

THE GREAT HAMSTER

大仓鼠乱 REBELLION



A 24-HOUR RPG
ABOUT KUNG-FU RODENTS
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Dedicated to Tilda, a true fighter with a big heart. Rest in peace.

Special Thanks to Tony Oliver, Ringo, Neponen, Eulalia, Leon, Mössö, Susuwatari, Doris, Kylie, Blondie, Madonna, Starsky, Hutch, and all the rest of you who taught me so much about the things in life that really matter.

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The Hamster Republic and the Wandering Hamster are tribute to the impossibly enduring computer RPG project *OHRPGCE* by James Paige. I am in no way associated with Mr Paige or his project, just a fan who's followed *OHRPGCE* almost since its very beginnings and wanted to insert an intertextual reference!

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THE STORY

For a thousand generations, the hundred tribes of the Hamster Republic lived in peace among themselves and with their neighbours. The Syrians lived alone as was their way, and the Dwarfs lived in small villages as was theirs, and popularly-elected Rulers supervised the happiness of all the tribes. All were content with their lives, living off the land.

Then came the Mekaton. They were autonomous machines from elsewhere, and the hamsters had never seen anything like them. They built massive installations and labyrinthine cities, and mined the earth for minerals to build more like them.

At first, the hamsters tried living peacefully alongside the Mekaton. There was plenty of room for everyone. Ruler Titus even adopted some Mekaton customs. But then, the land started to become poisoned and the waters polluted. The Mekaton were deaf to the hamsters' complaints. The hamsters grew restless, but wherever their unrest boiled over to violence, the force guns of the Mekaton made short work of their opponents.

THE WANDERING HAMSTER

The Hamster Republic had a long tradition in the arts of bare-paw fighting. As the unrest grew, more and more young hamsters started applying themselves to martial pursuits, to drive off the Mekaton invaders. They organised in schools called dojos, each teaching a particular way of fighting. Many hamsters travelled from dojo to dojo, learning the styles of several masters, and sometimes starting dojos of their own.

Hamster legends told of an ancient master of the martial arts wandering alone from place to place, called the Wandering Hamster. There were more and more rumours that someone had seen the Wandering Hamster or even actually spoken with him. He was often described as a big, powerfully-built hamster who never showed his face, but spoke of ways of combining inner tranquility with diligent physical training to gain the ability to resist the guns of the Mekaton.

These accounts inspired many impatient young hamsters and, overconfident in their strength, went out to confront the invaders. They were sometimes able to win encouraging victories, but still were no match for the full fury of the Mekaton.



The Mekaton retaliated, destroying many hamster villages. Ruler Titus was unable to assuage them. Popular opinion turned against the dojos, whose fighters only irritated the Mekaton without being able to oust them, causing helpless hamsters to suffer.

MASTER KEETON

Once when Ruler Titus was addressing the people of the Hamster Republic together with Mekaton representatives, they were approached by a stranger calling himself Keeton. Keeton was a guinea pig from the Western mountains with patience in his eyes and wisdom in his heart. He accused Ruler Titus of neglecting the welfare of his people and told the Mekaton that they needed an impartial intermediary if they were ever to find common ground with the hamsters.

He spoke eloquently as is the guinea pig way, and gained the support of both the hamsters and the Mekaton. Ruler Titus was deposed and placed in house arrest, and Keeton replaced him. To appease both the Mekaton and the hamster public, he declared the dojos illegal and sent the Republican Guard out to imprison their masters. The dojos were driven underground almost overnight, but continued their training in secret locations.

Then one day, a secret message was brought to the most senior of the remaining masters. In it, she was instructed to call as many of the dojos to a meeting as she could. She did so, and on the night of the meeting, the assembled hamsters were astonished to be met by many of the formerly-imprisoned masters – escorted by none other than Keeton himself.

The full scope of the wise old guinea pig's plan was now revealed. It was he who had taught them how to unlock their inner strength, being mistaken for the Wandering Hamster. He had cooperated with the Mekaton in order to gain their confidence – and it had worked. He had learned the most closely guarded secret of the Mekaton: they were not, in fact, truly self-sufficient, but were controlled by an individual. This individual was an evil rat named Huangti.

The way to defeat the Mekaton, then, seemed to be to locate Huangti – even Keeton did not know where he resided – and overpower him. Keeton then put the decision to the assembled conspirators: should he declare all-out war on the invaders, or continue to work with them while the martial artists fought in the shadows?

The majority voted to remain underground. This placed Keeton at a great personal risk, but he humbly accepted it as a small price for avoiding further danger to innocents. In honour of this noble gesture, as well as his knowledge of the martial arts, the hamsters now call him Master Keeton.

THE INVISIBLE REBELLION

The masters of all dojos are selecting their most promising students and sending them out to gain knowledge and experience in the battle against the Mekaton. Individual differences are set aside in pursuit of this common goal: the most disparate groups are routinely assembled to make use of their varying abilities. After all, they only have their own skills to help them: officially they are still outlaws, and the Republican Guard is likely to try to apprehend them if they can find them. Worse yet, some dojos either have their own ideas of the best way to fight the Mekaton, or even have sided with the invaders altogether. And the force gun-armed Mekaton troops are everywhere.

The future of the Hamster Republic is in your paws!

CHARACTERS

Welcome to the world of *The Great Hamster Rebellion*! Your character will be a hamster well versed in the martial arts, and ready to take on the cybernetic invaders of your homeland. With perseverance, ingenuity, and not a little luck, you will grow over your adventures to be able to take on the evil rat Huangti, and end the Mekaton menace once and for all.

TRIBES

Many different tribes make up the Hamster Republic. A character can belong to one of the following.

Syrian: The most numerous tribe. Syrians are fairly large and often have golden brown fur that may be long or short, but black, white and sable colours also exist. They tend to be grumpy and prefer to live alone in small, comfortable huts surrounded by plenty of land.

European: The biggest hamsters, the hulking Europeans are even larger than Syrians – and even worse-tempered. Their fur tends towards dark colouring. They build vast mansions in solitary, far-away locations where they live alone. Not surprisingly, they are perhaps the least commonly seen hamsters.

Chinese: This uncommon tribe has the distinguishing feature that their tails are long and prehensile, not short like other hamsters'. Their fur is either brownish-grey or spotted white, and has a darker stripe down the back. They live quiet lives in small family groups near the Northern deserts.

Russian: Small hamsters that are almost as common as the Syrians. Their fur is usually brown or grey, but with a stripe like the Chinese, and some replace the dark fur with white in wintertime, making them excellent spies. They live in small villages, often made up by one extended family.

Roborovski: The quickest and smallest of all tribes, Roborovskis or Desert Hamsters come

from the North like the Chinese, live in large families like the Russians, but lack the stripe that marks the fur on both of those. Their fur is a sandy colour, sometimes with white spots of varying size.

ABILITIES

When characters perform tasks, they will be using one of eight Abilities. Abilities are divided into two categories: external (those involving direct interaction with the world) and internal (those that are more about your mental capabilities).

External Abilities

Acrobatics: To climb sheer walls, backflip out of the way of a rolling boulder, or push open the door to a Mekaton lab so your friends can slip inside.

Combat: Arguably the most important ability of all! The skill of bare-paw fighting, but it also covers using the iron claws of the Republican Guard and any other weapons.

Intrusion: To hide from searching guards, shadow somebody through a crowd, or palm a small item while the owner is distracted.

Manipulation: Using and repairing things, from simple hand-carts to advanced Mekaton parts.

Internal Abilities

Alertness: To notice someone sneaking up or by, sniff out a hidden treasure, or find a trap before stepping into it. In many ways the opposite of Intrusion, which is often used against Alertness.

Knowledge: To recall an obscure version of the legend of the Wandering Hamster, figure out the entry code to a Mekaton security lock, or know which roots are edible and which are not.

Persuasion: To command a troop of Republican Guards in battle, convince a guard that you do have a reason to be here, or persuade a doubtful ally to join your cause.

Resolve: Your “guts”, will power, self discipline, and sheer determination. The ability to push yourself to the limits and keep going.

MARTIAL ARTS

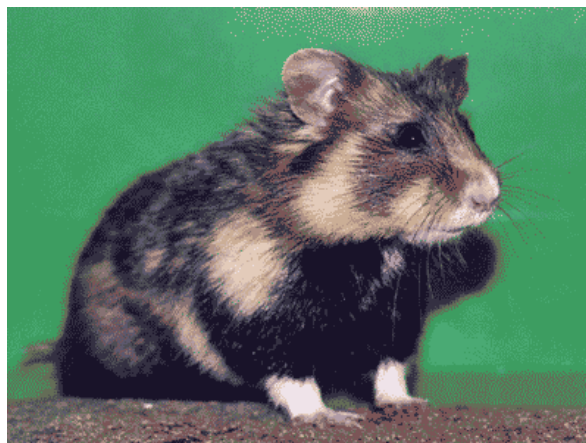
All characters, and quite a few of their opponents, are skilled in the martial arts. Martial arts training is diverse, and confers upon students all kinds of special skills, not all of which apply (or only apply) to combat situations.

Also, every dojo and every master has a particular style that they teach, so there are literally hundreds of different martial arts styles. Trying to provide an exhaustive list of them all would be futile, so instead you will describe the approach of the style you practice in general terms.

Styles are defined along two axes: aggressiveness and directness. Together these descriptors will provide direction to your choice of the techniques that you have learned.

Aggressiveness: The style’s approach to taking the initiative. *Offensive* styles aim to end any fight quickly by aggressively going for every opening. *Defensive* styles let the opponent do all the hard work and focus on reacting effectively. *Technical* styles adapt to changing situations, looking for opportunities to take decisive action at a critical moment.

Directness: The style’s approach to applying force. *Linear* styles focus on direct punches and kicks. *Circular* styles favour throws and spinning moves. *Balanced* styles are somewhere in between, typically mixing linear attacks with circular defences.



CREATING A CHARACTER

To create a character, first choose a tribe. This will give you a starting set of abilities and a technique. In addition, all hamsters are accomplished climbers, and gain the technique Climbing +1.

Tribe	Acrobatics	Combat	Intrusion	Manipulation	Alertness	Knowledge	Persuasion	Resolve	Technique
Syrian	2	3	1	4	2	2	1	3	Spirit +1
European	1	2	1	2	2	3	3	4	Power +1
Chinese	4	2	2	3	3	1	1	2	Tail
Russian	3	2	3	1	4	1	2	2	Escape +1
Roborovski	3	2	4	2	3	1	2	1	Speed +1

Then define your martial arts style by describing its aggressiveness and directness, and give it an evocative name. Add the points given below for each descriptor chosen to find the total amount you have to spend on external and internal techniques and abilities.

	External Techniques	Internal Techniques	External Abilities	Internal Abilities
Aggressiveness				
Offensive	3	2	5	2
Defensive	2	3	2	5
Technical	1	4	3	4
Directness				
Linear	6	1	4	1
Circular	2	5	1	4
Balanced	4	3	3	2

Improving Abilities: To raise an ability by one level, you need to spend points equal to the new level. For example, to bring an ability from 4 to 5 costs 5 points.

Learning Techniques: Each technique has a cost in points to learn it.

Those that give a bonus to certain rolls can be taken multiple times, paying the cost each time and improving the bonus by one.

Finally, note down four characteristics:

Defence: How difficult you are to hit. Begins at 5.

Toughness: Your resistance to damage. Begins at 5.

Chi: Your reserves of inner strength. Begins at 5.

Health: How much punishment you can take. Begins at 10.

Then give your character an appropriately hamsterlike name, describe your physical appearance, personal history, etc. and begin play!

A Note on Possessions: It is tradition amongst martial arts hamsters that as they wander the land, they may own no more than they can carry in their cheek pouches. Therefore, there are no equipment lists in this game. After all, you have four paws of fury and the training to take on the world!



CHARACTER CREATION EXAMPLE

Let's create a young kung fu hamster named Sandy. We'll make her a Russian, a grey little hamster with white spots around her eyes that make her look permanently startled. Her starting abilities look like this:

Acrobatics	3	Alertness	4
Combat	2	Knowledge	1
Intrusion	3	Persuasion	2
Manipulation	1	Resolve	2

She practices a Technical Linear style called the Way of the North Wind, giving her the following points to spend:

External Techniques	7 (1+6)
Internal Techniques	5 (4+1)
External Abilities	7 (3+4)
Internal Abilities	5 (4+1)

We record these totals on her character sheet for future reference. Then, we round out her abilities by improving Combat to 4 (3+4 = 7 external points), Knowledge to 2 (2 internal points) and Resolve to 3 (3 internal points). That's all 12 points used, and Sandy's abilities now stand as follows:

Acrobatics	3	Alertness	4
Combat	4	Knowledge	2
Intrusion	3	Persuasion	2
Manipulation	1	Resolve	3

Now, we choose a few techniques. She already has Climbing +1 (for being a hamster) and Escape +1 (for being a Russian). With 7 points for external techniques, we take Jumping +1 (5 points), with 2 left over; for internal techniques we have 5 points, and take Fighting Stance +1 (4 points), with 1 left over.

Sandy's characteristics end up as follows:

Defence	6 (5+1 for Fighting Stance)
Toughness	5
Chi	5
Health	10

TECHNIQUES

The various techniques available are listed below. They are divided into external and inter-

nal categories, just like abilities. How many points worth of each you can take depends on your style.

External Techniques	Cost	Description
Body Hardening	6	+1 to Toughness.
Chi Gong	3	+1 to Health.
Climbing	6	+1 to Acrobatics rolls involving scaling surfaces or climbing ropes.
Escape	6*	Character can retreat from combat at full speed with an Acrobatics roll vs. 10.
Jumping	5	+1 to Acrobatics rolls for leaping great heights or lengths.
Kiaijutsu	6*	By letting out a blood-curdling screech while attacking, character gains +1 to hit and damage.
Power	6	+1 to damage rolls, as well as Acrobatics or other rolls involving raw strength.
Tail	—	Chinese hamsters and certain other creatures have a tail that can be used to grab things. It lacks the strength and dexterity for combat or tool use, but can free the paws for other uses.
Vibrating Paw	8*	By using 1 Chi, character can shatter a small inanimate object or punch a hole in a larger one.

Internal Techniques	Cost	Description
Cobra Strike	5	Character makes called shots at –1 instead of the usual –3.
Feather Fall	7*	Character can subtract the result of an Acrobatics roll from any falling damage.
Feather Walk	5*	By using 1 Chi, character can walk without a sound (+3 to Intrusion) and leaving no tracks (-3 to Alertness to track) for one minute.
Fighting Stance	4	+1 to Defence.
Mountain Spirit	6*	By using 2 Chi, character can instantly restore own Health equal to own level+1.
Nerve Strike	10*	With a successful called shot, victim is immobilised for one round, cannot act and has a defence of 0. This does not work on the Mekaton!
Reiki	6*	Directing the flow of chi for healing purposes. Restores 1D Health on others with a half-hour of rest and relaxation.
Speed	6	+1 to initiative, as well as Acrobatics or other rolls where quickness is essential.
Spirit	5	+1 to Chi.

LEVELS AND EXPERIENCE

Characters begin at level 1. This makes them the equivalent of a black belt – proficient in all the basics and able to go out into the world and learn to apply what they know.

As they adventure, characters gain experience points (XP). When they have gained new XP equal to ten times the number of the next level, their level increases by one and they can increase their abilities and techniques with the same point allotments as on the first level. The XP requirements for different levels are summarised in the table below.

The highest level possible is 12. At this level, the character is considered a master, and has little left to learn.

Level	Total XP Required
1	–
2	20
3	50
4	90
5	140
6	200
7	270
8	350
9	440
10	540
11	650
12	770

Sometimes, especially when increasing already-high abilities, the cost to improve the value by a level may be higher than the points you gain per level. Therefore, you can save points from level to level until you have enough. (A handy space is provided on the character sheet for this purpose for both abilities and techniques, next to the space for recording the points you gain each level.)

BASIC MECHANICS

All rolls in *The Great Hamster Rebellion* are made with ordinary six-sided dice – usually two of them, indicated by the notation “2D”. Often, a further bonus is added to the sum of the rolls, for example, “2D+5”.

By far the most common type of roll is the ability roll. For example, to make an Alertness roll, you roll 2D and add your Alertness level. If your Alertness were 3 and the roll was 8, the total would be 11.

The total is compared to a difficulty level set by the GM according to how hard the attempt is. The table below provides some guidelines.

Difficulty Level	Description
5	No challenge at all
10	Somewhat easy
15	Moderately difficult
20	Really rather difficult
25	Borderline impossible

OPPOSED ROLLS

When two characters are trying to do the same thing, or two mutually exclusive things, both make their rolls and whoever gets the higher result, prevails. The active party wins ties; if there is no active party, or two of them, the GM may call for another roll or declare an interesting result (such as both characters grabbing the lever at the same time).

COMBAT

Combat is fought in rounds. At the start of a round, every combatant rolls for initiative by making an Alertness roll. Whoever has the highest result goes first. After every action, the initiative result is decreased by the action's speed value, and if the remainder is positive, the character gets to act again at that initiative count.

To make an attack, the character makes a Combat roll and tries to get a result equal to or higher than the target's Defence score.

When an attack succeeds, it does damage equal to 1D + the attack's damage bonus, minus the target's Toughness. If anything remains, it is subtracted from the target's Health. At 0 Health, a character is knocked out.

Basic Moves	Attack	Damage	Initiative
Punch	+1	+1	-5
Jab	+1	+0	-3
Rabbit Punch	+0	+3	-7
Kick	+0	+2	-6
Roundhouse Kick	-1	+4	-6
Jump Kick	-1	+5	-8
Throw	+0	+0	-5

A successful throw causes the target to go prone and be at +2 to hit and -2 on his or her own attacks.

OTHER TRIBES

GERBILS

In the Northern deserts where Roborovskis and Chinese hamsters make their homes live also nomadic tribes of Gerbils. Gerbils are born survivors, able to subsist on very little. They have sandy fur and long tails which, although not prehensile like Chinese hamsters, help them to make prodigious leaps.

Acrobatics	Alertness
Combat	Knowledge
Intrusion	Persuasion
Manipulation	Resolve

GUINEA PIGS

The gentle and unassuming Guinea Pigs live quiet lives in the Western mountains. Their communities are large, sprawling villages of communal huts. The guinea pigs have a great oral tradition and are master storytellers.

Acrobatics	Alertness
Combat	Knowledge
Intrusion	Persuasion
Manipulation	Resolve

RATS

These scavengers and bullies can be found wherever honest folk reside. Accustomed to simply taking what they need, some of them are decent enough and can even sometimes be found training and travelling together with other creatures.

Acrobatics	Alertness
Combat	Knowledge
Intrusion	Persuasion
Manipulation	Resolve

MONSTERS

Crows

Wild Cats

Snakes

Scorpions

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

MASTER KEETON

Level 12 Guinea Pig

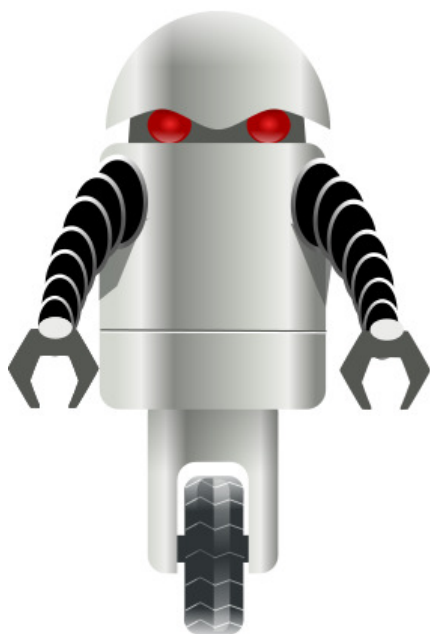
Acrobatics	2	Alertness	5
Combat	5	Knowledge	11
Intrusion	2	Persuasion	9
Manipulation	5	Resolve	5



YUANTI THE RAT

Level 12 Cybernetic Rat

Acrobatics	6	Alertness	7
Combat	11	Knowledge	4
Intrusion	4	Persuasion	7
Manipulation	4	Resolve	7



MEKATON ENFORCERS

Level 3 Combat Robot

Acrobatics	2	Alertness	6
Combat	6	Knowledge	1
Intrusion	3	Persuasion	4
Manipulation	3	Resolve	1

DESIGNER'S MUS- INGS

So I Sat Down to Think About a Game Called *The Great Hamster Rebellion*...

It's not all that unusual for me to come up with a title first and then write a game around it. This time, though, someone else came up with the title, and I picked it off a list and ran with it. The obvious first question was, who are the hamsters rebelling against? I decided against a "real world" backdrop (fun as that would've been), with pets rebelling against their masters, and instead envisaged a fantasy world where the animals are the dominant life-form. Perhaps due to the influence of the really rather amusing trailer to the upcoming Bruckheimer/Disney film *G-Force*, I pitted the hamsters against unfeeling robots. With what would they fight, then? Hamsters with guns didn't really strike me as an attractive idea, so how about martial arts? From there, the pieces just fell into place. The rebellion became an allegory of the Boxer Rebellion. The robots became invaders from foreign shores. Keeton became the controversial leader of the hamsters.

The mechanics owe quite a bit to Michael T. Desing's sadly unavailable freeware RPG *Mythweaver*. Another strong influence was *Dragon Fist*, an oddity from the time TSR was acquired by WotC and AD&D was about to become just D&D. I also took pages out of R. Talsorian's underappreciated RPG *Dream Park*, as well as bits and pieces from various sources that are not so clear to me.

How unfortunate that I couldn't finish this in time! Well, you play 'em as you roll 'em.

