

**GURPS**

Fourth Edition

# MONSTER HUNTERS 4

## *SIDEKICKS*



Written by JASON "PK" LEVINE

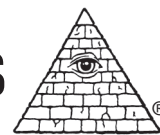
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# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION . . . . .</b>	<b>3</b>	Gunman . . . . .	10	Money . . . . .	18
How to Use This Book . . . . .	3	Magician . . . . .	11	Self-Preservation . . . . .	18
Recommended Books . . . . .	3	<i>Quick-and-Dirty</i>		. . . AS JUNIOR HUNTERS . . . . .	18
About the Author . . . . .	3	<i>Charm Creation</i> . . . . .	11	Junior Hunters . . . . .	19
<b>1. SIDEKICK</b>		Muscle . . . . .	12	Mixed Power Levels . . . . .	19
<b>TEMPLATES . . . . .</b>	<b>4</b>	Occultist . . . . .	13	<i>Scaling for Monsters</i> . . . . .	19
Motivation . . . . .	5	Scout . . . . .	14	. . . AS CHAMPIONS . . . . .	20
<i>Niche Substitution</i> . . . . .	5	Whitecoat . . . . .	14	Caster . . . . .	21
<b>STANDARD SIDEKICKS . . . . .</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>LOW-END ALLIES . . . . .</b>	<b>15</b>	<i>Upgrading the Gifted</i> . . . . .	21
Brother . . . . .	5	Tough Guy . . . . .	16	Enhanced . . . . .	21
Fixer . . . . .	6	Wise Guy . . . . .	16	Monstrous . . . . .	21
<i>Using GURPS Action</i> . . . . .	7	<b>2. USING SIDEKICKS . . . . .</b>	<b>17</b>	Mystic . . . . .	22
Geek . . . . .	7	. . . AS ALLIES . . . . .	17	Overman . . . . .	22
Gifted . . . . .	8	More Than an Advantage . . . . .	17	Psychic . . . . .	22
<i>Appropriate Action Heroes</i> . . . . .	9	Trust and Motivation . . . . .	17	<b>INDEX . . . . .</b>	<b>23</b>

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

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# INTRODUCTION

Scott leaned back into the couch cushion, rubbing his temples. "I really don't get it. That's three times this month alone."

Brad continued to pace. "No kidding. We show up, and the lair's cleaned out. At least it wasn't an ambush this time."

"Small favors."

"There's got to be a common thread, here. Something –" Danielle started, before her sentence was interrupted by a knock at the door.

The four teammates exchanged confused glances for a long moment. Finally, Everett shrugged and strode over to open the door. The young blonde woman there was just turning to leave. "Oh, good, you guys **are** here. I knew my info wasn't off!"

Everett blinked. There was something familiar about her. Change the hair, add some piercings, remove the fancy designer clothes . . . "Anna?"

"In the flesh! And out of the chains, thankfully. Sorry to just show up, but I owe you guys for saving me from those demons last year."

Danielle walked over. "How did you find this place?"

"That's your whole problem – I **could** find you. Right now, there are only a few snitches who really know about y'all, and they're getting rich selling tip-offs. But it's only a matter of time until one gets stupid, spills too much info to the wrong person, and the entire underworld has your number."

"Wait," Brad interrupted. "Someone's selling information . . . about us?"

Everett frowned. "If that's true, how did **you** get the info?"

"We all have our talents. You kill monsters. I find things out." Anna smiled. "Frankly, I think your job is a bit harder."

Everyone needs a hand sometimes. Even the mightiest champion can be in only one place at a time, and having someone you can trust to watch your back is invaluable. A hunter can truly live or die by the quality of his sidekicks.

**GURPS Monster Hunters 4: Sidekicks** continues the series' focus on hunting as a *team*, by offering a selection of templates for sidekicks and junior hunters. While these recruits are low-powered compared to a typical champion, each is a skilled hunter in his own right – trained and trustworthy enough to do any team proud.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

All of the sidekicks in this supplement would be a valuable asset to any monster-hunting team. There are several ways to use them, however – as NPCs or PCs!

### *Sidekicks Can Be Allies*

Every champion template offers the option of a 200-point Ally, and the sidekicks in this book can fill that role admirably. Allies are a reasonably priced way to cover gaps in the team's knowledge or abilities; a group lacking religious skill can bring in a brother (pp. 5-6), one without a social expert can recruit a fixer (pp. 6-7), and so on. There are even a couple of low-end, 100-point Allies for champions on a budget! A sidekick can be

a way not only to bulk up the team, but to do so in a specific, useful way.

### *Sidekicks Can Be Junior Hunters*

Some groups may balk at the thought of playing 400-point champions . . . or maybe somebody just wants to be an underdog. For those gamers, these templates *also* represent an alternative to the ones in **GURPS Monster Hunters 1: Champions**. Because these sidekicks represent real heroes – not comic relief! – gamers can play a 200-point "junior hunter" without sacrificing competence. **Sidekicks** offers advice for both the GM running a low-powered game *and* the GM running one with mixed power levels, including some unique approaches that specifically take advantage of each dynamic.

### *Sidekicks Can Be Champions*

While the templates in this book are set at 200 points, it's relatively easy to "bump them up" to the 400-point range, to put them on equal footing with the other champions. Chapter 2 includes a selection of 200-point lenses for just this purpose. Did you want to play a psi, but dreamed of being a burly bruiser instead of a brain? Then take the muscle template (pp. 12-13) and add the psychic lens (p. 22)! Inhumans already have seven primary skill sets to choose from, but **Sidekicks** more than doubles that; each of the templates in Chapter 1 can be turned into an inhuman champion with almost no effort. **Sidekicks** significantly expands the range of hunters available for a standard **Monster Hunters** game, in a balanced and simple manner.

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS

The templates found in **Sidekicks** are designed to complement and support those from **Champions**, using the rules found in **GURPS Monster Hunters 2: The Mission**. While the GM can run a game using these templates *instead* of the ones from **Champions**, he'll still need **Champions** for its details on magic, powers, races, and gear. Chapter 1 includes rules for adapting the templates from both **GURPS Action 1: Heroes** and **GURPS Action 3: Furious Fists**; readers looking for further sidekicks will thus find those books useful.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Jason "PK" Levine is seeking employment with an established monster-hunting team in the northern Georgia area. His references include Steve Jackson Games, where he is currently employed as the Sidekick **GURPS** Line Editor, and the Church of the SubGenius, a spiritual movement for which he regularly rants and raves. His skills include extensive toy knowledge, experience herding cats and dogs, and an unorthodox-yet-delicious cooking style. Please contact him at the attached number with information regarding salary, benefits, and average number of limbs lost per teammate per month.

## JUNIOR HUNTERS

The templates from Chapter 1 can all be monster hunters in their own right. Each is a competent, well-trained hero; after all, *GURPS* considers 200 points to be right on the edge between “heroic” and “larger-than-life” (p. B487)! Thus, a *Monster Hunters* GM may want the players to build PCs using the templates from *Sidekicks* instead of *Champions*.

This is a viable approach to the game, but it does modify some of its fundamental assumptions. The most important is the power level of the threats they’ll be facing; the monsters in *The Enemy* are designed for 400-point PCs. The GM *needs* to take the advice and guidelines under *Scaling for Monsters* (below) into account!

A more subtle ramification of lowering the power level is that the junior hunters may no longer be the *best* choice for dealing with a particular threat. Once the GM tones down the monsters for survivability, they start to become the kind of thing that mundane organizations could feasibly deal with. When a team of semi-realistic heroes coexists with SWAT teams and similar resources, it can be *very* tempting to call in the cavalry instead of dealing with the situation personally. If they do so successfully, it may eventually raise the question, “Why are *we* dealing with these monsters when the authorities can handle them just fine?”

The simplest fix is to establish that no one will *believe* the hunters if they do try to call in help . . . but this may motivate some groups to focus on obtaining and delivering proof of the problem *instead* of dealing with it themselves! (Not to mention that there’s nothing preventing them from calling 911 and reporting the vampire lair as a meth lab!) This isn’t *necessarily* a problem, but it drastically limits the focus of the game, as “investigating, hunting, catching, and confronting monsters” becomes “only investigating monsters.” In the long run, the best tactic may be an out-of-game agreement between the

GM and players: “Your PCs need to deal with these threats because they’re the protagonists; it’s a monster-hunting game, not a National-Guard-calling one.”

## MIXED POWER LEVELS

Many fictional hunter teams are built around one or two powerful champions and their retinue of faithful sidekicks. In a small group, this is a perfect use for Allies (pp. 17-18), but in a large group, some people may wish to *play* these sidekicks! The GM should never force this, as many gamers consider it unfair to start with fewer points than other players – but if someone *wants* to play a sidekick instead of a full champion, it can be a lot of fun!

The key to running a mixed game is to ensure that spotlight time is distributed equally among all of the PCs. This is easiest if each sidekick specializes in one or two unique areas of expertise – areas upon which the champion PCs agree not to impinge. For example, a 200-point fixer in a group of 400-point champions will still fill a vital role if he’s the only one with Carousing, Savoir-Faire (Mafia), and Streetwise, and a geek hacker is invaluable if no one else on the team is a computer expert. Because it’s easier for a 400-point champion to accidentally run roughshod over a niche, the order in which the PCs are created matters. The following method is usually the most fair:

1. Each person openly chooses the template and lens he wants to play.
2. The sidekick players create their characters, making it clear which niches they wish to fill. The players should avoid choosing niches that a given champion can’t *help* but overrun; e.g., if another player has declared that he’ll be playing a sleuth (*Champions*, p. 17), there’s no way that a sidekick can be the only “forensics expert,” as the sleuth’s Detective! will automatically include that.

## Scaling for Monsters

Most monsters from *The Enemy* include a rough conversion between the size of the hunter team and the number of monsters that will make for a fair fight. Sidekicks require special consideration for these purposes; while they are less effective than a full champion at most tasks, simply having another body can make a significant difference in a fight. Even a weak teammate contributes an extra attack each turn, numerical superiority makes it possible to get behind opponents for surprise attacks, and bullets do the same damage no matter *who’s* firing them.

The GM should gauge how effective each sidekick is in a fight, relative to a full champion. Broadly considered, the gunman, muscle, and scout can be thought of as “combatants”; the brother, fixer, geek, magician, occultist, and whitecoat are more “noncombatants”; and the status of the gifted depends completely upon which special abilities he has. This is a *very* subjective divide, however; the GM needs to look at the attributes, advantages, and skills taken by each *individual!* Among other possibilities, a sidekick who relies on guns will be closer to a champion in potency than one who relies on muscle-powered

weapons, as the latter are tied much more closely to personal ability.

As a general rule, a noncombatant sidekick counts as 1/2 of a champion, while a combatant counts as 3/4. (For *Low-End Allies*, pp. 15-16, count the tough guy as 1/2 and the wise guy as 1/4.) These values are *only* for the purpose of estimating how many monsters to throw at the group; use them in other calculations at your peril!

*Example:* Paige is running a game with mixed power levels (see above). Two PCs are 400-point champions, one of whom has a 200-point geek sidekick. The two remaining PCs are 200-point junior hunters: a gifted and a scout. While the geek isn’t a combat specialist, she uses heavy weapons and wears lots of armor; thus, the GM considers her a combatant. The gifted specializes in ESP, making him more of a noncombatant investigator. The scout stays lightly equipped but is an excellent shot, and thus a combatant. Thus, Paige thinks of this team as a group of  $2 + 3/4 + 1/2 + 3/4 = 4$  champions; if a monster description suggests that “two to three foes per champion” is fair, she would pit the team against eight to 12 such monsters.

# INDEX

- Adventures, flashback, 22.  
Allies, 3; *100-point*, 15-16; *200-point*, 5-15; as NPCs, 17; *equipping*, 18; *improving*, 17; *in teams*, 5; *killing off*, 18; *miraculous recovery*, 18; *motivations*, 18; *Patrons and*, 18; *Wealth and*, 18; *see also Characters*.  
Analyst character type, 8.  
Armorer character type, 8.  
Brother template, 5-6.  
Caster lens, 21.  
Champions, *see Characters, Monster Hunters, Templates*.  
Characters, *building junior versions*, 22; *creation order*, 19-20; *modifying Action templates*, 7; *motivation*, 5; *selecting Action templates*, 9; *upgrading existing*, 20-21; *see also Allies, Templates*.  
Charm creation, 11.  
Combatant character type, 6.  
Death, *miraculous recovery*, 18, 20.  
Enhanced lens, 21.  
Equipment, *analyzing*, 8.  
Fixer template, 6-7.  
Geek template, 7-8.  
Gifted template, 8-10; *upgrading*, 21.  
Gunman template, 10-11.  
**GURPS Action**, 7, 9; **Action 1: Heroes**, 3, 7; **Action 3: Furious Fists**, 3, 7; **Monster Hunters**, 3, 5, 9, 15, 17, 19; **Monster Hunters 1: Champions**, 3-22; **Monster Hunters 2: The Mission**, 3, 6, 8, 18, 20; **Monster Hunters 3: The Enemy**, 19.  
Hacker character type, 8.  
Inhuman-blooded character type, 10.  
Junior hunters, 3, 18-20.  
Magician template, 11-12.  
Mechanic character type, 8.  
Miraculous recovery, 18, 20.  
Monster hunters, *junior*, 18-20; *team composition*, 5; *see also Allies, Characters*.  
Monsters, *scaling for*, 19.  
Monstrous lens, 21.  
Muscle template, 12-13.  
Mystic lens, 22.  
Occultist template, 13.  
Overman lens, 22.  
Patrons advantage, *Allies and*, 18.  
Plot protection optional rule, 20.  
Power levels, *adjusting threats for*, 19; *mixed*, 19-20.  
Psychic lens, 22.  
Scout template, 14.  
Sidekicks, *see Allies, Characters*.  
Social animal character type, 7.  
Team composition, 5.  
Templates, 5-16; *100-point*, 15-16; *200-point*, 5-15; *from Action*, 7, 9; *upgrading*, 3, 20-22.  
Tough guy template, 16.  
Troupe-style play, 20.  
Wealth advantage, *Allies and*, 18.  
Wheel man character type, 7.  
Whitecoat template, 14-15.  
Wise guy template, 16.

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