

The School

The concept of "Special Forces" is a somewhat fuzzy one when considering the Host -- or, for that matter, the Horde. Most individuals formally involved in the War are either literally supernatural entities, or mortals who have been imbued with supernatural powers; also, the realities of a millennia-long secret war to the knife favor a certain emphasis of precise, covert strikes over overt, mass conflicts. In a very real sense, **every** combat-focused member of the Host partakes of the Special Forces mindset.

This does not mean that the Host does not have specialists, of course -- and Zadkiel, Cherub Archangel of Protection, trains the best of them, both angelic and human. Those who graduate of the School have a certain reputation about them. One that is completely deserved.

Purpose and Goals

To provide the forces of Heaven in general (and Zadkiel in particular) with innovative operatives trained in survival techniques and irregular warfare tactics.

Organization and Leadership

The School is very much Zadkiel's responsibility. Its instructors are mostly Servitors, Saints, and especially good Soldiers of Protection; specialists from other Words (overwhelmingly War) are rotated in and out on a somewhat regular basis. It is a fairly respectable honor among the War Faction to be given this opportunity to teach, particularly as Zadkiel has a name for rewarding good service. The current Commandant of the School is Reginald, a 13 Force Saint of Protection with Distinctions from both Protection **and** the Sword (the latter given by Laurence in order to clarify certain chain-of-command issues).

The actual number of staff at the School will be dependent on the number of angels in a particular campaign. At minimum, it will be necessary to have at least three permanent training facilities -- one for each plane -- so that students of the School can be given as wide a range of training conditions as possible (and so that Zadkiel can train Soldiers!). The larger the War, the more training facilities, and the larger the staff -- but the School is not geared towards churning out endless numbers of specially

trained angels and Soldiers. This should be taken into consideration when determining the School's total size, as well.

Generally speaking, forces trained by the School retain their original assignment and Superiors. The bulk of them are evenly divided among Protection, War, the Sword, and the Wind. The other Archangels have at least one School-trained squad: yes, this includes Flowers. Novalis needs trained scouts and infiltrators just as badly as anyone else, and having ones prepared to do things *her* way is quite refreshing.

Alumni of the School do maintain quasi-formal contact with each other after graduation, at a level somewhere between 'old boy network' and 'interdisciplinary working group.' These contacts tend to be largely unaffected by the political and ideological struggles going on at the Superior level, but generally do not extend further than the level of information exchanges. However, should the situation call for it, alumni of the School have been known to discreetly call in favors of a somewhat more tangible kind. Favors called in by the School itself are somewhat less common, but much more likely to get a response. Commandant Reginald's ability to requisition material aid and troops is legendary, in both senses of the word.

Abilities and Resources

The School's training program is both valuable and varied. All alumni can be assumed to have undergone the basic course and at least three of the nine advanced schools (detailed below). It should be noted that the School does *not* teach Song use. Zadkiel has no objections to Songs per se, but they have the twin penalties of being both loud and dependent on a slowly regenerating resource. If a Song is a viable option in a given situation, that's fine -- but the School is all about what one does when options are limited.

Basic Course

The Basic course emphasizes tactical awareness, stealth and a broad spectrum of survival techniques. Note that it is assumed that anyone coming to the School already knows how to throw a punch and shoot a gun. Also note that the training regimen is carefully calibrated to equally push mortals and immortals -- which is less difficult with regard to angels than one might expect, possibly because students are pretty much kept empty of Essence throughout training. It's amazing how subtle a crutch

Essence can be: almost completely unnoticeable, in fact, until the crutch goes away.

- **Prerequisites:** 10/8/6 Forces (celestial/Saint/Soldier), minimum stats of 7/5/4 (celestial/Saint/Soldier), Dodge/2, Fighting/3, and either Ranged Weapon/3 (pistol or rifle) or Large Weapon/3 (any).
- **Skills Learned:** Driving (2pt), Language (Battle - see below) (2pt) Move Silently (2pt), Survival (2 pts each in Arctic, Forest, Jungle, Mountain and Urban), and Tactics (3pt).
- **Total:** 20pt.

Language: Battle

This is a fieldstripped and deliberately mutated variant of Angelic, enormously simplified for human brains and tongues. Battle Language has an extensive vocabulary when it comes to military activities, covert operations, and general invective, but is fairly useless for anything else (with, oddly enough, the exception of the culinary arts). It bears no relationship to any known human language and is sufficiently jargon-filled that speakers of regular Angelic cannot readily understand it (-6 to rolls). Despite all of this, its main use is probably that of building camaraderie among students and alumni of the School: after all, as a

covert group they cannot not get much in the way of public displays of respect, or even the pleasure of funny haircuts.

Advanced Courses

As stated above, all alumni of the School must pass at least three specialized courses before graduation. Depending on the Archangel, this may either be at the discretion of the student, or assigned. Alumni may later take additional courses: permission to do so is usually a formality. Quite a few alumni have eventually checked out in **all** of them.

Each course has a type after it (Combative, Social and Technical): generally, students will take at least two different types of courses. Each costs 10pt to learn.

Counter-Proliferation (Technical)

This course teaches techniques in dealing with both regular weapons of mass destruction and Insidious Master Plans: unfortunately, there are enough 'Renegade' Servitors of Death, Infernal Fire and/or Technology out there to make this a necessary field of study. Students are taught recognition and disarmament techniques.

- **Skills taught:** Chemistry (2pt), Computer Operation (1pt), Electronics (2pt), Engineering (2pt) Knowledge (NBC weaponry) (1pt), Knowledge (Vaputech) (1pt), and Knowledge (Samingan Necromantic Techniques) (1pt).

Counter-Terrorism (Social)

This course focuses more on the prevention of terrorist activities than on reacting to them; students are taught how to assess a given situation for suspicious activities, identify possible threats and shut down operations before they start.

- **Skills taught:** Detect Lies (2pt), Emote (2pt), Fast-Talk (2pt), Lying/1, Knowledge (Site Security) (2pt), and Savoir-Faire (1pt).

Internal Defense (Technical)

A close relative of the Counter-Proliferation course, this field of study deals with quietly dealing with Tether security, safe houses and the fine art of equipment requisition. It also covers medical procedures for dealing with the aftermath when any of the above operations go sour.

- **Skills taught:** Computer Operation (2pt), Electronics (1pt), Forgery (2pt), Medicine (3pt), and Scrounging (2pt).

Forgery (Precision) Default -2

In many ways, this is the Artistry (Official Documents) skill. A successful roll (with the usual penalties for inferior materials) will provide official-looking papers that will stand up to a casual scrutiny. Actually having those papers stand up to serious scrutiny requires a separate Computer Operations roll (or a midnight visit to the appropriate filing cabinet).

Scrounging (Perception) Default -0

This skill handles the acquisition of supplies and materials through nonofficial channels: the CD determines the degree of success - or, on a failure, the reaction penalty from officials discovering the attempt.

Special Reconnaissance (Military)

This course is, simply put, the most dangerous one of them all: it teaches how to survive in Hell. While the techniques are available to everyone, only angels can pass the course, as the graduation exam involves actually

raiding the Pit itself and coming back alive. Needless to say, the former is much easier than the latter: this is the only course where a student may choose to forego the final examination without prejudice (although he, she or it must take another course to fulfill the minimum advanced topics of study needed for final graduation).

- **Skills taught:** Area Knowledge (Hell's Geography) (2pt), Knowledge (Hell's Political Structure) (2pt) Move Silently (2pt), and Survival (Hell) (4pt).

Direct Action (Military)

This is otherwise known as Applied Mayhem: it's very popular, and very, very straightforward.

- **Skills taught:** Dodge (2pt), Fighting (1pt), Ranged Weapon (2pt each in rifle and pistol), and Small Weapon (knife) (3pt).

Psychological Warfare (Social)

This course is almost as disreputable as Civil Affairs: it shares a similar ethos in admitting the utility of deceit and subterfuge in the service of Heaven, but where Civil Affairs teaches how to insinuate, Psychological Warfare teaches how to disintegrate.

- **Skills taught:** Detect Lies (1pt), Emote (1pt), Knowledge (Human Psychology) (1pt), Language (3pts in any current human tongue), Lying (3pt), and Savoir-Faire (1pt)

Civil Affairs (Social)

The unofficial name for this is the Schmoozing Course: it teaches what computer hackers call 'social engineering'. It is not considered to be a particularly reputable course, but the Mercurians and Servitors of Flowers swear by it.

- **Skills taught:** Emote (2pt), Knowledge (Human Psychology) (3pt), Savoir-Faire (3pt), and Seduction (2pt).

Unconventional Warfare (Military)

This course deals with developing insurgency groups in areas either deemed officially 'neutral' -- i.e., the Marches -- or actively under Hell's influence (missions in Hell itself are taught in another course entirely). The focus is on training others in the skills needed to harass the Enemy, which implies a certain knowledge in said skills themselves.

- **Skills taught:** Chemistry (1pt), Dream-Shaping / Dreaming (2pt), Knowledge (Demolitions) (1pt),

Knowledge (Logistics) (1pt), Knowledge (Teaching) (1pt), Ranged Weapon (any type of firearm) (1pt), Savoir-Faire (1pt), and Survival: Marches (2pt).

Field Operations (Military)

This course is the most energetic of the major fields of study: it emphasizes physical development and a variety of useful physical and outdoor skills.

- **Skills taught:** Acrobatics (1pt), Cooking (1pt), Climbing (1pt), Escape (1pt), Running (2pt), Swimming (1pt), Tracking (2pt), and Throwing (1pt).

Cooking (Perception) Default -1

This skill represents the ability to turn assorted foodstuffs into something edible.

Celestial Relationships

Heaven

As stated above, alumni of the School can be found in every Superior's organization (even Jordi and Novalis have some, although admittedly with somewhat special

training). This has led to the School enjoying a remarkably good reputation across the board. Being an alumni generally defaults to being given a certain amount of respect, which of course may be modified for specific individuals.

It has been wondered, of course, why neither War nor the Sword has oversight over the School. This is actually fairly easily explained: while Michael could certainly have developed his own training regimen, one of the School's main advantages is its ability to draw instructors and recruits from across the Host. The Archangel of War currently dislikes and/or is disliked by his counterpart of Dreams, Judgement, Flowers, Lightning, Animals, and Destiny; this antipathy would undoubtedly spill over into the School. However, Protection gets along with just about everyone, which **also** spills over in the School -- but in a positive manner. Thus, as long as Michael can pump in enough instructors from War to assure a high quality of training (which, incidentally, he can, easily) and gets enough training slots to fill his personal requirements, the actual method by which all this happens is immaterial.

Laurence is even simpler to explain: he **has** oversight -- but, like a good commanding officer, he's handed the day-to-day responsibility over to a trusted subordinate and

let her go do her job. End of story, unless Zadkiel starts screwing it up -- and, of all the things that the Commander of the Host has to worry about, 'Zadkiel seriously screwing *anything* up' ranks somewhere just above 'a giant space whale appears out of nowhere and starts eating Mars.'

Hell

While Hell has its own types of special combat operatives, their inherent paranoia prevents them from the extensive cross-Word interaction typified by the School. As a result, individual Demon Princes sponsor their own special forces, which invariably (and typically quite erroneously) compare themselves favorably to School alumni. Among the rank and file of the Horde, a School-trained operative is seen as either a figure of terror, a worthy enemy to count coup upon, or sometimes even both at once.

History and Use in the Campaign

Generally speaking, the School has only been in existence for little over an Earth century, and has generally evolved along with its corporeal counterparts. Commandant Reginald has been the titular head of the School since the 1940s, and has been instrumental in formalizing and expanding its training regimen to its current scope.

Being an alumnus of the School's training program was deliberately designed to be beyond the reach of a beginning angelic PC's character point budget: the training alone costs a bare minimum of 50 points, and that's not taking into account the minimum number of Forces required, or the prerequisite skill set costs. On the other hand, characters that have demonstrated their suitability may very well be offered training.

As for human characters: a 6 Force Soldier that has undergone the full training would be an interesting addition to a party of beginning angelic PCs. The total package cost would be 58 points -- 14 more than the 'standard' experienced Soldier total of 44 (24 from Forces and 20 extra): add 2 for very limited customization, and the Soldier would be ready to go. He or she would have almost no esoteric abilities whatsoever, but that would be partially compensated for by the extensive skill list, not to mention the usual human advantage of being able to avoid Disturbance.

Something to consider.

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