. There was an inner cabal, "The Most High Council of Nobles, Enlightened Keepers of the Sacred Flame of Loyalty, and Lords of the Western Gates" (generally referred to as simply "the High Council" or "the Council" by those in the know).

They monitored Valois' descendants, to be sure, but approximately 70 years ago, they were given a new purpose by the Mongfish family, who asked a simple question: "If a proper heir doesn't appear *naturally,* then why can't we *engineer* it so that one does?"

And so they did – see *The Storm King Conspiracy* (p. 10).

## The Heterodyne Boys

One of the worst Heterodynes in modern memory was Saturnus Heterodyne, creator of, among other atrocities, the Beast – a sapient, capricious train that roamed the countryside freely, consuming whatever it felt suitable as "fuel." Saturnus was known for his mad extravagances; for instance, during a particularly cold year, he set fire to Mechanicsburg's old town hall and kept it burning for five months. He married the Lady Teodora Vodenichrova, who was the daughter of a conquered house and none too pleased about the idea. This turned out to be a blessing for the world. Teodora was a kind and noble woman, who insisted upon raising her two sons, Bill and Barry, away from the "bad" influences of their father and Castle Heterodyne. In the end, she died in the act of poisoning her husband, ridding the world of the last of the evil Heterodynes. She was later canonized by every reigning Pope.

The Heterodyne Boys, as Bill and Barry came to be known, grew to be true heroes. They were both powerful Sparks, and chose to use their talents for good, vowing to end the Long War and repair the damage done.

Accompanied by their best friend Klaus Wulfenbach (p. 36), their construct assistants Punch and Judy (p. 34), and an ever-changing cast of colorful adventurers, they traveled the world, negotiating peace, stopping monsters, and dismantling doomsday devices. They did so much to make up for their family's terrible history that the name "Heterodyne" became associated more with the heroic brothers than their wicked ancestors.



# Violetta Mondarev



As a Smoke Knight (below), Violetta was originally assigned as a bodyguard to her cousin, Tarvek. Ostensibly, she was so bad at it that she was reassigned to Mechanicsburg as secretary to its Burgermeister.

In truth, she is quite well-trained – but Tarvek was the one who wrote up her evaluation reports, and he systematically downplayed her abilities so that the rest of the family would underestimate her and leave her out of their scheming.

Tarvek was the one who arranged for Violetta's transfer, out of fear she would be killed in the crossfire of his family's conspiracies. She was in Mechanicsburg when Tarvek arrived at the Great Hospital, and freed him by dosing him with a bottle of Moveit #6. She fled the hospital with him in tow, only to end up in Castle Heterodyne (p. 20).

When Tarvek became gravely ill, he released Violetta from his service and into Agatha's.

Once Agatha, Gil, and Tarvek were healthy again, Violetta stayed with Agatha and Tarvek as they worked to repair Castle Heterodyne, while also helping them survive Zola's attacks and machinations. In Agatha and Zola's last fight, Violetta realized that Zola had used Auntie Mehitabel's Natural Causes (p. 155), but had the antidote handy. She continues to use her training and sneakiness to keep others safe, and was with Agatha when the Doom Bell (p. 19) rang.

When the Wulfenbach forces were routed and Agatha was declared the Heterodyne, Martellus (p. 52) kidnapped Agatha and poisoned Tarvek. Violetta went through the Mirror Gate with them. Violetta and Krosp scouted out the Refuge of Storms, and used that knowledge to help Agatha find a garage in which she could build clanks to help her escape.

## *Smoke Knights*

The Smoke Knights are a secret organization of covert operatives associated with the Sturmhalten ruling families. Think "techno-ninja": They wear dark pajamas, have sneaky gear like grapnel guns (p. 156), and are masters of poisons and other chemicals. There are numerous similar groups in Europa, but amongst those in the know, the Smoke Knights are acknowledged as the best. They can do things right in front of a person's face without them even realizing it. For advice on building Smoke Knight characters, see *Spy* (p. 63).

Since then, Violetta has remained by Agatha's side, no matter where the Spark goes. She came to England with her and was taken prisoner to be used as a sacrifice while summoning Awful Things, but has since been rescued and rejoined the party.

## *Violetta Mondarev, Smoke Knight* 216 points

Violetta is her own harshest critic, convinced she hasn't advanced in the Smoke Knights due to her own incompetence – she still doesn't know that was Tarvek, keeping her out of the line of fire. She claims to hate Tarvek, but obviously cares about his well-being, unless she's the one hitting him. Violetta is also clearly a good influence on Tarvek, grounding him and giving him perspective, while he helps her be more confident and decisive.

Somehow, Violetta has found herself having feelings for Moloch von Zinzer, whom she met inside Castle Heterodyne. She desperately tries to stifle these, however, as she is now Agatha's loyal servant, and von Zinzer has repeatedly declared that he wants nothing to do with Sparks, or Mechanicsburg, and intends to leave at the first possible chance.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 12 [40]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 11 [10].
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 14 [8]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 7.00 [25]; Basic Move 7 [0].

***Advantages:*** Cultural Adaptability [10]; Legal Immunity [15].

***Disadvantages:*** Duty (Tarvek and Agatha; 9 or less) [-5]; Enemies (Family; Built on 150%; 9 or less) [-20].

***Skills:*** Acrobatics (H) DX+2 [12]-14; Acting (A) IQ+2 [8]-13; Body Language (A) Per [2]-11; Detect Lies (H) Per [4]-11; Diplomacy (H) IQ [4]-11; Disguise (A) IQ+2 [8]-13; Escape (H) DX+1 [8]-13; Garrote (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Guns (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Knife (E) DX+4 [12]-16; Persuade (H) Will [4]-11; Poisons (H) IQ+1 [8]-12; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ [1]-11; Sleight of Hand (H) DX+3 [16]-15; Stealth (A) DX+1 [4]-13; Thrown Weapon (Knife) (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Traps (A) IQ+2 [8]-13; Urban Survival (A) Per+1 [4]-12.

# Otilia/Von Pinn



Otilia, the Muse (p. 65) of Protection, was created for the Storm King by the great Spark Van Rijn. Later, Van Rijn gave her the task of "keeping the Heterodyne girl safe," by which he meant "safe for those around her." The Storm King, meanwhile, gave her the task of protecting his bride. Otilia was a prisoner in Castle Heterodyne (p. 20) for close to two centuries.

## Human or Not?

After determining the game's starting character points, the next step is to decide whether to permit players to use nonhuman templates for their characters – many nonhuman races cost a lot of points and require higher power levels. Prohibiting them isn't all that limiting; humans in *Girl Genius* can be merchants, artisans, soldiers, and even members of elite organizations like the Smoke Knights (p. 43). They can also be Sparks, although *non*-Sparks have more freedom to move among society, as many common people fear known Sparks!

Nonhuman characters include everything from genetically modified human constructs to robotic clanks. They're a little different, or more than human, such as the genetically modified Lackya (p. 67) or the constructs Punch and Judy (p. 34). They sometimes lack the social freedom – or the character points! – to pursue certain professions.



# Occupational Templates

A player never *has* to use these templates, but when seeking a specific occupation, it can save time to start from one. During character creation, the player can customize the template to the character and the story by choosing from the listed options – or even by substituting an advantage, disadvantage, or skill for another of equal value from Chapter 5 (subject to GM approval). Some other notes:

*Languages:* All characters begin with English or German (GM's discretion) at Native level. See *Language* (p. 73).

*Variable Costs:* An advantage or disadvantage with a point cost of "[Varies]" has no simple, fixed cost. Find the trait in Chapter 5 and choose anything that falls within your budget.

*Disadvantages:* Disadvantages marked with * (e.g., "Bad Temper [-10*]") are assumed to have a self-control number of 12. See *Self-Control* (p. 94).

*Skills:* For any skill marked with †, choose an applicable specialty; this can be from the list included with that skill in *Skills* (pp. 103-129) or be a custom specialty approved by the GM. Some templates offer additional points to spend on skills; the player can spend these on improving or adding skills on the template, or on new skills from Chapter 5 (as long as the GM agrees they suit the character).

*Lenses:* Lenses are common variations on standard templates. Each specifies a name, a point cost, and the traits that it adds, removes, or otherwise alters. To create that kind of character, pay the template cost *plus* the lens cost, and make the noted changes to the template.

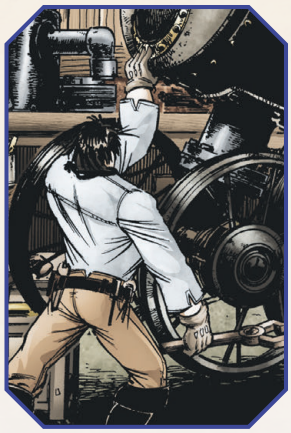
## *Artisan* 75 points

Artisans include weavers, seamstresses, woodworkers, potters, leatherworkers, and so on. They're the people who turn raw goods into everything from fine clothing to a new saddle. They're also able to repair items – a helpful skill after a strenuous adventure.

***Attributes:*** ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 10 [0].
***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].
***Advantages:*** A total of 25 points spent on suitable Talents [Varies] or Versatile [5].
***Disadvantages:*** A total of -15 points chosen from Chummy [-5] *or* Gregarious [-10], Easy to Read [-10], Honesty [-10*], Incurious [-5*], Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-5], or Workaholic [-5].
***Skills:*** Merchant (A) IQ+1 [4]-12. ● *One* of Sewing (E) DX+5 [16]-16; Carpentry (E) IQ+5 [16]-16; Cartography or Heraldry, both (A) IQ+4 [16]-15; Artistry† (H) IQ+3 [16]-14; or Alchemy (VH) IQ+2 [16]-13. ● Another 5 points spent on skills from Chapter 5.

## *Blacksmith* 75 points

In Europa, a good blacksmith is worth more than their weight in iron. When their Spark companions overcomplicate everything, it's helpful to have someone to remind them that sometimes the solution is simple – a hammer and anvil can solve a plethora of problems that a giant clank can't. Blacksmiths are the go-to resource for useful tools, standard weapons, and custom parts.



***Attributes:*** ST 12 [20]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 10 [0].
***Secondary Characteristics:*** Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].
***Advantages:*** Artificer 2 [20] *and* Versatile [5].
***Disadvantages:*** A total of -15 points chosen from Easy to Read [-10], Honesty [-10*], Sense of Duty (Village *or* Adventuring companions) [-5], Stubbornness [-5], or Workaholic [-5].
***Skills:*** Machinist (A) IQ+2 [2]-12‡; Merchant (A) IQ+1 [4]-11; Riding† (A) DX [2]-11; *and* Smith (Iron) (A) IQ+3 [4]-13‡. ● *Three* specialties from Armory† and other Smith†, all (A) IQ+2 [2]-12‡. ● Another 7 points spent on skills from Chapter 5.

‡ Includes +2 for Artificer.

### *Lens: Mechanic* +19 points

Add Machine Empathy [15]. ● Add Mechanic (A) IQ+2 [2]-12, and *either* Electrician (A) IQ+2 [2]-12 *or* Engineer† (H) IQ+1 [2]-11 (all include +2 for Artificer).

## Importance

Importance encapsulates your formally recognized place in society, distinct from your personal reputation. If you're a judge, professor, or member of the Fifty Families, your station carries some degree of *official* power.



### *Status* ±5 points/level

Status is a measure of social standing. In Europa, Status levels range from -2 (serf or street person) to 8 (Baron Wulfenbach), with the average person being Status 0 (freeman or ordinary citizen). If you don't specifically buy Status, you have Status 0. Status costs 5 points per level; e.g., Status 5 costs 25 points, while Status -2 is -10 points.

Status greater than 0 means you're a member of your culture's upper classes. As a result, others *in that culture only* defer to you, giving you a bonus on reaction rolls. This bonus equals the difference between your Status level and that of the other person. Any purchase of Status greater than 3 requires GM approval; there are very few opportunities in this world for people to rise to truly great prominence.

Status less than 0 means you're a serf, a slave, or simply very poor. If you have such negative Status, apply the difference between your Status and the NPC's as a reaction penalty, but no worse than -4.

### *Rank* 5 points/level

Specific sectors of society – e.g., the civil service, the military, major trade guilds, and certain powerful Spark organizations – often have internal ranking systems, distinct from Status. If such an organization has significant social influence, or access to useful resources, its members must pay points for their rank within it.

Rank comes in levels. Each Rank has authority over those of lower Rank, regardless of personal ability. In most cases, there are six to eight levels of Rank. The GM should determine the highest Rank available to starting characters – usually Rank 3-5.

There are generally several systems of Rank in a given society. You can hold more than one kind of Rank unless the GM rules that holding one sort of Rank precludes holding another. Rank also coexists with Status, and high Rank grants additional Status at no extra cost: +1 to Status at Rank 2-4, +2 to Status at Rank 5-7; and +3 to Status at Rank 8 or higher. This represents society's respect for senior members of important social institutions. If you hold multiple types of Rank, you may claim a Status bonus for each.

Some forms of Rank can award you privileges, such as Clerical Investment (p. 84), but these frequently come with disadvantages, such as Duty (p. 96). The GM is the final arbiter of what your Rank provides you with and requires you to do.

### Special Rules for Rank

Two situations might arise in play for those with Rank:

*Temporary Rank:* Those of higher Rank can temporarily increase your Rank for a predetermined amount of time – until the end of a mission, battle, etc. This process is called *brevetting* in the case of Military Rank. To keep temporary Rank, you must meet all of the usual requirements and pay the appropriate point cost.

*Courtesy Rank:* Those who have formerly held Rank may retain that Rank as a "Courtesy Rank" for only 1 point per level. Those who currently hold a title that carries little real authority may also take Courtesy Rank. Courtesy Rank is for social situations only; it gives you a fancier title.

# Friends and Foes

In many ways, who you *are* is based on who you *know*. Having people you can rely on for help is an advantage that costs character points. This is especially true when those friends have official titles or are "in the know"; access to such individuals can provide benefits out of reach of your formal social position.

You can also have relationships with individuals who complicate your existence, perhaps seeking to interfere with your agenda, or popping back into your life from time to time to settle old grudges. These are disadvantages that grant you points – possibly a lot of points, if you're on the bad side of people in power!



### Fortune-Telling IQ/A

*Defaults:* IQ-5, Fast-Talk-3, or Occultism-3.

This is the art of interviewing someone in order to learn more about their lifestyle and personality, and then using this information to make an "educated guess" about their future that you can pass off as supernatural divination. Suitable props – star charts, tea leaves, etc. – can enhance the illusion. Knowledge of traditional occult or religious beliefs (especially your subject's!) can also lend an air of legitimacy.

With the GM's permission, you can use Fortune-Telling in place of Fast-Talk (by making predictions that guide the subject toward a particular course of action), or Interrogation or Psychology (by asking the subject leading questions under the pretense of telling their fortune). This is possible only if the subject believes you're a genuine fortune-teller *and* you take the time to do a full "reading" for them.

Fortune-Telling is *not* a paranormal talent and *cannot* tell the future. You might wish to learn it if you have actual divinatory abilities, though, as it enables you to present your predictions in a culturally acceptable way.

### Forward Observer IQ/A

*Defaults:* IQ-5 or Artillery (any)-5.

This is the skill of being a "spotter" for artillery. It includes locating and marking targets, matching ordnance to target for best effect, and calling in corrections to any fire you personally observe. Failure means the ordnance misses the target; critical failures result in severe "collateral damage" or "friendly fire" incidents. The very worst critical failures (GM's decision) drop the ordnance on *your* position!

### Gambling IQ/A

*Defaults:* IQ-5 or Mathematics-5.

This is skill at playing games of *chance.* A successful Gambling roll can (among other things) tell you if a game is rigged, identify a fellow gambler in a group of strangers, or "estimate the odds" in *any* tricky situation.

When you gamble against the house, make a skill roll (the GM might secretly modify this if the odds are poor!). When you gamble against someone else, roll a Regular Contest of Gambling (p. 133) until one of you wins. Sleight of Hand (p. 126) is helpful if you want to cheat! To *spot* a cheater, roll a Quick Contest: your Gambling or Vision roll, whichever is *higher,* vs. your opponent's Sleight of Hand skill (for card or dice tricks) or IQ (for other kinds of cheating).

### Games IQ/E

*Default:* IQ-4.

This is the ability to play games of *skill* appropriate to your culture, and to learn new ones quickly. It includes knowledge of rules, etiquette, and tournament regulations. As people often stake vast sums on games, it might be possible to earn a living as a professional gamer. Games may also be played to settle disputes.

### Gardening IQ/E

*Defaults:* IQ-4 or Farming-3.

This is the ability to care for plants on a small scale. (For large-scale crops, use Farming, p. 114.) A skill roll lets you grow food, medicinal herbs, attractive flowers and trees, etc.

### Garrote DX/E

*Default*: DX-4.

This is the ability to strangle a victim with a rope or a wire. You cannot use a garrote to parry.

### Gesture IQ/E

*Default:* IQ-4.

This is the ability to communicate through improvised hand signals. A successful skill roll lets you convey one *simple* idea to another person, or understand one simple idea they're attempting to get across to you. Gesture isn't suited to complex communication, however.

### Group Performance IQ/A

*Defaults:* IQ-5.

This is the ability to arrange a performance and direct a group of performers in its execution – in rehearsal, in a studio, or before a live audience. A successful roll means the performance is pleasing.

## Jumping

When you want to jump over something, the GM should usually say, "Great, you jumped over it," and get on with play. In combat, jumping over a minor obstacle costs one extra yard of movement but succeeds automatically. Only *significant* obstacles need the following rules.

With a running start – at least two seconds of sprinting – your broad jump in *yards* or high jump in *feet* equals the better of your Move or *half* your Jumping skill (round down). Always factor in encumbrance! Halve distance without a running start and halve it in combat; if both apply, quarter it.

If there's *any* doubt about the landing, the GM may require a roll against DX or Jumping skill.

## Lifting and Moving Things

Basic Lift (BL) governs the maximum weight you can manage; see p. 71. The GM may let multiple people add their BL (*not* their ST) whenever it seems reasonable for them to work together. To exceed these limits, see *Extra Effort* (p. 144) and *Hysterical Strength* (below).

*One-Handed Lift:* BL (one second), 2×BL (two seconds).

*Two-Handed Lift:* 2×BL (one second), 4×BL (two seconds), 8×BL (four seconds).

*Shove and Knock Over:* 12×BL (one second). *Double* this with a running start.

*Carry on Back:* 15×BL. Yes, you *can* carry more than you can lift, but every *second* that your encumbrance exceeds Extra-Heavy (10×BL) costs 1 FP!

*Shift Slightly:* 50×BL, if you can brace from a good position.

*Pulling a Load:* Treat the load and any conveyance as encumbrance, but divide the effective weight by 2 for a sledge, 10 for a two-wheeled cart, or 20 for a four-wheeled wagon. *Halve* it (further) if the surface is smooth and level.

## Riding

There's no need to roll against Riding skill (p. 124) for standard travel; roll only when attempting a jump, tight turn, or similarly difficult maneuver. Failure means the animal balks and is spooked (below). On a critical failure, it has an injurious accident.

In combat, your mount takes its own maneuvers (usually Move, but a war-trained animal can attack), leaving you free to act on your own. Your attacks use the *lower* of your weapon skill or Riding skill. If your mount is hit, you must succeed at a Riding roll – at a penalty equal to the shock penalty the animal suffered – or it spooks.

If your mount *spooks*, you must take a Ready maneuver to make a Riding roll each turn. A critical success or three ordinary successes in a row calms your mount; three failures in a row or a critical failure means it bucks you. A long alternation of successes and failures means you spend your time fighting your mount instead of the enemy!

Treat long-distance riding as *Hiking* (p. 135), using the *mount's* Move after adjusting for encumbrance (which is usually you and your gear).

## Hysterical Strength

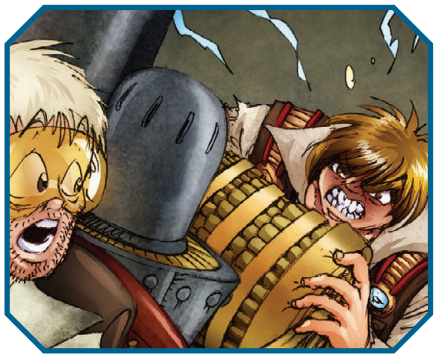
During times of emotional crisis, *Girl Genius* heroes and villains often find themselves able to accomplish feats of great strength: lifting huge generators, knocking down doors, and so on. When a player feels that their character has hit an emotional breaking point – or the GM feels that an NPC has – they may declare that they're becoming hysterical.

This requires a Will roll, with the following modifiers:

*Appropriateness:* A GM-determined penalty based on how dramatic and emotional the moment is – anywhere from no penalty if the world ends or your soul-mate dies if you don't act now, down to -10 if things are stress-free and nothing is at stake. *You cannot "take back" going hysterical if you dislike the GM's modifier; you* ***must*** *still roll!*

*Disadvantages:* A disadvantage that *directly* relates to the dramatic situation gives +1 per -5 points of value. Only the *single largest* applicable disadvantage gives a bonus, unless the GM generously rules otherwise.

*Spark:* Add *half* Spark level, rounded down.



### Results

*Critical Failure:* Your brain overloads completely. You pass out for 2d×5 minutes.

*Failure:* You rant and rave but in the end accomplish nothing. Lose FP equal to 1d + margin of failure.

*Success:* Your ST is *doubled* for one action, *tripled* if your margin of success was 5-9, or *quadrupled* for a margin of 10+. This usually lasts for only a second, but the GM may let you, say, hold a heavy weight for a few seconds. Afterward, you're mentally and physically drained, often not even realizing just what you accomplished. You immediately lose FP equal to 1d+1 times the *same* multiplier your ST had; e.g., (1d+1)×3 FP if your ST was tripled! (No, you can't choose to use less extra ST to reduce this loss.)

*Critical Success:* Your ST is quadrupled, as above, but you lose only (1d+1)×2 FP.

As Basic Lift (BL) is based on the *square* of Strength, doubling ST gives 4× BL, tripling ST gives 9× BL, and quadrupling ST gives 16× BL.

Regardless of the outcome, you can attempt hysterical strength only once per game session.

## "Mundane" Inventors

In a world defined by the amazing inventions of people like Agatha Heterodyne and Baron Wulfenbach, it's easy to assume that the small-town cobbler who invents a better shoe isn't a Spark at all, but merely a mundane inventor.

This is incorrect.

There's no such thing as a "mundane" inventor. You can be a Spark but have only a wisp of ability. Perhaps you can't build gigantic, flying fortresses, but the boots you create never need to be re-soled. Many of the performers in Master Payne's Circus of Adventure are minor Sparks, talented enough to create something interesting but not powerful enough to protect themselves.

Like any talented person, a Spark cannot make bricks without clay. If you take a weak Spark, educate her at Transylvania Polygnostic University, and then assign her to a team of supportive, intelligent people, she'll produce more complex devices than a high-level genius who was raised on a pig farm in the middle of the Wastelands. (Oh, we're not saying that Pig Boy won't create something wonderful and possibly quite terrifying, but it's likely to be more along the lines of a pig that spins a cocoon and four months later hatches into 120 lbs. of sausage. He would then be burned at the stake by his horrified neighbors.)

Simply put, there are strong Sparks and there are weak Sparks, but if you *act* like a Spark, then by definition you *are* a Spark.

*Note to the GM:* If you really *want* "mundane" inventors, permit Gadgeteer (p. 87) to non-Sparks. This enables inventing at -4 per missing Spark level. Still, consider forbidding *Quick* Gadgeteer; the benefits in *Quick Gadgeteering* (p. 155) are unequivocally Sparky. (Letting low-level Sparks upgrade to Quick Gadgeteer is fine.)

*Fra Pelagatti's Lion:* An apparatus that emits a pulse which interferes with complex devices (like Castle Heterodyne). Upon use, any such object in the area shuts down for five minutes.

*Grapnel Gun:* A small, pistol-like device with a claw and retractable line, allowing its user to climb walls. Use the rules for Clinging (p. 84).

*Gravity Engine:* A device that displaces gravity around it, affecting mass and occasionally light. Can change gravity within a range of 0G to 5G (1G is standard gravity).

*Hive Engine:* The host of a number of wasps, including slaver wasps. Used to create revenants.

*Hogfarb's Resplendent Immolation:* A disease that causes its victims to change colors rapidly. Unless cured, they either melt or explode into flames after 3d hours.

*Jägerdraught:* The mysterious drink of the Heterodynes that turns ordinary humans into Jägermonsters.

*Jolly Fun Oxidation Enhancer:* A handheld device capable of causing the rapid onset of rust.

*Moveit #6:* A potion that increases speed and stamina for a short time.

*Moveit #11:* An even *stronger* potion. Too much of it can kill.

*Queen's Mirror* (also *Mirror Gate* or just *Gate*): A device that allows people to travel great distances – a teleportation portal. The user can transport between any two Gates instantaneously. Can also be used to communicate. Gates are ancient devices (easily 6,000 years old); no one knows who built them, but the God-Queens of old used them extensively. The system has been broken for over 4,000 years, and even the remaining God-Queens cannot repair them. That said, occasionally one flickers on, and there are stories of people being transported across the world, or speaking to others thousands of kilometers away. (Apparently *somebody* has an idea of how they work, as Martellus' people constructed a device that was able to connect to the one hidden in the basement of the Red Cathedral in Mechanicsburg, but don't count on Queen's Gates working – at all.)

*Silverodeon:* A calliope that was restored by Agatha Heterodyne to act as a battle-control engine for Master Payne's Circus of Adventure.

*Spark Roast:* Coffee modified through Spark ingenuity to be overwhelmingly perfect in taste and body.

*Summoning Engine:* A device capable of calling and downloading Lucrezia Mongfish's consciousness into other individuals; also known as a "beacon engine."

*Time Freeze Generator:* A device that can stop time. Owned by Baron Klaus Wulfenbach, and used on the town of Mechanicsburg.

*Wasp Vaccine:* A vaccine created by Tarvek. Prevents possession by a slaver wasp.



# Technology

*Girl Genius* is set in an alternate version of the Industrial Revolution. We know what technology could and could not do during that period in *our* world – but those limitations are of little consequence in the fictional world of Sparks! Their gifts allow them to transcend the mundane constraints of science to build fantastic and wondrous inventions. This section covers some of the transformational effects of that work on war, commerce, and everyday life.

# 8. Onward to Adventure!

The mood of *Girl Genius* can shift quickly from slapstick humor to blood-chilling terror. The ever-changing tone presents a unique challenge for players and GMs – one you can distill into the perfect brew for your table. This chapter provides guidance and ideas for GMs designing *Girl Genius* campaigns.



## Logistical Considerations

The first step to a successful campaign is to gather your group – five or six players plus the GM works well – and ensure that everybody can agree to the basic logistics and upkeep required.

### *Duration*

How long do you want your campaign to last? Will it be a single-session "one shot," a miniseries (a few sessions or a couple of adventures), or a long-term chronicle that might run indefinitely?

### *Time and Place*

Where will sessions be held? You might alternate locations so no one person has the burden of always hosting – unless someone *wants* to, of course! It's usually a good idea to set a specific time (typically weekly or biweekly), so players can get it onto their calendars and not miss a session.

### *Character Power Level*

The type of narrative you wish to build will dictate the PCs' power level. For more on this, see *Power Level* (p. 57).

## Sherlocking the Table: The Secret of Learning What Players Want

As a GM, when you ask players point-blank what they want, you'll often get vague platitudes about having fun, experiencing the adventure, or enjoying time with their friends. There's really only one surefire way to ensure that your players have the maximum amount of fun at your table: Players respond best when their characters fit the narrative needs of the scenario and overall story, and everyone has something to do.

How do you achieve this result organically? Use the Sherlock method. Ask your players to pitch ideas for the upcoming campaign, and then deduce what sorts of scenarios they might want . . . even if they don't realize it.

For instance, one player archetype is the eternal warrior, seeking the thrill of battle. Their desires are easy to meet, but other players might present a more complex challenge. A Lackya detective seeking to uncover the nature of the Storm King conspiracy might be less interested in fighting than in seeking out clues while poring over forgotten tomes of lore and history, perhaps even matching wits with elements of the cabal itself. The challenge for the GM is to design scenarios where the player of the detective *and* the warrior feel their characters are vital to the story and have their moments in the sun.

If you do this correctly, you can deduce exactly what scenarios would bring the players the most time in the spotlight and engage them in the experience, ensuring that each of them plays a pivotal role in the story as it develops.

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## Character Sheet

Name _____ Player _____ Point Total ___

Ht ____ Wt ____ Size Modifier ____ Age ____ Unspent Pts ____

Appearance _____ Race _____

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ST | | [ ] | HP | | | [ ] |
| DX | | [ ] | Will | | | [ ] |
| IQ | | [ ] | Per | | | [ ] |
| HT | | [ ] | FP | | | [ ] |

| Languages | Spoken | Written |
|---|---|---|
| | | [ ] |
| | | [ ] |
| | | [ ] |
| | | [ ] |
| | | [ ] |

**Reaction Modifiers**

Appearance _____

Status _____

Reputation _____

BASIC LIFT (ST × ST)/5 _____ DAMAGE Thr _____ Sw _____

BASIC SPEED _____ [ ] BASIC MOVE _____ [ ]

| DR | Parry | Block |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

| Encumbrance | | | Move | | Dodge | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| None (0) | = BL | ____ | BM × 1 | ____ | Dodge | ____ |
| Light (1) | = 2 × BL | ____ | BM × 0.8 | ____ | Dodge -1 | ____ |
| Medium (2) | = 3 × BL | ____ | BM × 0.6 | ____ | Dodge -2 | ____ |
| Heavy (3) | = 6 × BL | ____ | BM × 0.4 | ____ | Dodge -3 | ____ |
| X-Heavy (4) | = 10 × BL | ____ | BM × 0.2 | ____ | Dodge -4 | ____ |

**Skills**

| Name | Level | Points | Name | Level | Points |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |

**Advantages**

| Name | Points |
|---|---|
| | |

**Disadvantages and Quirks**

| Name | Points |
|---|---|
| | |

**Armor & Possessions**

| Item | Location | Cost | Weight |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

**Character Notes**

**Melee Weapons**

| Weapon | Damage | Reach | Parry | Notes | Cost | Weight |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | |

**Ranged Weapons**

| Weapon | Damage | Acc | Range | Shots | ST | Bulk | Notes | Cost | Weight |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | Totals: | $ ___ | Lbs. ___ |

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