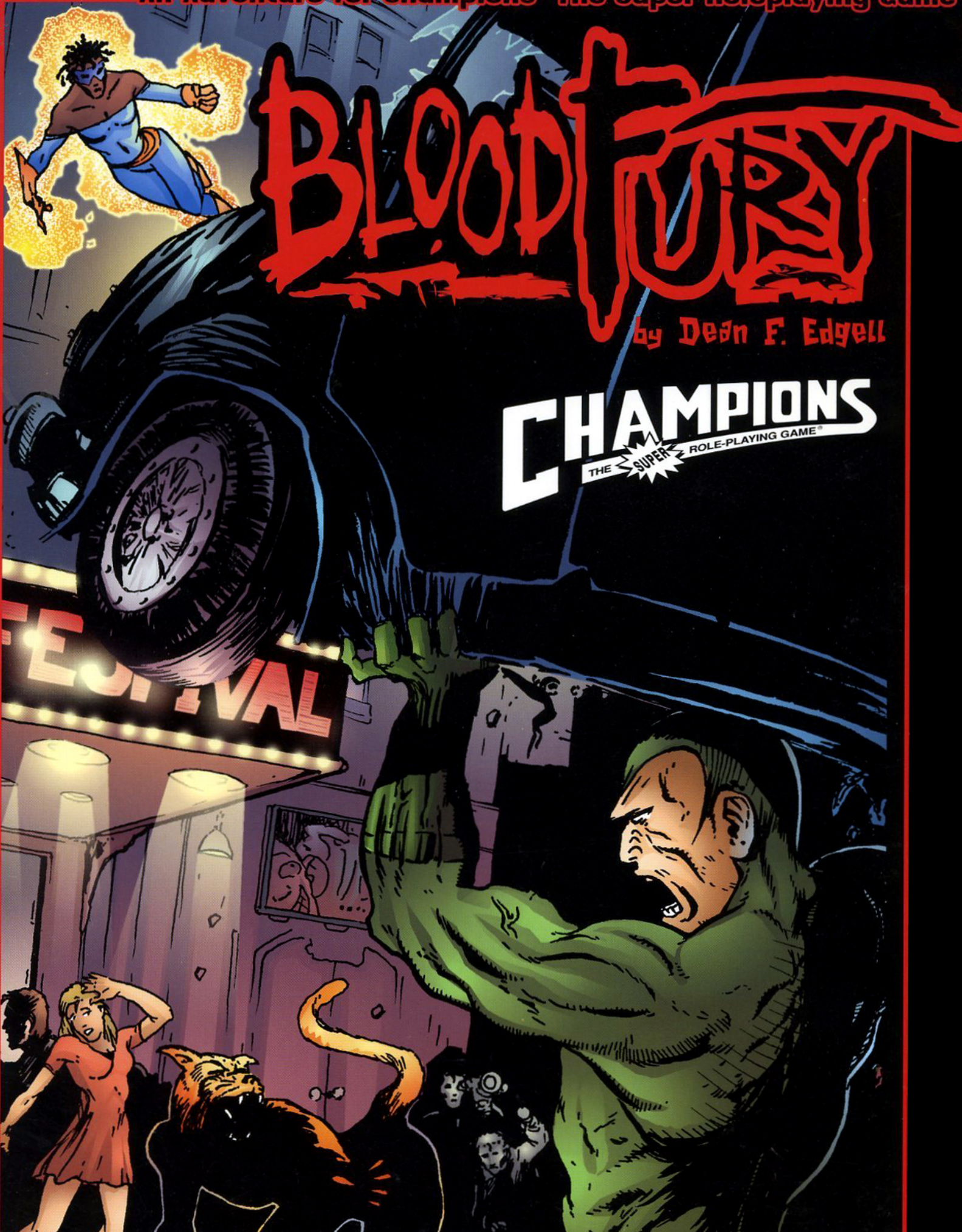


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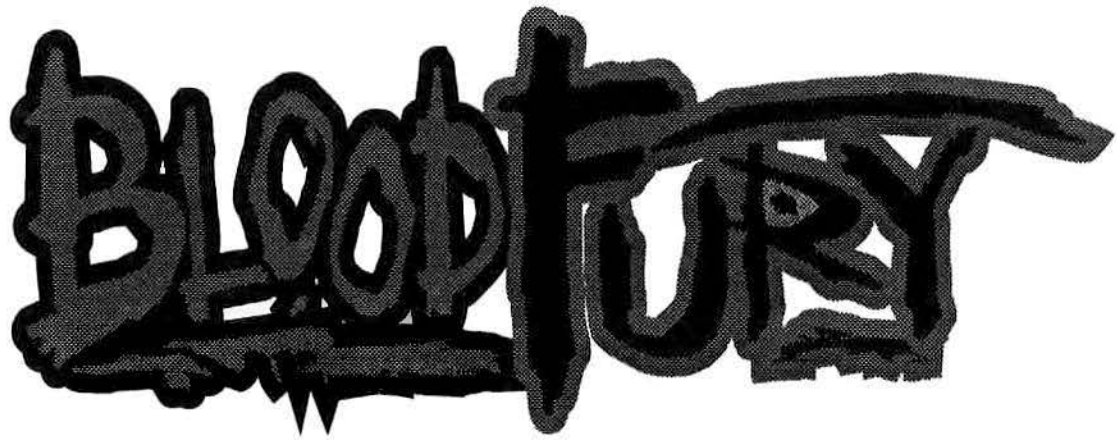
An Adventure for Champions® The Super Roleplaying Game



BLOOD FURY

by Dean F. Edgell

CHAMPIONS
THE SUPER ROLE-PLAYING GAME®



A Champions® Adventure Resource
by Dean F. Edgell

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*The author dedicates this adventure "to Michael 'The Raven' Atkinson,
the schemer, the chaos-bringer, my friend."*

The editor would like to recommend the general-interest gaming APA, *Alarums & Excursions*, to all readers of this product. Many interesting people, including him, appear pretty regularly in this magazine. For a sample copy, send \$3.24 (which includes Book Rate postage within the U.S.) to: Lee Gold, 3965 Alla Road, Los Angeles, California, 90066.

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INTRODUCTION

Blood Fury is a *Champions* adventure suitable for a balanced team of heroes built on an average of 250-300 points with a base of skills on which to draw. It can be easily adjusted for use with more or less powerful groups.

This adventure involves the heroes' attempts to locate and recruit a rare blood donor to save a young woman's life. The task is not as simple as it appears and the heroes find themselves drawn into a web of intrigue and danger in which the lives of hundreds of thousands may be caught. *Blood Fury* should challenge the players' ingenuity and role-playing abilities. The heroes will find that their wits are every bit as important in overcoming this threat as their awesome powers.

Plot Summary

There is a new gangster in the campaign city known only as "Mr. Caesar." When a gang war for control of the campaign city's drug supply erupts, the heroes get involved in a routine bust of some drug traffickers. Events turn tragic when an innocent bystander is injured. It soon becomes clear that the young woman will die unless she can get a blood transfusion. Unfortunately, she is a latent mutant with a nearly unique blood-type and only one potential donor, her brother, can be identified. When the hospital can't locate him, the heroes are asked to get involved.

The heroes' search for the donor, Dr. Richard Chandler, ultimately leads them to an isolated military base. Chandler has been drafted to work on a secret scientific project. When

Chandler coldly refuses to help his sister, claiming that his work takes priority, the heroes smell a rat. They investigate and "Chandler" is revealed to be a robot, the research a farce, and the laboratory closely monitored by sophisticated electronic surveillance. Two things are clear. The needed blood donor is still missing and someone with impressive scientific resources is very interested in the Army's secret research.

The quest for answers takes the heroes into the heart of Operation: Quarantine. There they discover that the Army has sealed off the village of Ponds ville, where something has transformed the peaceful townspeople into raging murderous madmen.

The heroes brave Ponds ville in the search for the source of the evil. They witness horror and death in a town gone mad. They have to defend themselves against the townsfolk and decide how to help the hidden survivors. The heroes' Ponds ville investigations also bring them face-to-face with more disguised robots, and lead to evidence that Ponds ville's fate was intentionally inflicted, when they uncover the secret of the Rage Poison.

The trail leads back to the campaign city. There, the heroes realize that the mastermind behind it all is the city's newest drug lord, Mr. Caesar, who intends to introduce his Rage Poison into the city's drug supply, causing chaos, suffering, and death on an unprecedented scale.

The heroes race to prevent the distribution of the poisoned drugs and rescue the kidnapped persons. They end up in final battle with drug-dealers, robots and the mysterious Mr. Caesar.

About the Author

Dean Edgell is a wise and charismatic gentleman known for his Adonis-like body and chiselled features. When travelling in public, he often disguises himself as a vaguely irritating, middle-aged, and out-of-shape character. (Shape Shift: a single other form, (+1) Affects Personality, too, (+1) Persistent, (1/2) Always On — Real Cost 20 pts.)

Dean co-authored the much-lauded adventure "Menace Out Of Time" from *Champions Presents™*. ("Lauded" in that someone sent a fan letter to his co-author and brother, Dana, but not to Dean.) He has also contributed a number of articles to *Adventurer's Club™*. He has helped run the official *Justice, Inc.™* tournaments at the GenCon game conventions for several years. Dean is also 1/4 of the team behind the inimitable *Drive-In Hero* tournaments which have run at the same conventions. If you look at your *Champions Rule Book™* carefully, you can find Dean's name buried amongst the contributors and playtesters. Dean has mastered the achievement of finding talented people to work on projects to which he can then attach his name.

When he is not gaming or writing, Dean occupies his time by being a lawyer, a father, and a partner to his long-suffering spouse.

Dean has met George MacDonald and Steve Peterson (but has no reason to believe that they remember this).

How To Use This Book

The GM should read this scenario completely and become totally familiar with it before attempting to run the adventure. Pay particular attention to the adventure's flow and to the information which is known by the players at any time. The GM should be careful not to reveal information that the players have not earned. *Blood Fury* is designed to be mysterious, and to increase in tension as each new development raises the stakes of the situation until the heroes finally realize the enormity of the villain's plot and then Mr. Caesar's true identity. The GM must make an effort to build and maintain the suspense.

Blood Fury works best if it can be slipped into an existing campaign. The GM can then get the players "accustomed to" the ongoing gang war for control of the city's drug supply and the name "Mr. Caesar" before playing this adventure. (See Background, p. 6.)

The GM should remember that this adventure is only a framework; it is up to him to bring it to life. He should give thought to how to role-play each of the NPCs *before* play begins, and when the time comes he should act boldly and with drama to make those characters live. When describing a scene, he must create images for the players using all of the senses, not just sight. The setting is as much a character as any NPC, and the GM must plan for that. He must work to weave moods with his words, giving them emotional, as well as informational, content. And, as always, he must be prepared to adjust the scenario to handle the unexpected.

Most importantly, have fun!

Adapting *Blood Fury* To Other Genres

This adventure is perfectly suited to *Dark Champions™* campaigns. Its themes of drugs,

gang wars, and intrigue are down-to-Earth and fit in well with that genre. For less powerful heroes, simply reduce the power of the robots and superhuman opposition (Buckshot would be a suitable replacement for Ogre), and put more emphasis on avoiding conflict with Pondsville's natives, rather than battling them. In the final encounter, the GM may also wish to have some support troops (police or agents) available to deal with the drug-dealers while the heroes cope with the major opponents. Finally, the GM may wish to alter the identity of Mr. Caesar to suit his campaign (such as Fenris, the Master of Crime, or some other major villain that the PCs have had dealings with in the past).

It can also be used in non-superheroic campaigns more easily than most, as it is in many respects a skill-driven adventure. For obvious reasons, *Blood Fury* isn't suitable for low-technology campaigns, although a sufficiently imaginative GM could translate the plot to a fantasy campaign.

Background

Before the player characters become involved in this adventure, they require some background information. The best way to receive it is by direct exposure in the course of play over a series of adventures, through subplots and incidental encounters. That way, the information is available to the heroes, but the players won't realize that it relates to this adventure until it becomes pertinent. Let them think that the gang war and Mr. Caesar are a running subplot, scheduled to climax in some later game session. Let them believe that the opening encounter is just another step towards that upcoming game. Then, when Mr. Caesar and his drugs suddenly reappear at the climax of *Blood Fury*, they will be both familiar and a surprise. The following is the information that must somehow be delivered to the players.

If the group has played through *Shadows of the City*[™], when the heroes disrupted the plans

of The Pack, the campaign city's illegal drug networks were left in chaos. But soon, new suppliers and their gangs moved in to rebuild and fill the vacuum. Several rivals hoped to take advantage of the situation to become the campaign city's next drug kingpin. One of these was the previously unknown Mr. Caesar. If the group has played through *Hudson City Blues*[™], the entire underworld has been similarly disrupted, and Mr. Caesar is only one of a number of newcomers trying to make a name for himself. (If you haven't played either of these adventures, don't worry. This adventure can be played without change by assuming that Mr. Caesar has challenged the existing regimes.)

Four weeks ago, the campaign city's most important new drug lord, Ricardo Lopez, was brutally murdered, beaten to death with crushing blows. (The GM can substitute any existing campaign-based character.) Police suspect that the murder was gang-related, but have no suspects or leads. None of Lopez's family or associates cooperated with their investigation, and the police seem more frustrated by the loss of months of investigation spent trying to obtain evidence against Lopez than driven to find his murderer. Good cops try to do their jobs, but this investigation has hit a stone wall.

Word on the street says that a new drug lord, known only as Mr. Caesar, has taken over Lopez's operation. Mr. Caesar is trying to pick up all the pieces of the campaign city's drug network. Rival successors and dissenters in the Lopez organization were dealt with as brutally, and as fatally, as was Lopez. All undercover police officers in Lopez's operation have also been found dead. At the same time, police (and possibly the heroes) received a series of anonymous tips, leading to many arrests of rival drug gangs and their leaders, crippling the operations of Mr. Caesar's competitors.

These things are known: Mr. Caesar is well-informed, Mr. Caesar is murderous and, in four short weeks, Mr. Caesar has taken control of 80% of the supply of hard drugs in the city.

Foreshadowing

The GM is encouraged to run foreshadowing encounters and subplots in game sessions leading up to this adventure, so that the heroes can hear the name "Mr. Caesar" and that he's taking control of the city's drug supply. If the GM inserts one or two of these in several (not necessarily contiguous) game sessions before running *Blood Fury*, the background will have been laid. Here are a few possible foreshadowing scenes:

- The GM can adapt scenes from Chapter 1 of the "Mob Rule" adventure in the *Champions Rule Book* (p. C36), replacing the VIPER agents with competent normal mobsters armed with conventional weapons. These mobsters used to be part of Ricardo Lopez's organization but now work for Mr. Caesar. They don't know who he is or where to find him, and get their instructions through inter-

mediaries. At this stage of the adventure, the heroes shouldn't be able to get any leads back to Mr. Caesar. If these scenes are used, you may want to change the names, but Dòn Joseph Guisseppi, Joey "Big J" Montagne, and Frank Ferguson are all high-level narcotics suppliers and Mr. Caesar's men are trying to either eliminate the competition or recruit them into Mr. Caesar's organization.

- One or more of the heroes learn the location of a fortified crack house. (Perhaps the police seek superpowered help to penetrate it before evidence can be destroyed.) When the heroes arrive, however, they find the crack house's steel door torn from its hinges, obviously by someone with superhuman strength. Inside are the bodies of several dealers, riddled with bullets. On the wall in freshly-sprayed paint are the words, "Mr. Caesar Rules."



- Heroes on patrol, or just out on the town in their secret identities, witness one or two police cars with sirens screaming in a high-speed pursuit of a truck. This truck is the brainchild of "Smart" Eddie Giacomini: a mobile crack house. Smart Eddie has welded steel armor plates to a panel truck. The truck has small windows with sliding covers through which money and drugs can be passed, but during this chase, Smart Eddie and two sidekicks are shooting from them.

The truck has the same statistics as a GMC panel truck (p. 195 of the *Champions Rule Book*) except that it has DEF 9, -7 KNB and a greater mass. The driver's front and side windows aren't armored. Smart Eddie and his boys are Skilled Normals armed with Uzi submachine guns. From behind their cover they disable the police vehicles and escape unless the heroes intervene.

If captured, Smart Eddie loudly tells his boys, "You have the right to remain silent; use it! Mr. Caesar'll take care of everything." After that they don't want to talk. However, the heroes may be able to use skills, mental powers, or Presence to get information from Smart Eddie or his boys. Eddie noticed that Mr. Caesar was moving in to take control of the narcotics trade in the campaign city, so he decided to side with a winner and join his organization. Eddie doesn't really know who Mr. Caesar is, or how to get in touch with him. He got his drugs from a supplier who used to work for Ricardo Lopez but who now deals for Mr. Caesar.

- El Capataz (p. C69 of the *Champions Rule Book*) is a high-level drug-dealer in the campaign city. He has recently returned after a period of incarceration, hospitalization, or hiding as appropriate, hoping to take advantage of the chaos in the city's underworld to take control of narcotics in the campaign city. Instead his organization is targeted by Mr. Caesar.

His Psychological Limitations don't let him work for anyone else, and Mr. Caesar

isn't accepting partners, so El Capataz is in a war for survival. He's arranged a secret meeting of the city's embattled drug lords in the hopes of forging an alliance against Mr. Caesar, under his own leadership, of course.

The heroes receive an conspicuous, but untraceable, message from Mr. Caesar. If the heroes have a public address this message may come in the form of a telephone call or a hand-delivered note. If the heroes cannot be reached directly they learn that one of their contacts (who has been give Mr. Caesar's message) is looking for them. The message claims to tell them the time and location of El Capataz's secret meeting.

The heroes may suspect a trap, and they may not wish to do Mr. Caesar's dirty work, but they probably go to the meeting. If they don't, the police do, since they received a similar tip. The tip is legitimate; Mr. Caesar wants the heroes to eliminate his competition.

The GM should decide where the meeting is to be held and what guards the drug lords have. The mansion from p. C49 of the *Champions Rule Book* makes a convenient meeting-site. Several squads of gunmen are sufficient opposition unless the GM wants to make more of a battle out of this encounter, in which case, the drug lords may have hired superpowered bodyguards; perhaps the Asesinos (*Champions Rule Book*, p. C56) or the Coalition (see Atlas Games' *Dystopia*) have been brought in by the criminals to negotiate a contract killing of Mr. Caesar. When the heroes interrupt the meeting a full-scale battle might erupt . . . Or if the GM wants slightly less powerful opposition, perhaps the contract is offered to Mechassassin (*Classic Enemies*, p. 76).

In any event, if the heroes are victorious they find sufficient evidence to arrest these criminals. Even if the heroes lose, they have disrupted the proposed alliance and Mr. Caesar still wins.

ON BROADWAY

Blood Fury begins with one or two player characters having learned from familiar street sources about a planned drug deal. They know the deal is to take place in front of the Elysium Theater at 11:00 p.m., just as the show lets out. The heroes should get involved, perhaps staking out the scene.

(This encounter can be used as written if only a few players are present for a game, or if the GM runs other, unconnected, encounters for the other players so that all will have equal play-time. Alternatively, the GM may wish to let all the heroes in on this action. However, he should keep in mind that they will likely overpower the opposition, and it is not recommended that the opposition be made more powerful.)

The criminals' plan calls for the drug supplier to attend the theater performance and then exit on time, when the crowds and confusion are the greatest. He carries a briefcase containing 10 kilos of cocaine. An unmarked black van pulls up to the curb and the side door slides open. The supplier quickly enters the van and exchanges his briefcase for a matching one containing money. The criminals then separate, taking advantage of the human cover.

Unfortunately for the plan, word of their deal reached the street; the heroes are here. Worse, the police 'crack' narcotics investigation team is staking out the street undercover, concealed in various places around the area. One officer is working in the theater box office. He has a 12 gauge open choke shotgun under the counter (which can be spotted by a person entering or leaving the theater with a Perception roll). Two other officers are disguised as tourists at a table in the neighboring café. A fourth is disguised as a drunk homeless person in the alley

alongside the theater. Two others, also armed with shotguns, are in an unmarked car 50 yards (24 hexes) down the street.

The police officers are skilled at their work (all are competent normals, armed with .38 Special revolvers and police batons) and aren't ordinarily noticed by the criminals nor the heroes. To recognize any of the officers requires a Streetwise roll at -3. Once a hero realizes that there is one undercover cop present, each of the others can be picked out with a Perception roll.

The police plan not to interfere with the drug deal and will only observe to collect evidence and surreptitiously photograph the transaction. They realize that any attempt to arrest the criminals would be resisted and the subsequent gun-play could injure the civilians who crowd the street. The heroes may not be so wise.

Further complications exist since the criminals are not dealing with one another in an honorable and trusting fashion. The seller is a gangster opposed by Mr. Caesar, making him (justifiably) paranoid. He has brought some insurance, in the form of two allies who are waiting in a car across the street from the theater. These allies can be spotted with either a Perception or Streetwise roll, and attack anyone who threatens or harms the supplier. (If the GM wants to toughen the encounter, he can make one of these allies a mercenary supervillain: Armadillo from the *Champions Rule Book*, Lazer from *Classic Enemies*, or even Hammerhand or Piledriver of the Coalition from *Dystopia* would be appropriate choices.)

What the supplier doesn't realize is that the buyers in the van (four skilled normals armed with Skorpion submachine guns) have already seen the writing on the wall, and have joined Mr.

Caesar's gang. Mr. Caesar wants to eliminate all rival suppliers so that he can control the city's drug supply. Along with the money, the briefcase contains a hidden bomb that detonates three minutes after the supplier takes it. (The bomb is a 4d6 K explosion.) Mr. Caesar's men expect to be long gone when it goes off.

If the heroes do not intervene after the supplier enters the van, another factor comes into play. Jimmy Dugan (or a similar NPC pest; Dugan's stats can be found on p. 539 of the *Champions Rule Book*), through his own sources, has also learned of this drug deal and intends to broadcast it live on the 11:00 news. Arriving on the scene just minutes before 11:00, Dugan and his loyal mini-cam operator race from a van marked with the station logo. Dugan tries to climb into the drug-dealers' van, microphone thrust forward, all the while talking:

"This is Jimmy Dugan, live in front of the Elysium Theater, where a major drug deal is going down right now. And it's being brought to you, in your living rooms, live as it happens, by me, Jimmy Dugan. Live. Carry on with your business gentlemen. Try to ignore the camera. Tell me, is that cocaine?"

Needless to say, the dealers are not thrilled to be on T.V. They respond by throwing Dugan out of the van. Then one of the dealers steps out, draws his gun and attempts to kill him. Hopefully, at this point the heroes intervene. In any event, at the first sign of guns the police react.

If the heroes acted before Dugan got involved, the intrepid reporter still rushes into the middle of the action; a scoop is a scoop.

The drug-dealers resist the heroes using their guns, forcing the police to get involved. The heroes find themselves in the middle of a fire-fight with drug-dealers, police, Dugan and crowds of innocent bystanders. And if things weren't bad enough, in the back of the dealers' van sits Mr. Caesar's enforcer: Ogre (see p. 51 for Ogre's statistics).

Mr. Caesar made certain that word of this deal reached the streets. He hopes to eliminate another rival supplier, but he has another plan as well. While he did not tell his own men, he expects a battle with police that will result in the crippling or elimination of the police force's narcotics squad. Ogre was sent to guarantee that.

Ogre doesn't know about the bomb and it wouldn't concern him anyway. He's in no hurry to get away. From Ogre's perspective, the criminals were minding their own business when the police and heroes tried to hurt them, once again acting as bullies throwing their weight around. Well, Ogre knows how to handle bullies...

"Help! Someone's Bleeding!"

While the forces of law and order should prove victorious, either during or immediately after the battle, the heroes discover that a bystander, Noella Chandler (see p. 50), was seriously injured, hit by a ricocheting or stray bullet, an energy blast, a piece of shrapnel from a thrown or damaged object, or caught in the explosion of the bomb. The injury is a serious one with a lot of bleeding; there may be a foreign object in her chest.

This injury is crucial to the adventure and the GM should ensure that the tragedy occurs. Do not roll for this. Do not roll damage. This is a plot device; it just happens. If the heroes did too good a job of protecting innocents, the GM may have to substitute one of the police officers or Dugan's camera-man as the injured party.

If the injury occurs in such a way that a hero feels or appears responsible ("If only I hadn't dodged when Ogre threw that Buick, this tragedy wouldn't have occurred!"), so much the better. If it is appropriate, the police or crowd may blame the hero. Jimmy Dugan may blame the hero anyway.

Noella's life is in grave danger. Stopping the bleeding takes at least one minute and a



Paramedic roll. Then constant attention by a character with Paramedic skill will keep her alive until an ambulance arrives. If no hero has this skill, they could try to race Noella to a hospital if one of the heroes can reach a respectable speed (say greater than 160" per turn). Otherwise, the heroes may have to stand around helplessly while others (surviving police, medically-trained bystanders) try to keep Noella alive.

At the hospital, doctors struggle to save Noella. After two hours, the emergency room chief speaks to any waiting heroes (and later to the press so, if no one cares enough to wait, the heroes still receive the news); Noella Chandler's condition remains critical. She requires surgery to deal with internal injuries. However, because of her loss of blood, the surgeons won't risk the operations without a good quantity of compatible blood. Unfortunately, Noella is a latent

mutant with a nearly unique blood type. No matched blood is available. The hospital is preparing to test volunteers, but their only real hope for a match is Noella's brother, Richard Chandler. Regrettably, the hospital is unable to reach him.

Without matched blood to permit surgery, Noella will probably die within 72 hours. If she does, it will be the heroes' fault (at least according to Jimmy Dugan and the pack-mentality media). If the heroes don't get involved, she will definitely die.

If this isn't enough to get the heroes involved, because they are unconcerned or less than heroic, the GM may wish to prompt them with official pleas for help from the doctors and with well-deserved abuse from the media.

The plot of *Blood Fury* hinges on Noella's survival, so she should not die while the heroes

are trying to save her. However, the adventure also hinges on the heroes' struggles to save her. This responsibility drives the adventure forward and the race against time to preserve a life contributes to the suspense. Don't let the heroes forget it.

Periodic news reports of Noella's failing condition may reach the heroes' ears as the media follows the story of the innocent struck down in the heroes' crime-fighting activities. The heroes can overhear a radio or television report whenever the GM wants to remind them of the life that hangs in the balance.

If the heroes have healing powers or regeneration usable on others that can short-circuit the adventure, the GM has several options. He could rule that Noella's injuries are so severe that the hero's powers were stretched to their limits just preventing her immediate death. He could declare that Noella's latent mutation resists such powers, making them ineffective. Or he could find another reason for the heroes to seek out Richard Chandler. Perhaps, although her body was restored, Noella's will to live was crushed. She fades in and out of a coma but has asked for her brother. She will die if he doesn't arrive to bolster her waning spirit.

Questioning the Prisoners

Some characters may not initially get involved in Noella Chandler's fate either because of callousness or obsession with other concerns. They may instead pursue an investigation of Ogre and his companions, and their connection with the new drug lord, Mr. Caesar.

Ogre refuses to answer any questions. He is not likely to be affected by Presence Attacks, is too tough for most Interrogation to work, and too suspicious for other Presence-based skills to be successful. (Penalties of at least -5 should be applied to the skill rolls and the attempts should be role-played.) Only characters with mental powers are likely to get information from Ogre.

If a hero uses Telepathy (at +10 effect) or orders Ogre to answer questions with Mind Control (at +20 effect) he can learn what Ogre knows. A convincing Mental Illusion of Mechanon questioning him may also persuade him to answer.

Ogre is working for Mr. Caesar, the new drug lord. He doesn't know Mr. Caesar's real name. Ogre met him while hiding out in the city's sewers after his last escape. Mr. Caesar offered him a job and Ogre took it. Since then, he's been the muscle behind Mr. Caesar's takeover. Mr. Caesar is a short, stocky man with a loud voice and big lips. The GM can fill in more description if the heroes press for it. Ogre also knows an address for Mr. Caesar's headquarters (but see below).

If the mentalist goes for a deep telepathic probe (at least +30 effect) and makes a Perception roll, he realizes that Ogre's memories have been tampered with. Restoring his true memories would be difficult and time consuming (requiring a PS: Psyche Reconstruction roll after one day). A Mind Control roll of 50+ (before applying Ogre's vulnerability) can also overcome the effects of Mr. Caesar's brainwashing and allow Ogre to remember.

If Ogre is released or escapes and the heroes follow him (which requires Shadowing rolls or else Ogre spots the heroes and attacks), he goes to the address he believes is Mr. Caesar's headquarters. It is actually the headquarters of a rival drug supplier. If heroes, the police, or Ogre show up there, violence is bound to erupt. There is lots of evidence to arrest this supplier if it can be legally obtained. If Ogre is able to move on after this trap, he wanders about, gets lost, and may eventually throw a violent tantrum.

If Mr. Caesar is certain that Ogre is not being followed, he may arrange for Ogre to be picked up and hidden. If Ogre is arrested again, he eventually breaks out or is freed by Mr. Caesar's men so that he can be present during the final encounter. This break-out occurs while the heroes are out of town trying to locate Richard Chandler.

If the heroes question the other drug-dealers arrested with Ogre, they also refuse to talk. They are more likely to respond, however, to well role-played Presence or skill use. They know the information from the Background (p. 6), but they do not know Mr. Caesar's real name or what he looks like. They work for Mr. Caesar but receive their instructions from one of his lieutenants, Marco Caballero, who brought Ogre with him. The van was owned by one of the arrested dealers.

Noella Chandler was brought to the hospital in the middle of the night, and the GM must

decide how soon after that the heroes are asked to locate Richard Chandler. Whatever length of time is chosen, they shouldn't be able to get past this point in the investigation before being contacted by the hospital. However, if the heroes have absolutely refused to help Noella (reputations be damned) then they may pursue their investigations of Mr. Caesar. If they have Marco's name they can proceed to "A Conversation with Marco" on p. 35, and from there to the final confrontation with Mr. Caesar. However, the heroes' lack of knowledge of Mr. Caesar's real agenda, may result in tragedy.

THE SEARCH FOR RICHARD CHANDLER

The hospital has an address and phone number for Richard Chandler obtained from Noella's personal address book, and have confirmed that he is her only living relative. Richard Chandler lives in the campaign city, a few miles away. The hospital has not been able to reach him by phone, and the heroes have no better luck.

If they go to his address, heroes find that Chandler lives in a third-floor apartment. The door is locked, the blinds are drawn, and no one answers the door. The building superintendent can tell the heroes that Dr. Chandler has been away on business for nearly three weeks, and that he's a scientist with a local research laboratory, although he can't recall the name.

The superintendent doesn't let heroes into the apartment unless they have police powers and show their identification, they successfully use Bribery or Persuasion skills, they use Mind Control or another power to influence his

actions, or they make a Presence Attack at +10 level of effect (for which violent actions, surprise, and exhibiting violent powers don't help unless the 'heroes' are trying to terrorize this innocent man, a choice which ought to affect their reputations).

If the heroes want to enter the apartment without the superintendent's help, they can steal his master key with Sleight of Hand skill rolls as with picking pockets, or they can simply break in using Lockpicking skill or brute force.

Inside the apartment, there is nothing amiss. A Perception roll reveals a thin layer of dust indicating that the apartment has been unoccupied for some time. An examination of the refrigerator reveals sour milk and other food that has gone bad; the milk carton has a "best before" date 20 days earlier than the heroes' investigation. A search of the apartment turns up a photograph of Chandler and his sister; they appear to be happy, loving siblings. In the desk

is a file of financial records indicating that Chandler is employed by Biotechnologies Research, Inc. He regularly gives his sister money to help support her while she's in school. His investments are conservative and present no leads. If a hero who searches the bedroom also makes an Intelligence roll, he realizes that some clothes are gone and that there is no suitcase.

The mailbox for the apartment is near the building's front door. It is locked but can be opened with a Lockpicking roll. Several days' worth of mail is jammed inside. Most is of no interest but there is a credit card bill which, if opened (a criminal offense), is dated two weeks before and shows that the most recent uses of Chandler's credit card were a week before that in the village of Mudford. In Mudford, the locals indicate that when strangers visit the village, they usually have something to do with the nearby government reserve, Seraphim Springs.

Biotechnologies Research, Inc.

Visitors to this small, private research company are referred to the company manager, Albert Gontz (see p. 50). Gontz is a fat man who wears too-tight suits and perspires when confronted by the heroes. His speech is peppered with 'ums' and 'ahs'. Gontz' nervous appearance is normal for him, although the heroes may find it suspicious. In fact, if advised of the life and death nature of the heroes' errand, Gontz freely helps them and gives the following information in response to appropriate questions.

Biotechnologies Research, Inc. is a private company engaged in research and development in the fields of biochemistry, microbiology, and medicine. Dr. Richard Chandler is the leader of their research team. He is an internationally recognized expert in microbiology, genetics, and immunology (characters with those Sciences recognize his name on a skill roll). Chandler is presently away on a short-term contract doing

research for the government. The nature of the project is top secret; Gontz doesn't know anything about it. He does know that Chandler is at a government research laboratory at Seraphim Springs about 200 miles away. Gontz won't tell the heroes, except under compulsion, that Chandler was hired by the Department of Defense.

The heroes may choose to break into Biotechnologies Research, Inc. to gather information. The company is security conscious. Their computers are not normally connected to outside phone lines and therefore aren't accessible by modem. The building's locks and security systems all take -3 to rolls against them. Security systems include normal and infrared cameras in the hallways, and alarms on all doors and windows. As well, there are two armed security guards on duty at night (skilled normals carrying .38 Specials). One stays in the security station monitoring the cameras and alarms. The second man makes walking patrols throughout the building. The two are in constant walkie-talkie contact. At any sign of intrusion, the police are summoned automatically, arriving in five minutes unless one of the guards calls the station, gives a code, and then advises that it was a false alarm.

All of the company's records are on computer. If a character can gain access to the computer for five minutes and make a Computer Programming roll at -2, he can learn all of the information possessed by Gontz. The skill roll can be improved if the character takes more time; the roll is only -1 after 30 minutes. Clever heroes may break in just to connect the computer to the phone lines and leave the time-consuming job of breaking the computer's security to be done from a safe distance.

If a break-in is discovered either at Biotechnologies Research, Inc. or at Chandler's apartment, the police are called in. The investigating detective has Criminology 13- and a stubborn streak to assist him in identifying the 'criminals', tracking them down, and bringing them

before the courts. Threatening or assaulting citizens also summons the police.

The Government

Some heroes may want to check into the government contract before going to Seraphim

Springs. A Bureaucratic roll after five hours on the phone or in Washington discloses that it's a top secret Department of Defense contract issued at the request of the Army. If the heroes want to discover more, see "Operation: Quarantine", p. 22.

SERAPHIM SPRINGS

Seraphim Springs is an isolated wilderness reserve owned by the U.S. government. It is near the small village of Mudford. Anyone in the village can give directions to Seraphim Springs, as it is the only reason strangers come to the area.

The reserve is surrounded by 12-foot-high fences, and signs reading:

KEEP OUT.
THIS IS A RESTRICTED AREA.
U.S. GOVERNMENT PROPERTY.
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.

are posted at regular intervals. A single road enters Seraphim Springs. A guard post is situated out of sight around a bend in the road 500 meters (250") from the boundary. It is manned by two soldiers. Four others are on stand-by in a nearby one-room shack. A chemical toilet is available near by.

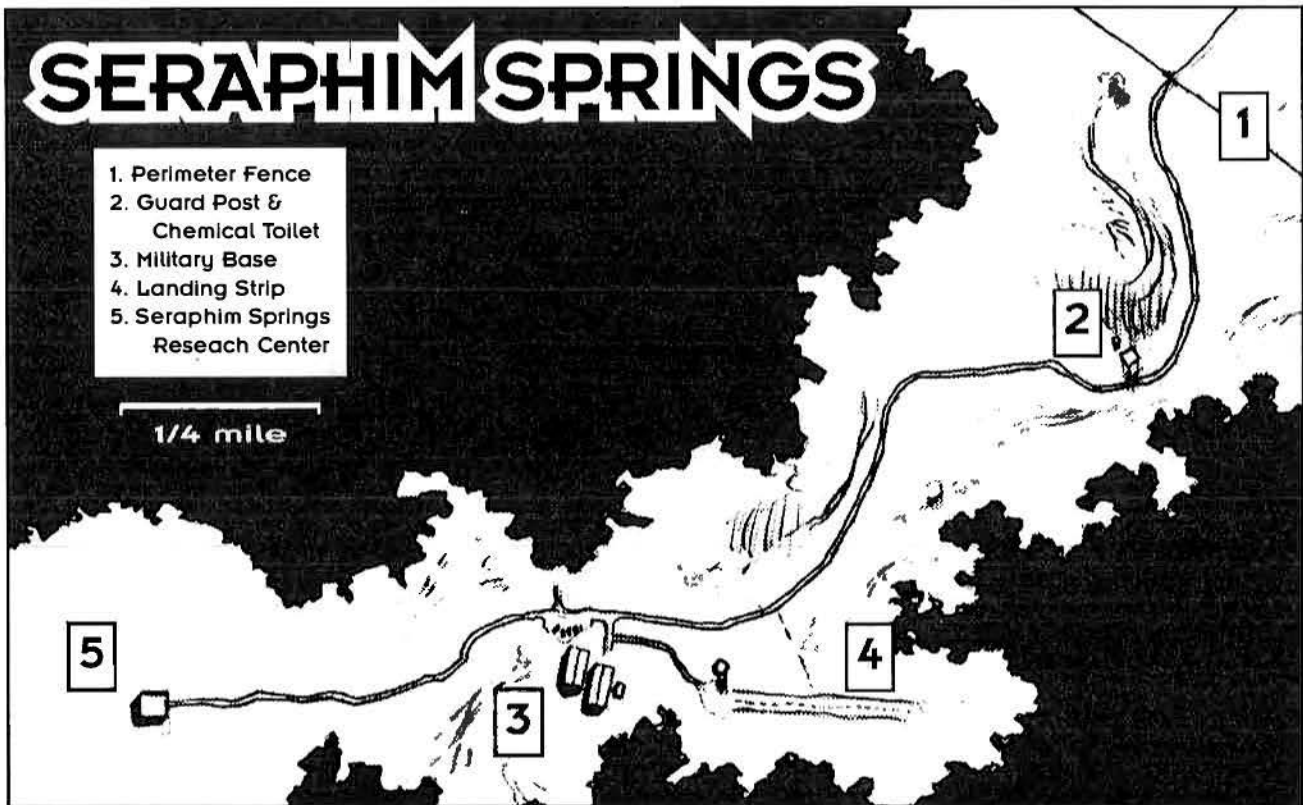
A mile into the interior of Seraphim Springs is a small military base, home to about 60 soldiers under the command of Major Joseph Reynolds. The base has a small landing strip for aircraft. No aircraft are presently here. The base is equipped with five trucks and five jeeps for transport. Major Reynolds is very concerned

with the facility's security. He has groups of soldiers regularly patrolling the reserve.

All of this security is to protect a small, single-storey, red brick building located another half-mile down the road in the heart of the reserve. This is the Seraphim Springs Research Center. There is no cover in which one might hide in a 50-foot (8-hex) radius of the building and it is flood-lit at night (-4 to Stealth rolls of characters who try to cross the area). A team of six soldiers is on guard patrolling outside the building at all times.

The windows are sealed and wired to sound an alarm if broken. The alarms can be bypassed with Security Systems rolls either at the central alarm box inside the building or at a given window. From outside the building bypassing an alarm takes -3 to the roll. If a window alarm is sounded, soldiers from the outside patrols investigate, while maintaining radio contact with the man at reception (below). At the first sign of intruders, the main base is contacted and 20 soldiers arrive at the research center in five minutes.

There are no chimneys or other means of access to the building. The building is air-conditioned but the vents are heavily filtered. (More



than ten levels of Shrinking would be required to pass through the vents, although "Desolidification: not through solid objects" might work).

The only entrance to the building is the front door. Just inside is a reception area manned by a soldier behind a security glass window (DEF 4, BOD 2). He controls access to the rest of the building through an electronically locked security door (DEF 7, BOD 5, which can be opened by a Lockpicking roll at -3 after one turn; Electronics is complementary), speaking to people in the reception area through an intercom. He monitors the window alarms as well, and is in radio contact with the outside guards and the main base.

If the heroes present themselves at the main gate they are initially turned away. However, if they explain why they have come or ask to see the officer in charge, impressing the guards with the seriousness of the situation, they are admitted and escorted to Major Reynolds. To confirm the heroes' identities and mission, Reynolds calls

the hospital. If everything checks out, he takes them to the research center. He won't discuss the classified research that goes on here. (As they are escorted through the reserve the heroes have a chance to observe the security measures described above.) The heroes are asked to wait in the reception area while Dr. Chandler is summoned, and Major Reynolds waits with them.

While they wait, the heroes may overhear a news bulletin from a radio on the soldier/receptionist's desk:

"In the news today, the fate of a young woman who was caught in the middle of a battle involving [the hero group], hangs in the balance. Doctors at the [campaign city] hospital say Noella Chandler is in critical condition and she requires surgery to save her life. Unfortunately, surgery cannot be performed without blood for transfusion and Noella has a very rare blood type. Doctors are trying to locate a relative in the hopes of find-

ing a match. Since every second counts in trying to save this poor victim of violence, doctors are arranging to test volunteers from the public in hopes of finding a match. Doctors warn that the chance of finding a matched donor is unlikely but they are prepared to take every chance to save a life. Meanwhile, [the hero group], who were involved in Noella's injury, are unavailable for comment."

Dr. Chandler, I Presume

Dr. Chandler (see p. 50) arrives through the security door, which is part of an air-tight air-lock. He wears a lab coat over work pants and a

plaid shirt. He is civil but abrupt with the heroes. After listening to them, he coldly indicates that he cannot help;

"Ah. I see. Unfortunately, I am unable to help. As I indicated, I am involved in some very crucial research and must return to it. I'm sorry that you had to journey so far out of your way. Have a pleasant trip back."

What happens next depends largely on the heroes. Dr. Chandler listens to further pleas or arguments for a little while, but eventually brushes them off again ("*I understand. I cannot. I must get back to my research.*"). He won't discuss the nature of his classified research. Presence Attacks and Presence-based skills do not change his attitude. He will not help his sister. It is contrary to his programming.



'Dr. Chandler' is a robot simulacrum of the real Richard Chandler (see p. 53). The army doesn't realize that he is a robot and neither should the heroes when they first meet. The robot is programmed to act as a normal person, however certain powers or skills may give the heroes some clues:

Mental Powers: All attempts to use mental powers on Chandler fail. The robot lacks an EGO. The heroes won't know this; all 'to hit' rolls simply miss.

Tracking Scent or Discriminatory Scent: A character with these enhanced senses who remains in Dr. Chandler's presence for more than a few minutes and makes a Perception roll, or who specifically asks about his scent, notes that he has no scent.

Discriminatory Touch: A character with this enhanced sense who makes contact with the robot's skin and makes a Perception roll notes an absence of the usual oils found on the skin.

N-Ray Vision: This sense almost certainly reveals the robot (depending on the power's limitation).

Infrared Vision: The robot has normal body temperature and so is not normally revealed by Infrared sight. However, close study and a Perception roll at -3 might let a character realize that Dr. Chandler's body temperature is uniform throughout his body and never fluctuates, unlike normal humans.

Microscopic Vision: Microscopic analysis of the robot's skin, which cannot be done at range, reveals that it is synthetic.

Other senses: A variety of other enhanced senses may give the robot away at the GM's discretion. The robot doesn't have a heart beat, for instance. Also, its non-organic components may trigger some unusual Detect senses.

Conversation, PS: Psychiatry or Psychology: After a few minutes conversation with Chandler, a skill roll at -2 discloses an unusually rational and literal mind with a lack of emotional connections to the subject of conversation, or to the parties to the conversation.

PS: Medicine: After a few minutes in the presence of the robot, a Perception roll at -4 and a skill roll may let the character recognize some odd factors about Dr. Chandler. His pupils don't react. He doesn't perspire. He exhibits no stress reactions to the news about his sister. If a character can somehow conduct a medical examination of Chandler, he automatically discovers his robotic nature.

Danger Sense: A hero with an out-of-combat Danger Sense feels a vague uneasiness in the robot's presence but doesn't understand why.

The GM may have a number of clues to give to his players. For dramatic purposes they should not be revealed all at once. Let the heroes interact with Dr. Chandler before revealing the clues. It may also be better to give each character his own clues without the other players learning the information. Preparing notes in advance to hand out to the players as the clues are discovered may be a good idea. The heroes may not be free to talk about what they've discovered while with Dr. Chandler and Major Reynolds. They may not put the pieces together until they get a chance to compare notes.

Finally, the robot may also be revealed if any character uses force upon it. The robot's synthetic skin (DEF 4, BOD 1) can easily be torn, revealing the plastic and metal beneath. A hero, especially if frustrated, may get rough with Chandler even without knowing he is a robot. Any character who attempts even to *lift* Chandler discovers that he weighs more than would be expected. (The GM may wish to require a Perception roll from any character whose STR is greater than 30, since the difference in weight is less impressive to those with great strength.)

If Chandler is discovered to be a robot, and the robot knows that the discovery has been made, it attacks to the full extent of its abilities and attempts to kill every one who knows its true nature. Otherwise it makes every effort to preserve the charade.

Major Reynolds' Reaction

Major Reynolds allows the heroes to deliver their initial message to Dr. Chandler because he is satisfied that it is a matter of life and death. He doesn't allow the heroes to move about unescorted, and he ensures that their initial conversation with Chandler takes place in the reception area, not in the lab. Once their message is delivered (if the fact that Chandler is a robot isn't revealed), he escorts the heroes off the reserve and doesn't let them return without another equally good reason. Reynolds treats the heroes with respect and courtesy, so long as he receives the same, unless they threaten base security or his control over the situation. In that event, he takes all possible steps to restore control and maintain security, including arresting the heroes.

If the heroes prove that Chandler is a robot, presumably by destroying it in battle, Reynolds realizes that he faces a major security breach that's outside his military experience. He wants to contain the heroes until he can get instructions and therefore asks them to remain in his custody and refrain from contacting anyone, as a national security matter. If the heroes refuse, he places them under arrest. If they agree to stay or at least do not resist arrest, they are brought to General Thurgood in Rivertown (see p. 23). If they resist or attempt escape, Reynolds and his men do their best to stop them.

Breaking In

Some heroes may decide to break into the research center, either before or after meeting with Dr. Chandler. The extensive security measures are described on p. 15. The break-in is, of course, illegal and if they are caught and do not at that time have evidence of some more important wrongdoing (such as the fact that Chandler

is a robot), they will be arrested and jailed by the Army.

If a hero gets into Dr. Chandler's laboratory, he may find further clues. A cursory visual inspection reveals a large number of rats in cages, a powerful microscope, and a variety of other scientific equipment not recognizable to the untrained eye. Characters with Science skill in fields such as medicine or biochemistry realize that the equipment is for the analysis and study of biological tissues and fluids. There is equipment for the growth of cultures and a refrigerator for preserving samples. A pair of heavy gloves lie on top of the rat cages. If a character with an out-of-combat Danger Sense approaches the caged rats, he gets a feeling of danger. The rats appear to be excited or distressed. There is also a sophisticated personal computer on a desk with a telephone, a fax machine, and a number of papers and notes. A Perception roll lets a hero notice that an uneaten lunch has been thrown in the waste basket. On a second roll, the hero realizes that the lab is not sterile. In fact, there are a couple of flies buzzing about.

If more time is spent examining the laboratory, more can be learned. The papers on the desk consist of rough notes which cannot be deciphered and Army communiqués demanding reports and emphasizing the importance of quick progress. A typical one concludes,

"I need not remind you of the urgent and volatile nature of our concern. An immediate cure is imperative. If word should leak out before we have a cure, control of the situation may be lost and public panic may ensue."

This is signed by General Thurgood and gives his location as "Operation: Quarantine" in "Rivertown."

An examination of the ongoing work and an SC: Medicine, Biochemistry, Immunology, Genetics or similar roll reveals that the lab is being used in an effort to research a biochemical condition, likely in search of a cure.

The computer has a security system in place but it can be bypassed in one minute with a Computer Programming roll at -3. Remember that rolls can be improved by taking more time. The computer contains reams of technical data only comprehensible to persons with the Sciences mentioned above. Again, an appropriate Science roll can obtain the same information. However, if the hero has access to the computer files, examines the equipment, and makes his Science skill roll by 2, then he realizes that something is odd. If the roll is made by 4 or more (again, heroes may take more time to improve their rolls) the hero realizes that the work being done is not purposeful but a pointless sham. Also, some crucial information has been erased preventing the hero from making any real sense of the problem or the research.

The lab rats, as can be determined if they are examined closely, are not normal. Some act excited and friendly, some are in stupors, and some are dead. Most have wounds from bites and scratches. Each is now kept in a separate cage, however they sometimes attack each other through the bars. Any character who sticks his hand into a cage is attacked. If the character doesn't have active resistant defences or heavy gloves, he is bitten. In that unfortunate event, he may become infected: see "The Rage Poison" on p. 47.

If a hero decides to go so far, he may open up the computer, the telephone, or the fax machine. Inside, on making a Bugging roll (or a KS: Computer/Telephone/Fax Machine roll, or an Electronics roll at -2), he finds a small electronic bug. A character with either the Bugging or Systems Operation skill may analyze the bug with the aid of appropriate tools. It is a highly sophisticated miniaturized device which can monitor all activity involving the piece of equipment and transmit that information by burst transmissions of microwaves.

The Flies: The GM should not over-emphasize the presence of flies in the room. Mentioning them once in the description of the laboratory (and then only after a successful

Perception roll) should be enough. Have faith; the heroes will find them in good time. Most GMs never mention flies in a game, so if you mention one once in this scene, they may pass it by as color. Mention one again in another scene, it might be a coincidence. But if they are mentioned a third time, you can bet the players' suspicions will be aroused. Be patient; the players' reactions can be worth the wait.

While it is unlikely, a hero may decide to kill a fly now. If he is successful and makes a Perception roll (rolled secretly by the GM), or actually states an intention to examine the corpse, then the hero discovers that the flies are tiny electronic devices rather than insects (see p. 54). If one of these 'bugs' is analyzed under a microscope by a character with Bugging or Systems Operation skill, he finds that the bugs are also miniature cameras and audio sensors with microwave burst transmitters similar to the equipment bugs.

If a character tries to trace the microwave signals and has any sort of Electronics, Systems Operation or related skill, he realizes that the signals are being sent into space. A Systems Operation roll discloses that, in fact, they are being bounced off a communications satellite to an (almost) untraceable destination. If a character has specialized tracking equipment, can reach the communications satellite, *and* makes a Systems Operation roll, he can determine the signal's destination and move directly to a confrontation with the criminal mastermind. This is unlikely.

Although it is unlikely that the heroes realize it at this point, the GM should know that Dr. Chandler's researches were being monitored by the criminal mastermind through the robot flies. When it appeared that Chandler was on the verge of a breakthrough, the mastermind kidnapped the scientist and replaced him with a robot simulacrum that sabotaged the research data and placed the equipment bugs.

When the heroes depart this scene, they may be followed by a robot fly, programmed to mon-

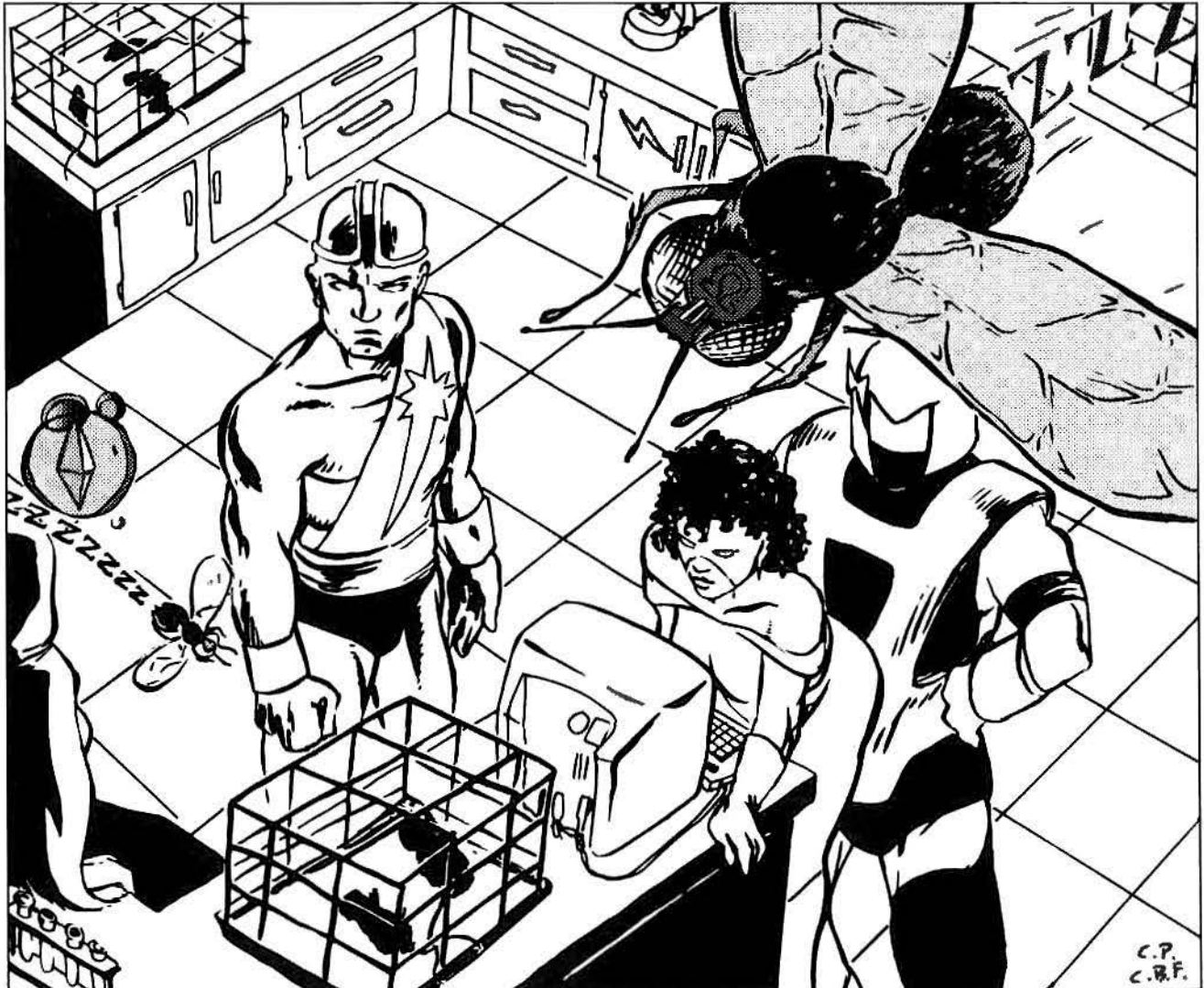
itor their activities. The heroes may also pick up such a spy later in the adventure.

The robot returns: If the heroes are engaged in a thorough examination of the lab and have not yet destroyed the robot Chandler, the GM may wish to interrupt them with the return of 'Chandler' to his lab. Since the flies have observed the heroes' activities and notified the mastermind, the robot is made aware of the heroes' presence in the lab and is instructed to catch them in the act.

Chandler acts shocked and outraged upon discovering the heroes in his laboratory. He tries to telephone the soldiers at the front desk or to run for their aid. It is possible that the heroes

will try to stop him, and his true nature could be revealed at this time. If this happens, the robot attacks to the full extent of its abilities, attempting to kill everyone with the knowledge that it is a robot.

Examining the robot: The robot, or its remaining parts, may be examined once it is destroyed. After five minutes of examination, a SC: Robotics or Cybernetics roll, or an Electronics roll at -2, discloses that the robot is extremely sophisticated. If the Science skill roll is made by 5, and the scientist has examined robots designed by Mechanon before, he notes that this robot is similar to those designed by Mechanon.



OPERATION: QUARANTINE

The trail leads the heroes to Operation: Quarantine, the Army's prepared response to a chemical or biological weapon used in a limited arena. It requires that: 1) the affected area be sealed off to prevent the spread or transmission of the contamination, 2) the harmful agent be identified and neutralized, if possible, and 3) aid be given to those within the affected area.

The operation has been implemented by presidential order in response to events in Pondsville, a small town located some distance from the campaign city. Pondsville and its environs have been sealed off by the Army. The operation is under the command of General Ernest Thurgood (see p. 55), and is headquartered in nearby Rivertown.

The existence of Operation: Quarantine and the Pondsville situation are all classified for national security reasons. However, the heroes, through their investigations, should learn about both.

In the course of their investigations, the heroes may want to talk to the authorities. They may try to get information from several sources:

Contact: President of the United States: The president is fully informed about Operation: Quarantine. If he has a great deal of trust in the heroes and they contact him about any matter relating to Operation: Quarantine, he sends the heroes to General Thurgood with a request that they assist him in any way possible and that the heroes keep all information relating to the operation secret for national security reasons. He also orders the general to fully brief the heroes. If the heroes fail to live up to the

president's trust, it should affect future contacts with him.

Contact: Army High Command: These contacts react similarly to the president.

Other Army Contacts: A Contact (or a PC hero) who is a senior Army officer may make a Bureaucratics roll after an hour or two to learn facts such as the following. Dr. Richard Chandler was one of several scientists hired as part of a top secret Army operation code-named "Operation: Quarantine." This operation was hastily activated three weeks ago under the command of General Ernest Thurgood. The operation is high priority and highly classified. Chandler is assigned to a military research center and training ground at Seraphim Springs. General Thurgood himself is stationed in Rivertown. No further information can be obtained without speaking directly to the high command or to the staff assigned to the operation.

Seraphim Springs: The soldiers stationed here don't know the nature of the special research Chandler is doing. They *do* know that they are assigned to Operation: Quarantine under the command of General Thurgood, but they don't know what Operation: Quarantine *is*. All of the base staff drive into the nearby village of Mudford regularly for good food, a night of relaxation, or just a change of scenery. Dr. Chandler used to make the same trip, but for the last week has stayed at the base. The soldier who cleans his lab each day also knows that Chandler has been throwing away his lunches for the past week.

Major Joseph Reynolds, the Seraphim Springs commander, knows that there has been an outbreak of disease near Rivertown that the Army is attempting to control by quarantine while scientists like Chandler look for a cure. He knows that General Thurgood is there. However, he won't willingly reveal anything about Operation: Quarantine. His concern is to maintain base security and secrecy about the operation as ordered.

Rivertown

This once sleepy small town has become a military encampment. Hundreds of soldiers and their equipment jostle with the townsfolk for room in the town's streets and parks. Roads leading into Rivertown are all closed by the Army; motorists are turned back by soldiers who explain that the Army is conducting training exercises in the area. Telephone calls to the people of Rivertown can't get through: "Mr. Jones' service has been disconnected for nonpayment of accounts," or, "All lines are busy, please try your call again." No outgoing calls can be made. The mail has stopped. Rivertown is effectively cut off from the rest of the world.

The citizens of Rivertown have cooperated with the Army so far, but they are beginning to get restless. Fear, anger, and stress are building, and Rivertown sits poised to explode.

Heroes arriving in Rivertown may face a number of reactions. If they are wanted as criminals, the Army tries to arrest them. If they arrive and, acting peacefully, display any knowledge of Operation: Quarantine, they are escorted under military guard to a meeting with General Thurgood. If they arrive offering their assistance without giving any details about what situation they are to assist with, they are first politely told to leave, but on insistence are brought to the general.

General Thurgood is headquartered in an old motel commandeered for the purpose. Much of the Army's personnel and equipment is stationed in the parking lot and in a park across the street. General Thurgood listens to whatever the heroes have to say and asks probing and thoughtful questions. Afterwards, he has any charges laid by the Army withdrawn (unless the heroes have been particularly obnoxious or uncooperative, have seriously harmed soldiers, or have engaged in destruction of Army equipment).

The general is under the observation of robot flies. The GM should not emphasize this. A single mention of a fly/flies should be enough. If a hero should catch or kill a fly, it can be handled in the same manner as for the fly in Chandler's lab (p. 20). There are also flies monitoring other Operation: Quarantine activities. One of these robot flies could even be reprogrammed to monitor the heroes and follow them around.

If the heroes have somehow met General Thurgood before encountering the robot simulacrum of Dr. Chandler, Thurgood can easily be persuaded to direct them to Seraphim Springs and give permission to deliver their message of mercy. If the heroes have met with Chandler and have not realized his true identity, and have approached the general for help persuading Chandler to help his sister, he regretfully advises the heroes that he cannot help.

If the heroes are under military arrest, General Thurgood has them put in the local jail under heavy guard until the next day when they are turned over to the appropriate military or civilian authorities. If the heroes are not under arrest, but aren't known to cooperate with the government and to preserve government secrets, General Thurgood thanks them for their concern and asks them to leave the area. In fact, he insists. Thurgood doesn't answer any questions about Operation: Quarantine.

If, however, the heroes are trusted by the government or Army, and there is evidence of the robot simulacrum or robot flies at Seraphim Springs, General Thurgood takes the heroes into his confidence and asks for their help.

General Thurgood's Briefing

General Thurgood gives the following information to the heroes (not necessarily in these exact words). He responds appropriately to any questions. To the general, this is a deadly serious matter. If the heroes want to know how they can help, he asks them for suggestions; after all, the heroes know their own capabilities best. Thurgood will take what help he can get. If pressed, however, what he needs most is some idea of how this all started. For that, he needs someone to go into Pondsville who won't get hurt.

"What I'm about to tell you is classified top secret by order of the president. It is governed by the National Security Act and it is a crime to reveal it to unauthorized persons. If you have any problem with that stop me now."

General Thurgood pauses, releases a tired sigh, brushes a fly off some notes, and begins, "Twenty-four days ago, the state police here in Rivertown received this telephone call."

The general slips a cassette into his tape-player. "Hello. This is Darryl Gorman, chief of police here in Pondsville. Look, I've got a real problem up here and I need some help. A bunch of people are goin' a little wild, fightin' and tearin' up the town..."

"A bunch of people? What are we talking about here, Mr. Gorman?", interrupts a male voice.

"A whole bunch! Way more'n the three of us can handle, that's fer sure. So we'd be real appreciative if you'd send over a dozen or so men to help us out."

"I'll transfer your call to the watch sergeant, sir."

Thurgood shuts off the tape. "There's no tape of the rest of the conversation. I'm told the sergeant indicated that he was not responsible for matters within Pondsville, and that he couldn't spare a dozen men, but that he would send a car over as soon as he could spare a man. That man went into Pondsville four hours later and never reported back.

"A second car, with two officers this time, was in Pondsville within the hour. They initially reported that the town was quiet. Then they radioed in that they saw what looked like a body in a yard. The next radio contact was just a few minutes later. The sounds in the background are people pounding on the car."

Thurgood slips another tape into the machine. "This is car 49. Officer down. Repeat, OFFICER DOWN! Get me some back up! Oh Jeez! They're all monsters, vampires! They were drinking Janet's blood! Get me outta here!"

Pounding can be heard in the background and then the starting of a car engine. The crash of shattering glass is followed by two gun shots.

"Sorry, Janet. I'm running. I'm running. I gotta get away. Oh nooo...I just ran over a little kid! Wait. She's getting up. I gotta get away. They're not human.

Send back up, please. Send for the blasted Army..."

Thurgood stops the tape.

"Officer Bradley returned to the Rivertown state police barracks. He was in shock. Also he was suffering from bruises, cuts, scratches, and even bites. He had three broken ribs and a fractured forearm. Six hours later while being debriefed at the local hospital, Bradley went berserk and attacked his fellow police officers, according to this report, "like an animal, clawing, biting, kicking." It took four officers to restrain him so he could be sedated. We've put him in isolation now. We did the same for the four officers and the medical staff who treated him. Three of them have manifested similar symptoms. One has since died.

"The state police set up road blocks around Pondsville. The governor called Washington and the Army was sent in under my command. I instituted Operation: Quarantine, the Army's prepared response to a chemical or biological weapon used in a limited arena. It requires that the affected area be sealed off to prevent the spread or transmission of the contamination. Second, if possible, the harmful agent is to be identified, and only third are we to render aid to those within the area of effect. Sounds cold, doesn't it? I wish I could feel that way.

"On my orders, my men have shot and killed eight people so far trying to leave the quarantine area. They wouldn't turn back. Some of them may not have been contaminated. I couldn't take the chance.

"I sent a team of trained men and women in self-contained environment

suits into Pondsville to assess the situation. They found several bodies, most showing signs of violence. My team was attacked by the people of Pondsville. Three didn't get out. Three did but two of them had serious injuries and their suit's integrity had been violated. They are also in isolation and have developed the same symptoms. The sixth man is in shock and has suffered a total mental breakdown.

"I sent another team in with environment suits in a tank. The tank was swarmed but the team inside was safe. They couldn't see much from in there, though. The death toll seems to be rising, but there are still a lot of crazed people in Pondsville. I haven't been able to help them.

"I've seconded 17 scientists, top men and women, who are working here and in secure military laboratories. They've made almost no progress. At one point it looked like Chandler was on to something, but it didn't pan out. We did learn that one of Pondsville's two doctors, a Dr. Fergus Glower, age 69, contacted the Rivertown hospital seeking advice the day before all this began. He apparently had an unusual number of patients, children, displaying symptoms of fever, restlessness, and irritability.

"I believe that we are dealing with a biological communicative agent — a disease — of unknown origin. There is no economic or strategic importance to this area. That rules out a foreign power or even criminal elements as responsible. No demands or claims of responsibility have been received so we can rule out blackmail or terrorists. There is no facility in the area from

which any experimental agent could have escaped.

"The Pondsville disease's vector for transmission is not clear. It may be airborne but more likely it's communicated through physical contact. All of the victims seem to have had open wounds. The disease seems to have the following symptoms: fever, increased perspiration and salivation, extreme aggressive behavior, paranoia and delusions, heightened physical strength during a period of heightened activity followed by a depressed quiet state, coma, and eventually death.

"One other thing. The infected seem to crave the taste of blood."

Heroes who are *not* briefed by the Army may still want to investigate, even after the Army has sent them away. Several avenues present themselves. All of the facts in the hands of General Thurgood are in top secret, limited access files in the Pentagon. If heroes try to break in there the GM is on his own. The same information is in the Pentagon's computers similarly protected. These computers are "on line" but to crack that computer's security requires a Computer Programming roll at -8 (at least).

General Thurgood's mind may simply be read by a telepath, he might be mind-controlled into briefing the heroes, or he could even be subjected to an appropriate Mental Illusion persuading him to conduct the briefing. However, if afterwards Thurgood becomes aware of this mental tampering, he'll be furious. He will have the heroes up on criminal charges for interfering with an officer in the course of his duty, theft of classified information, and anything else he can think of. Even if he can't hold them or get a conviction, they will have earned the distrust

of the general and his friends within the Army.

The heroes may decide to break into Thurgood's office/quarters in Rivertown to get information. This requires getting into Rivertown past the Army's road blocks and patrols. Then they must move through a town crawling with soldiers. The next hurdle is getting past the armed soldiers standing guard outside the motel room used by General Thurgood as both quarters and command post. Inside the room are the general's notes and records. Unfortunately for would-be burglars, the general is often present. Even if he isn't, the heroes might be interrupted by his return. (This is a good way to introduce some suspense and yet let the heroes get the information they came for.) The room's door and windows are locked, but the locks are not particularly challenging. If heroes are spotted sneaking around Rivertown or breaking into General Thurgood's room, the Army will have them up on criminal charges.

Less risky than breaking into General Thurgood's headquarters, is for a hero in Rivertown to monitor conversations and activities. Careful shadowing and eavesdropping by stealthy or disguised heroes, or the use of Conversation by a disguised hero, allows him to learn much of the information from General Thurgood's briefing. This takes several hours and the risk of discovery still exists. GM's may wish to role-play some of these encounters as well.

Lastly, aerial reconnaissance shows the Army's position and movements surrounding and quarantining Pondsville. The airspace is, of course, restricted, and if the hero is spotted he will have problems with the Army.

The GM should keep in mind that, while the encounters and events occurring in Rivertown can and should be entertaining, challenging, and sometimes exciting, the heroes should be able to get at least enough information to let them decide to go into Pondsville to pursue their investigations.

THE PONDVILLE HORROR

At some point, the heroes should decide to go into Pondsville to search for clues. The Army has several environment suits that they can borrow or steal, depending on their ongoing relationship with the Army. These suits give the protection of Life Support: Immune To Disease, Breathing Is Self-Contained for the two hours which their air tanks last. These suits only fit characters of roughly average human build between 5'6" and 6'6" tall. Each suit has a DEF of 2 that does not protect the wearer. If the DEF

is exceeded, the suit's integrity is violated and the Life Support protection is lost. It may be damaged by the use of some powers by the wearer, such as energy blasts, depending on the special effect. It is an OIF.

If the heroes are not operating with Army sanction, they have to get past the Army cordon around Pondsville.

(GM note: While GMing the exploration of Pondsville, strive for a feeling of suspense and horror. Suspense is largely a matter of mood. Try



to eliminate distractions. Consider the lighting and music in your playing space. Think about how you are using your voice. A slow, softer, modulated tone, with controlled energy, creates more tension than talking quickly, loudly, and excitedly. As well, consider your use of description. Too much is tedious, not suspenseful. Too little is bland. Pondsville is full of horrors and violence. How graphic should you be in your description? You want to communicate how terrible it is in Pondsville and that means painting pictures with words. However some players will be amused or disgusted by graphic descriptions. That doesn't build tension. Use description with restraint and art, but use it.)

Pondsville was once a pleasant, cheery village of neat houses surrounded by well-tended gardens and white picket fences. Baseball was played in its parks. A local band marched down Main Street on holidays. The schoolyard echoed with laughter and shouts of children. On Sundays, hymns filled the churches. It was a good place to live.

Now Pondsville is a ghost town. The ghosts are not long dead, some are not dead yet. The artifacts from its life lie abandoned, strewn carelessly about town. A lawnmower sits in the middle of a lawn that was left half-cut weeks ago, and still has one side longer than the other. Its gas tank is empty. Two cars collided in the middle of the street and still remain there. A small blonde-haired doll dressed in a pink dress with blood stains lies on a sidewalk.

There is no sound of human life. Flies buzz around the bodies that litter the town. Carrion birds and dogs worry at half-devoured rotten flesh, tearing away and carrying off pieces.

Some people died in the open, from terrible wounds inflicted by their neighbors. Others crept away, hid, and waited for death. Some died suddenly. Others died slowly from wounds or the disease. Bodies lie in the street, in offices, stores, and homes. In beds and under them. Huddled in basements or dark closets. Some died recently. Some have been dead for weeks. A few have been buried, most have not. They lie

black and bloated as they decay where life left them. There is no peace, no dignity in these deaths.

And everywhere there is the stench of dead things. Without the protection of the environment suits, the stink of decomposing human flesh is almost overpowering for one whose sense of smell is normal. It is far worse for those with sensitive noses. The effect can make strong people physically ill.

Most of the more than 1,000 people who once lived here are dead. They experienced pain, fear, and bloody violence. They felt horror at what was done by friends and loved ones, and by what they did *to* friends and loved ones. Pondsville has been the site of extreme and prolonged psychic anguish. The intensity of emotion, its duration and repetition, has resulted in lingering resonances on psychic levels. As they approach Pondsville, psychically sensitive characters begin to experience vague feelings of dread, fear, anger, and pain. The sensations grow in force as the sensitive approaches the village. By the time he reaches the village edge, the resonances become almost overwhelming. (Treat this as a constant, area-effect, 8d6 Mind Control command to flee the village and never return, that only affects the psychically sensitive. It can be resisted with EGO rolls, and the GM should only call for fresh resistance EGO rolls every few minutes unless stressful situations, such as combat or a fright, arise.) Some characters may also see apparitions of especially emotionally traumatic events being replayed in the psychic ether (as 8d6 Mental Illusions). For example, the psychic might witness a teenager violently attacking and killing her mother (perhaps even from the mother's perspective!). Mind Scanning Pondsville from a distance might expose a sensitive to similar effects.

Non-sensitives are, of course, oblivious to these phenomena.

The Survivors

Not everyone in Pondsville is dead, yet. Those who still live can be divided into two groups: those who suffer from the Rage Poison, and the few who do not.

Most of the infected have reached the final stages of the disease. The heroes may find them comatose, or weak, depressed, and inactive. They are dehydrated, starving, and near death. Some may even be paralyzed.

However there are still many, the last infected and those with hardy constitutions, who remain active, vigorous, and vicious. Some wander alone, but many travel in fractious packs. The slightest irritation can set a pack of these infected humans at each others' throats. Many bear wounds from previous battles. When they encounter the heroes, they are initially friendly and welcoming. The slightest provocation or the sight of blood, however, can trigger a furious attack. Then the heroes may be in for a battle for their lives, where injury may mean infection and eventual death.

In any situation where a hero must battle the townspeople and is outnumbered, the GM can make them more credible opponents by giving the townspeople the benefits of multiple attackers bonuses (see the *Champions Rule Book*, p. 150). Since the townspeople have not trained together, the benefits of the bonus should be reduced by 2. Therefore, if a single hero is confronted by four townspeople who coordinate, the hero is only at -1 to his DCV.

The Rage Poison section (p. 47) contains information on how heroes might become infected and on the progress of the disease. An infected hero may pose a serious challenge for his teammates.

The following are typical encounters in Pondsville. The GM is encouraged to create his own:

- 1) On the outskirts of the town sits a two-storey wood frame farmhouse. On the veran-

da, a dog lies unmoving. A porch swing creaks in the soft breeze. Lights waver from behind the curtained windows.

If a hero approaches the house, the dog leaps up and begins barking. It attacks anyone who sets foot on the porch or tries to enter the house. The dog is secured by a rope to prevent it from leaving.

Within moments of the dog beginning to bark, a man comes out of the farmhouse. He is stoop-shouldered, with grizzled gray hair and a beard. He carries a shotgun and takes aim at anyone approaching.

The man is Ezra McCubbin. His dog is Banjo. Unseen behind the window curtains is Ezra's daughter-in-law, armed with a rifle. More information about these characters and what they have gone through can be found in the Characters section (p.56).

"Now hold it right there, you people.
Don't take another step."

Ezra trusts no one. Too many of his friends and neighbors have behaved wildly. He doesn't hesitate to shoot anyone who comes closer without his permission. Ezra talks to the heroes at a distance and answers questions. However, if a hero wants to come closer or to help Ezra, he has to make a Persuasion roll at -3 or a Presence Attack, without intimidation, at the +20 level of effect to win him over. Otherwise, Ezra resists.

- 2) The heroes walk down a street in Pondsville. Litter slithers along the road on the gentle wind. A fly buzzes past and circles as it goes about its business. The setting is almost pastoral, except for the blackened bodies in the gutters.

"Yoo hoo! Yoo hoo!", cries a voice.

The heroes look around and see a woman standing in the door of a neat house behind a white picket fence. She has graying hair and wears an apron and a calico dress. She waves

Blood Fury

and smiles at the heroes while other women peer out the window.

"Over here. We were just having some iced tea and saw you. I'm so excited! I've never met a real celebrity before. And you're such handsome young men in person. Would you like to join us for some iced tea?"

The women are eager to invite the heroes in, and are excited by the prospect. Unfortunately, they are under the influence of the first (excitement) stage of the Rage Poison disease (see p. 51). These older, middle-class women were a group of friends who regularly played cards together, but now they've gathered together out of concern about the events in Pondsville. They are thrilled and relieved that the heroes have

come to save them. Close examination shows that they all have scabs and wounds from various fights. Their clothes may be torn in places.

The women are gracious, chatty, giggling hostesses who pepper the heroes with questions while offering iced tea and cookies. They also answer questions. Inevitably however, one of the women becomes suddenly annoyed and flies into a violent rage. This may be caused by a hero refusing to come sit with her, a hero leaving abruptly (*"How rude!"*), a hero refusing another cookie (or refusing to take off his environment suit), or one of the women blaming another for the nasty bite wound on her calf (*"I only bit you because you pulled my hair!"*) *"Well, you started it!"* *"Did not!"*. The heroes are soon involved in a vicious brawl, defending themselves, trying



to prevent the ladies from doing any more harm to each other, or both.

- 3) Another house is dark. The front door swings and bangs in the wind. From within drifts the muffled sound of music. The door's lock and latch are broken. The carpet crunches under foot where spilled blood has dried to cake the shag.

In the living room, the heroes find scattered small "action-figure" dolls of superheroes, perhaps themselves. The stereo is playing music from a radio station in another town; "*Ob la di. Ob la da. Life goes on, bra!*", sing the Beatles.

In the kitchen lies the body of a man in a pool of dried blood. His back is riddled with stab wounds, and he's been dead for days. Someone has smeared the blood on the floor in an attempt to clean it up. Footprints have been tracked through it and about the house.

Upstairs, a hero can find a bedroom. On its walls are posters of baseball players and superheroes, and model airplanes and superhero-vehicles hang by threads from the ceiling. On the bed, dressed in a suit and tie, lies a young boy, laid out as for a funeral. He has been dead longer than the man downstairs. Insects crawl over the body and out of its ears, nose, and mouth.

A noise startles the heroes. Something moved in the closet. Huddled on the closet floor is a woman, perhaps in her early 30's. Haggard and emaciated she clutches a blood-stained knife in blood-stained hands. Dried blood crusts her lips and chin. She stares unmoving at the heroes with huge, pain-filled eyes.

The woman gurgles something. Then she croaks incomprehensibly. The third time she tries the heroes can make out raspy words.

"Help me...Please...Help me. Ob la di. Ob la da. Life goes on, bra! La la how the life goes on."

This woman's son was one of the early victims of the Rage Poison. When he went through the excitement stages, he bit and scratched his mother, infecting her. When he died, Pondsville was already collapsing and funeral services were not available. The parents laid the boy out themselves. Later as the disease affected her, she killed her husband in a fit of rage, and under the influence of the disease, drank his blood. Now she is in the final stages of the disease, in physical and psychic pain. She will soon slip into a coma and die.

- 4) On the main street of Pondsville there is no sign of human life. The windows of the few stores have been smashed. Televisions are still playing in the windows of one of the stores; five Jimmy Dugans, all talking at once, their faces flanked by broken sets with shattered screens.

"Doctors continue a close watch over young Noella Chandler, who is not expected to be able to survive another 24 hours without life-saving surgery. That surgery cannot be performed without blood from a compatible donor. Hundreds of volunteers have come to the hospital to be tested in, so far, unsuccessful efforts to find a match. The best hope, doctors say, is for a blood relative to come forward, but so far no relative has appeared. And so the hours of Noella Chandler's life continue to tick away.

"Meanwhile, the whereabouts of the so-called heroes who must bear some responsibility in this tragic affair continues to be a mystery..."

Next door to the televisions, the heroes can find a sporting goods store. Behind its broken windows nothing can be seen because furniture has been piled in the dis-

play area, the doors are nailed shut, and the windows are boarded.

If the heroes disturb the barricades or try to enter, they are greeted by the blast from a powerful hunting rifle. Inside the sporting goods store, with a rack of loaded Springfield rifles and plenty of ammunition, is Leroy Buchanan (see p. 57). He has a couple of loaded 12 gauge shotguns handy as well. Leroy has cracked under the strain of living through events in Pondsville these past few weeks. He is prone to flashing back to his Vietnam experiences and can no longer separate that war from his present predicament. He is not infected, however he needs psychiatric care.

- 5) Corpses litter Pondsville's streets and yards, and each new turning exposes a new vision of death, violence, and loss. The heroes, surging with vitality and power, feel alien. There is no place for them here.

A hero's neck crawls with the feeling of being watched. Looking around, he spots a ghostly pale face peering from an attic window for only a moment and then it vanishes.

If the hero investigates the house, he finds the door locked and the windows latched. Entering, each step on the varnished hardwood floor echoes in the silence. The stairs creak under his weight as he climbs. Each room he passes is neat and undisturbed but devoid of life. The air is stale and dry. Behind a door, another set of stairs lead up to the attic.

The attic is cluttered with the debris of a lifetime. An old rocking chair rests by a small table heaped with dusty photograph albums. A wedding dress hangs in a plastic bag from a nail in a beam. Old souvenir pennants are tacked to the slanted roof. A clay ashtray made by a child sits in a box, broken in two.

Amongst the bric-a-brac is an old steamer trunk. Hidden within Joanie Davis (see p.

- 57) cowers, desperately hoping she will remain undiscovered.

Joanie has not yet been infected. The rest of her family was infected and is now dead. Joanie learned early to avoid them and the other townspeople who are now prone to random violence.

If she is found, Joanie runs as fast and long as she can to escape. If the heroes let her go, she probably runs into a pack of infected victims to be torn apart unless the heroes intervene.

If Joanie is stopped, she can be calmed with a Persuasion roll, and she then cooperates with the heroes. However, she really wants them to just take her and leave town as quickly as possible.

- 6) The heroes pick their way past the unmoving dead. The only noise they hear is their own breathing. Then suddenly the silence is shattered by a cry for help. Rounding a corner, the heroes see a lone man running toward them. Pursuing him is a throng of people, like hounds on the tail of a rabbit. The man stumbles and the hunters are upon him. Snarling and growling, they tear at him with teeth and nails.

The heroes have to intercede to save the beleaguered man, and possibly others as the members of the human pack begin to fight among themselves for a piece of prey, once blood begins to flow. The pack converges on any hero who interferes with it.

The pack consists of about two-dozen men and women, all of whom are victims of the Rage Poison in its first stage (see p. 51). Even if the heroes rescue the pursued man, he may later attack them under the influence of the disease.

The Search for Clues

What happened here? A thorough search of Pondsville could take days. The heroes can cut that time by splitting up and not looking everywhere. The following clues may be found if the heroes look in the right places:

- 1) In most houses where school-age children lived, notices of regular school vaccinations/booster-shots can be found. The shots were given 26 days ago. (Two days before the local police first called for assistance.)
- 2) At the Pondsville school, notices on the wall announce the vaccination/booster-shot program. A local doctor, Dr. Walter Yee, administered the injections. The signed authorizations from the parents of the students are in the school files. Almost all of the school's students received the shots. Attendance records also reveal an extraordinary number of absences the following day. Several parents were concerned about their children's fevers. Attendance decreased further the next two days for both students and teachers. Then the records stop.
- 3) In Dr. Glowrer's office, which is in his home, the heroes find the body of the doctor who died days ago as a result of violence. Patient files are stacked on his desk. It requires an INT roll to read the doctor's handwriting, but an examination of those records shows that, beginning on the morning 25 days ago, Dr. Glowrer saw a number of children with symptoms of fever, restlessness, and irritability. Initially, he treated it as a flu virus, but by the end of the day, his notes make reference to incidents of violence and "adrenaline-induced strength." Office tests of blood samples were incon-

clusive. By the following day, adults were experiencing the same symptoms. The doctor was preparing blood samples to be shipped to Rivertown for more extensive testing.

On a note pad, the heroes find his efforts to trace the origin point of the infection. Unfortunately, it also requires an INT roll to read the doctor's handwriting here. The notes say,

"— First appears with children — less resistance? — earlier exposure? — the school? — a student or teacher? — *Booster shots??*"

If the heroes check Dr. Glowrer's calendar, they find that he was on call for the town's other doctor, Dr. Yee, on the weekend 36 days earlier, ten days before the infection's outbreak.

4. At the Pondsville Medical Centre the heroes find the offices of the town's other doctor, Dr. Walter Yee. The heroes also find the doctor in his office along with his nurse, Lisa Wilcox, R.N., and receptionist/wife, Helen, apparently unaffected by the disease. They carry on calmly and disturbingly normally, almost ignoring the events that have transformed Pondsville. As far as the doctor is concerned, *"this is just a bug going around. No need to worry. If you'd like I can give you a vitamin injection to boost your resistance."*

The doctor and his staff are robot simulacra. The vitamin injection is the same booster-shot given to the children of Pondsville. It contains the virus responsible for the Pondsville disease. These robots' true nature can be discovered in the same fashions as applied to the robot simulacrum of Dr. Chandler in Seraphim Springs (p. 18). These robots attack to kill if their secret is penetrated. As well, should any effort be made to search their offices or records, the robots attack.

The doctor's records show similar symptoms in patients as did Dr. Glower's. However, in each case, the doctor indicated no concern, and suggested the patient carry on normally. A check of the doctor's calendar shows that he, his nurse, and his wife visited the campaign city for a weekend seminar on viral infection 36 days ago. A search of the office reveals a copy of the invitation to the free seminar, sponsored by Phillips Pharmaceuticals, Ltd.

In a cabinet, the heroes may also find a box of vials, mostly empty now, of the booster-shot vaccine, that was given to the children of Pondsville. The box is labelled as containing the usual vaccine, manufactured by Phillips Pharmaceuticals. The *real* vaccine, manufactured by a different, larger, pharmaceutical company, is all intact in a sealed box also stored in the cabinet.

The heroes should be able to deduce by now that the doctor was invited, with his staff, to the campaign city for a free seminar. He went with his wife and nurse, and they were kidnapped and replaced by robots. The robots returned to Pondsville and, using the school booster-shot program as cover, began infecting the children of Pondsville. If the players don't put it together, allow them a Deduction roll.

The Clues

The Robots: The nature of the robots, and what might be learned from analyzing their remains is the same as discussed with respect to the Chandler simulacrum in the Seraphim Springs section.

The Flies: There are thousands of flies in Pondsville, drawn by the hundreds of decomposing corpses. While most of these flies are regular houseflies, there are a number of miniaturized robotic flies here, too. These flies may shadow the heroes, monitoring their activities, rather than be

attracted to the dead, and the heroes could discover one of these. One of the robot flies here may even be permanently assigned to monitor the heroes.

The Toxin: Intense microscopic analysis determines that the toxin is impregnated with viruses. For more information, see the section on The Rage Poison, p. 47.

The Packaging: The box and vials in which the toxin was packaged contain the best clues for the heroes. The box comes from Phillips Pharmaceuticals. If the heroes find no other clues, they should find this box so they can still investigate that company. On a KS: Business or a KS: Campaign City roll at -2 a hero recalls that Phillips was a campaign-city company that went bankrupt six months ago and completely shut down operations.

The box is lined and padded with shredded newspapers, which are from a major daily in the campaign city.

If the unopened vials are examined and dusted for fingerprints by a character with Criminology, two fingerprints are found. A search of police fingerprint records identifies them as belonging to Marco Caballero, a small-time thug. A hero with Retrocognition powers might also see Marco packing the vials.

Anyone carefully examining the box and its contents and making a Perception roll finds a tiny amount of a white powder. Chemical analysis of the powder, by a character with Criminology or an appropriate Science, reveals that the powder is cocaine. A hero with Discriminatory Smell also, on a Perception roll, detects cocaine in the box.

The cocaine is too pure to belong to a user. It hasn't been cut for street distribution, and must belong to a high-level dealer. Every hero should realize what it would mean if the campaign city's drug supply was contaminated with the same toxin responsible for the Pondsville horror.

A CONVERSATION WITH MARCO

The race to save Noella Chandler is almost out of time. By the time the heroes are ready to leave Pondsville, it should be late in the day following Noella's injury. Without surgery, she won't live to see another sunrise. It is up to the heroes whether she lives or dies.

The heroes may also realize that time is of the essence in preventing the release of the Rage Poison in the campaign city.

Characters leaving Pondsville must either surrender to the Army or evade its cordon. The Army wants to restrain anyone who comes out of Pondsville without an intact environment suit, in order to perform medical examinations. It also tries to arrest anyone who entered Pondsville without permission. Unfortunately, cooperating with the Army means letting Noella die. Make certain the heroes understand this. General Thurgood can tell them that their quarantine is indefinite. If the heroes want to save Noella, they have to escape the quarantine.

Heroes who escape will be hunted by the Army and civilian authorities until they surrender. The GM can and should use these hunters to keep the pressure on the heroes for the rest of the adventure. Having PRIMUS or SAT camped out at the heroes' base or on their tails could put a crimp in some heroes' activities. A brief skirmish can also add some action if the game begins to lag in the next phase of investigation.

The heroes have only one hope of finding Richard Chandler. They have to find whoever is responsible for the Pondsville horror. If the heroes have no idea how to proceed, the GM can prompt them with a Deduction roll to look into Phillips Pharmaceuticals, the company whose box held the Rage Poison.

Phillips Pharmaceuticals, Ltd.

This small pharmaceutical manufacturer quietly went out of business six months ago. Its remaining products and drugs were sold and removed from the premises at that time. The company's offices and production facilities were housed in one building which has been locked and boarded up.

The heroes find the building still locked, but an inspection reveals (on a Perception roll) that the building has been broken into through a window near the back. The security system was shut down when the building's power was turned off, so no alarm would have been sounded.

Investigation can disclose the following information, if the heroes also take the appropriate steps:

- 1) By examining the room on the other side of the broken window (the shipping room) and making a Criminology roll, the hero sees that dust was only disturbed in the packing and shipping rooms. The burglar did not go past those areas. Only empty boxes, like a few others that remain behind, could have been taken. These boxes are similar to the one found in Pondsville. If the roll is made by 3 or more, the hero also realizes from the level of dust that the break-in occurred 5-8 weeks ago.
- 2) Dusting for fingerprints on the windowsill reveals a clear set of prints if a Criminology

roll is made. Police records identify these as belonging to Marco Caballero.

- 3) If the floor is examined where the dust was disturbed, and a Perception roll is made at -3, a small clump of dirt can be discovered. Chemical testing and a Criminology roll reveals that it contains a small amount of uncut, high-grade cocaine such as would belong to dealers before it is cut for the street. (The clump of dirt was carried in on the intruder's shoe and indicates that the intruder had been in an environment where there were particles of high-grade cocaine which adhered to the dirt.)
- 4) If the floor is examined and a Perception roll is made, the hero finds a cigar butt. A Criminology roll lets the hero determine that the level of dust both under and on top of the cigar indicates that it was left at the time of the break-in. A Criminology roll and appropriate testing or consultation with a tobacconist reveals that the cigar is made from a special blend of Cuban tobaccos. The cigar has a distinctive odor which will be recognized by anyone with Discriminatory Scent if it is ever again encountered.
- 5) With another Perception roll, the hero may also find a matchbook. If a Criminology roll is made, the level of dust both under and on top of the matchbook confirms that it was left at the time of the break-in. The matchbook has the name and address of a bowling alley and pool hall: "Tony's Rack and Roll."

For heroes who do not find the fingerprints, the cigar and matchbook are essential clues. They must be found. If the heroes somehow all miss their Perception rolls, give the clues to the hero who is most seriously involved in clue-seeking/detective work.

The GM should be aware that, six weeks ago, Marco Caballero, acting on instructions from Mr. Caesar, broke into the building and stole some old packing boxes, like the one the heroes

found in Pondsville. While inside Marco stopped and smoked a cigar.

Hitting the Streets

At some point, the heroes may try to use Streetwise skills and street contacts to find some answers or to find someone. If the heroes don't know what or who they're looking for, this won't be very useful. If the heroes are looking for Mr. Caesar, he is almost impossible to find. With a Streetwise roll at -3, after at least an hour's searching, the heroes learn that word on the street has it that Marco Caballero has some kind of connection with Mr. Caesar. If another Streetwise roll is made at -3, they also learn that Mr. Caesar has called some kind of meeting tonight where there is going to be a major distribution of drugs. The location of the meeting is not known to the source.

If a hero wishes to pursue the clue, he may (if he makes another Streetwise roll at -2 after at least one hour) find a drug-dealer who knows about the meeting and was going to attend. This dealer doesn't know Mr. Caesar's identity or the location of his headquarters. However, he can be intimidated into giving the hero the time and place of the meeting. He has Presence 15 and is at -3 to Persuasion, Bribery, and Interrogation rolls because of his fear of reprisals from Mr. Caesar. Conversation and Seduction work without penalty but take longer. If the heroes learn the location of the meeting called by Mr. Caesar, they can proceed directly to the final scene, "The Death-Dealers," p.40.

If the heroes are looking for Marco, a Streetwise roll at -1, a KS: Local Criminals roll, or other appropriate skill or contact, lets them learn that Marco hangs out at Tony's Rack and Roll, and also that Marco has some kind of connection with Mr. Caesar.

The GM can use the time taken by street investigations to shift the game time to night without using any additional real time.

Tony's Rack and Roll

Tony's is located in a seedy, dangerous part of town. It should be night by the time the heroes arrive. This run-down bowling alley has been equipped with a bar and several pool tables available for rent by the hour. Its clientele is disreputable at best. Thugs, cutthroats, and murderers would be closer to the truth. The air is filled with smoke, and tinny music comes from a cheap radio.

The heroes may overhear a news update about Noella:

"Hundreds of concerned citizens are gathering this evening outside the [campaign city] hospital in a candlelight vigil for Noella Chandler. The young woman was critically injured in a battle involving members of [the hero group] and her condition continues to deteriorate. She isn't expected to live to see the dawn. No compatible donor has been found, and so doctors cannot perform potentially life-saving surgery. Religious leaders have arrived at the hospital to help ease her passage from this life. And here amongst the crowd of Noella's supporters, one question is repeated, 'Where are [the hero group]?'")

There are about two-dozen people, mostly men, at Tony's at any hour between 8:00 p.m. and closing time of 4:00 a.m. (Tony reopens at noon.) If strangers enter the bar, they are always studied closely. Many of Tony's patrons are on the run from the police or have other enemies. If the newcomers are not police or well-known costumed superheroes, one or two of the bar's regulars, such as Bart and Arnie (see p. 50), usually try to intimidate them. (A Presence Attack usually based on PRE 10-15, +1d6 for the appropriate setting, +1d6 for a minor violent action such as crushing a beer can, and +1d6 for their soliloquy for a total of 5-6 dice.) If their target is

impressed, the thugs press their advantage to start a fight. They can act before the newcomer as per the Presence Attack rules, possibly catching the surprised hero with his DCV down.

If the newcomers are unimpressed, the thugs do nothing but watch them. They are still hostile and won't help or assist the strangers. On the other hand, if the strangers respond with Presence Attacks of their own, and impress the thugs, they leave the newcomers alone and mind their own business. The bar patrons are eager to avoid trouble with imposing figures and tend to cooperate by answering non-incriminating questions (such as pointing out Marco).

If the newcomers are police or well-known superheroes, the reaction is slightly different. Many of the patrons try to leave quickly to avoid trouble. The others try to intimidate the police officers or heroes. They won't *attack* police officers though, unless they try to arrest someone. They don't answer any questions for either police or known superheroes unless their Presence Attacks reach at least the +10 level. The more important or damaging the information is, the harder it is to persuade anyone to reveal it.

In any barroom brawl, the regulars join in against any strangers as necessary to ensure that the regulars win. If it becomes clear that the regulars cannot win, all but the diehards fade away, going back to their drinks and games.

Many of the patrons are armed with knives and/or guns. They do not use lethal weapons inside of Tony's. Tony insists on that and keeps a double-barrelled sawed-off shotgun behind the bar to enforce the rule. He takes a similarly dim view of any heroes who use killing force in his bar. He accepts a certain amount of fighting but draws the line at killing. So long as the losers are simply thrown out, he figures the fighting just leaves him with a better class of riffraff.

Marco (see p. 58) is at Tony's when the heroes come looking for him. Heroes who arrive at Tony's and have seen the police picture of Marco have no trouble picking him out of the crowd once they have a chance to look around.



Any character with Discriminatory Scent who smelled Marco's cigar butt at Phillips Pharmaceuticals, Ltd. has no trouble identifying Marco by his particular brand of foul-smelling cigar. Other heroes may have to get someone to point Marco out. If the heroes do not know Marco's name, he can be easily "smoked out." If the heroes make it clear that they are looking for someone connected with Phillips Pharmaceutical or Mr. Caesar, Marco overhears and, realizing that the heroes are after him, tries to slip out, thereby drawing attention to himself.

Marco Talks

Once the heroes find Marco, they still have to persuade him to talk. His fear of Mr. Caesar gives him a bonus of +2 to his EGO roll if Mind Control is attempted on him. Telepathy func-

tions normally. If mental powers are not available, the heroes have to rely on Presence Attacks (at the +20 level minimum) or Presence-based skills. Conversation and Seduction work normally but take at least five minutes before the roll can be made. Interrogation and Persuasion are at -3 to the rolls, with an additional -5 unless the heroes promise to protect Marco from Mr. Caesar's retribution.

Ultimately, Marco talks, especially if he is convinced that he's looking at an accessory to murder charge for the hundreds of deaths in Pondsville and possibly more in the city. He wants to know that anything he says won't be used against him in any court, although if he is frightened enough (or if the information is being wormed out of him discreetly with Conversation or Seduction) it won't matter. Marco has a lot he can tell the heroes if they ask the right questions — all from Marco's point of view.

The GM should role-play any encounter with Marco. Here are some possible questions and the kind of information Marco might give, for the GM to adapt.

Did you steal the boxes from Phillips Pharmaceuticals?

"Ya, I stole some boxes from that Phillips place. So what, man? They was only boxes. They weren't gonna need them no more. Mr. Caesar told me to get them personally and not to tell anyone. I mean, you don't tell Mr. Caesar, 'No,' right?"

What did you do with the boxes?

"Ha. We only used one. Mr. Caesar gave me a bunch of glass vials. I figure they was some kinda drugs. Anyway, he tells me to pack them vials in the box and give them to this guy. Actually they was a guy and two ladies. He was a doctor or something, I think. I guess he was gonna move the stuff for Mr. Caesar. They didn't say much."

What's your connection to Mr. Caesar?

"First time I ever saw Mr. Caesar, he was on the street one night when I left Tony's. He was waitin' for me. He had some heavy muscle with him. Real heavy. That Ogre guy. Mr. Caesar said he was movin' in, was gonna take over the narco supply for the whole city. Only he needed my help, cuz I knew the business, and did I wanta sign on. Well me, I know the boys and they weren't gonna give up the business to some new guy who just wants in — and I tell Mr. Caesar so — and I tell him big super-muscle or no, he's lookin' to get whacked, you know?"

"Then Mr. Caesar he gives me this look and he says 'Do you doubt I can do what I say, little man?' Just like that. And the big guy, Ogre, he's lookin' like he'll eat a Chevy and spit out the hub caps on Mr. Caesar's say so.

"So before you know it I'm workin' with Mr. Caesar. He's a real smart guy and tough as nails, but he don't know much about the narco business for some guy who wanted to run it all. But me, I tell him what's what and who's who. Next thing I know Mr. Caesar starts whacking 'em. And taking over their trade, you know? And anybody what squawks gets whacked too.

"Now ain't hardly anybody gets anything what ain't been passed through Mr. Caesar. He gets the stuff when its smuggled in from Columbia and he sells it to the pushers — takes a nice cut, too. Mr. Caesar's called a big meeting of all his wholesalers tonight. Anybody who wants the stuff has to be there. He's puttin' out the word about his new distribution system. I figure it's gonna be the biggest dope deal ever. And I'm the guy what set it up.

"And that's not all. Mr. Caesar ain't quit-tin' with just the city. He says if everything goes according to plan, we're going down to Columbia, man, and take over the whole show!"

(It isn't a good idea for the heroes to have to wait for the big meeting. The meeting is scheduled for about an hour from the time when they learn about it; Marco was just about to leave for the meeting when the heroes nabbed him.)

Who is Mr. Caesar?

"I don't know his name. I don't know where he lives. He keeps that stuff secret, man. I guess so's he don't get hit.

Nobody knows. He contacts me by phone. I got a beeper, see? I got a number where I can contact him."

(This number is for a cellular phone which cannot easily be found. If the heroes can find it, it's in a trailer and is hooked to an electronics system which relays any communications by microwave transmissions to and from Mr. Caesar's headquarters. If these are traced the heroes are led to those headquarters.)

Where is this meeting and will Mr. Caesar be there?

"Mr. Caesar'll be there fer sure. It's real secret and the location was just given out at the last minute. It's going to be in a hangar at the airport. Lots of room for everybody. Hangar number 12."

Aren't you worried that the police will raid the meeting and bust everyone?

"Yah, a meeting like this seems kinda dumb. Lotsa people didn't want to come. I mentioned it to Mr. Caesar and he said anybody who don't come isn't one of his customers ever. Everybody has to be there. He also said no one needs to worry. He's got eyes and ears in all the police stations, in the FBI, in the DEA and even in places like PRIMUS and SAT. If they find out about this meeting, he'll know and he'll move out. He's got a planned escape route for everybody too. Mr. Caesar says it's real important that this shipment be distributed all at once. He says he wants to, like, make a statement."

THE DEATH-DEALERS

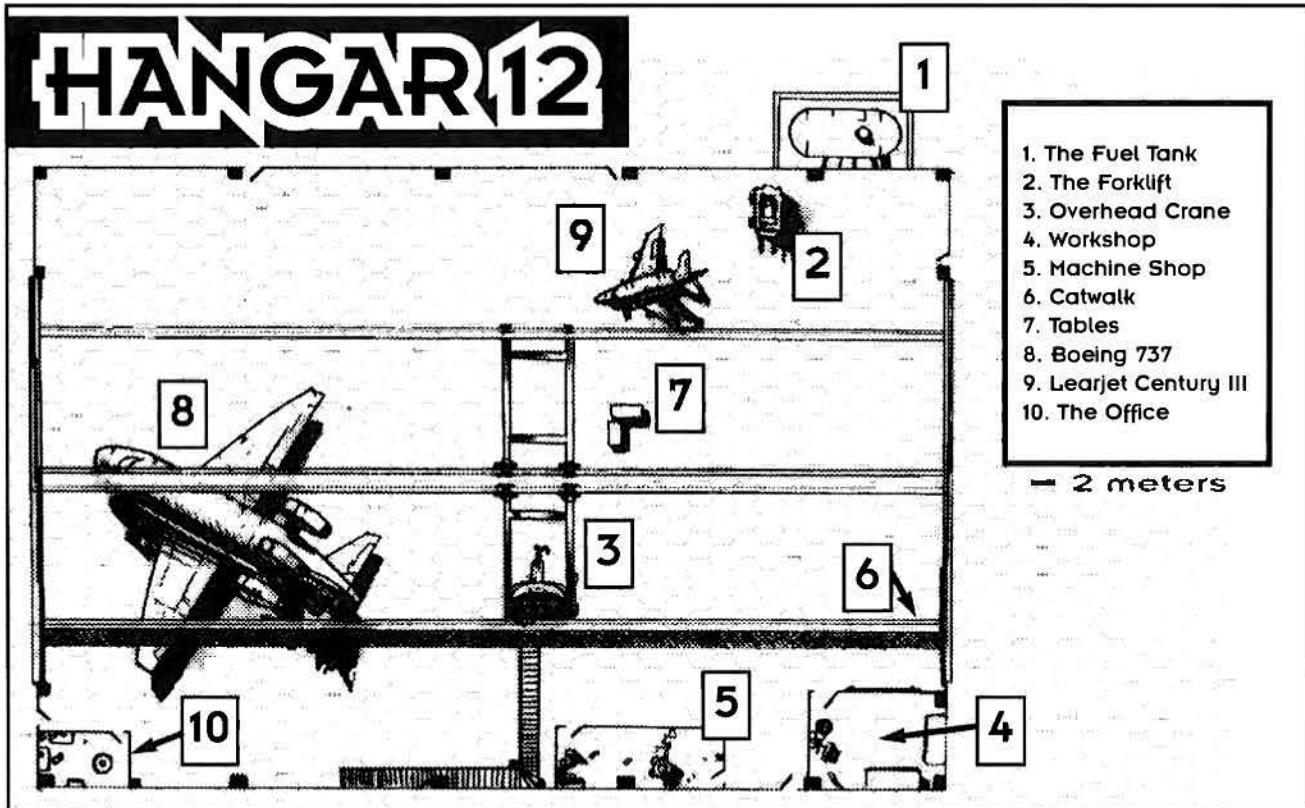
Mr. Caesar lied. Nothing will persuade him to cancel the planned meeting and distribution. He does have eyes and ears in the offices of the authorities (in the form of robot flies), but even if they learn about the planned meeting, the authorities would let it proceed hoping to catch all the criminals with evidence, ensuring convictions. Mr. Caesar is confident that his escape plans will defeat any plan of the authorities. Given Marco's information, the heroes are unlikely to contact the authorities, but even if they do, it won't affect Mr. Caesar's plans.

It is possible that Mr. Caesar knows the heroes are coming to his meeting. If they aren't yet wise to the robot flies, one may be monitor-

ing them. If the heroes did contact the authorities, Mr. Caesar knows. Finally, if Marco was left with freedom of action after talking to the heroes, he phones Mr. Caesar and tells him about his encounter. Then, finding Mr. Caesar unforgiving, he goes into hiding. Mr. Caesar's plans continue unaffected, except for the choice of weaponry carried by Mr. Caesar and his gunmen.

The Hangar

The setting for this final confrontation is a large hangar at the campaign city airport. The



building is made of corrugated steel, supported by steel I-beams. Except where the beams are, the walls and roof are DEF 5, BODY 3. The I-beams have DEF 10, BODY 8. The top of the walls (at the eaves) is 12 hexes (78") above the ground. The peak of the roof is 18 hexes (117") high. The floor of the hangar is thick, reinforced concrete, DEF 8, BODY 8.

The hangar contains two airplanes, a Boeing 737 jet and a Learjet Century III. Important areas and items are noted below.

1. The Fuel Tank: The large jet fuel tank is outside the hangar surrounded by a protective fence (DEF 8, BOD 4). The fence is designed to stop errant vehicles and has large gaps. These gaps are too small for most people to fit through, but a character with Shrinking or Contortionist could slip between the bars. The fence does not provide dependable cover because of the spaces. On a roll of 8-, or if a defender makes a Luck roll, a ranged attack may hit the fence rather than the

character behind it. The fence is ten feet (1.5 hexes) tall.

Inside the fenced area is the fuel tank itself (DEF 8, BOD 4). If the tank is cracked, the highly flammable fuel explodes on 13-, causing an 18d6 explosion to engulf the nearby hangar in flames along with any other nearby planes.

2. The Forklift: This is a tough, heavy-weight vehicle; a workhorse.

STR 30	SIZE 2 x 1 hexes
DEX 10	DCV -2
BOD 10	MASS (KB) 1.6 tons (-4)
DEF 6	MOVE 13" x 2
SPD 2	MAX 52"

3. Overhead Crane: Mounted on rails along I-beams, this crane sits 12 hexes above the floor. The operator enters its control-cockpit

from the catwalk. The crane can move about the hangar length and width.

STR 55 SIZE 2 x 1 hexes (cockpit)
DEX 10 DCV -2
BOD 10 MASS (KB) *
DEF 6 MOVE 13" x 2
SPD 2 MAX 52"

* The crane weighs only 3.2 tons but it is anchored to the rails on which it rides. Treat the crane as having -8 KB resistance.

4. Workshop: This room contains tools, workbenches (DEF 5, BOD 4), machine parts, and lifting gear (DEF 6, BOD 8).

5. Machine Shop: This room holds machines for tooling and building parts as required (DEF 7, BOD 6).

6. Catwalk: The catwalk is used to reach the overhead crane. The stairs rise at a sharp angle to the catwalk height of 12 hexes.

7. Tables: These two tables have been set out for the purposes of tonight's meeting. They are piled high with bags of drugs, especially cocaine. Only Mr. Caesar and his robot simulacra know that the drugs are contaminated with the Rage Poison.

If the tables are upset or violently disturbed, it is likely that the kilo bags break open and the air around the tables is filled with clouds of the powder (in a 2" radius effect). If any of the powder is breathed in, the victim is exposed to the Rage Poison as well as the drugs' narcotic effects.

8. The 737: The jet is fuelled and ready for take-off. A flick of a switch in its cockpit detonates explosive charges opening the hangar door and blocking all other runways, ensuring that this jet has a clear path and can take off immediately. The jet can only accelerate 25" per phase while on the ground and must reach a speed of 100" per phase in order to take off.

STR 48 SIZE 8 x 4 hexes
DEX 15 DCV -6
BOD 19 MASS(KB) 45 tons (-9)
DEF 3 MOVE 50" x 8
SPD 3 MAX 1200" Stall Velocity: 100"

9. The Learjet Century III: The stats for this smaller jet are on p. 195 of the *Champions Rulebook*. The GM may wish to give this jet a higher stall velocity and lower ground acceleration. Mr. Caesar waits on board this jet until it is time to give his speech. Mr. Caesar may attempt to escape on board the Learjet if the 737 is safely away, in order to lure the heroes away from the hidden base.

10. The Office: This room contains a desk (DEF 3, BOD 4), chair, filing cabinet, and phone. In the office, a sight Perception roll at -3 can locate a secret trap door in the floor, leading to Mr. Caesar's secret base.

Face to Face with Mr. Caesar

Mr. Caesar's plan is to attend the meeting along with Ogre (if he was incarcerated after the fight at the Elysium Theater, Mr. Caesar breaks him out of jail), three gunmen and Marco. Marco's absence does not change Mr. Caesar's plans. Mr. Caesar and his gunmen are armed with heavy pistols (2d6 RKA 8 shots) unless superheroes are expected. In that event, they carry special weapons — guns that fire 2 1/2d6 AP RKA projectiles (8 shots) and which, if they do Body damage, inject the target with the fatal virus. If these weapons are drawn for use, a Perception roll allows a hero with KS: Firearms or Weaponsmith: Slugthrowers to realize that the guns are not normal weapons but instead more like powerful tranquilizer guns.

Mr. Caesar and the gunmen are, in fact, all robots (see p. 60 and p. 53). However, they give a greater priority to fulfilling Mr. Caesar's plans

and ensuring the distribution of tainted drugs than to concealing their true natures.

About 50 men and women attend the meeting. They are the most important wholesale drug-dealers still active in the campaign city, along with their various bodyguards and associates. They are all normals or skilled normals, and are armed; 30 carry .45 automatics, five carry .44 magnum revolvers, ten carry 9mm Uzi submachine guns, and five have 12 gauge sawed-off shotguns.

The dealers are at the hangar to listen to Mr. Caesar's speech, to ensure that they remain in the distribution network, and to purchase the largest quantity of drugs possible. Each dealer is carrying lots of cash.

Each dealer is admitted at the door just by giving his name. However, the gunman at the door has seen photos of each of them and has a computer memory. Mr. Caesar does not believe that the authorities can plant a spy without his knowledge and wants to get the broadest possible distribution of his tainted drugs. Therefore he does not fear strangers, but welcomes them. If an impostor or uninvited dealer comes to the door, he is still admitted, however, strangers are kept under scrutiny and one of the gunmen is always nearby.

If everything goes according to plan, Mr. Caesar remains in the Learjet until he emerges to make a short speech around midnight. The speech basically welcomes everyone as his guests, and promises that under his control the city will know a new era of "efficiency" in all operations unlike any it has seen before. The meeting quickly moves on to the distribution of the drugs on hand (mostly cocaine and heroin). Deals are quickly completed to dispose of all the drugs. Although he has a near monopoly, Mr. Caesar's prices are reasonable; he *wants* to sell the drugs. Then all the dealers depart the way they came.

In the event of a large-scale raid or cordon by government authorities, Mr. Caesar's plan calls for all the dealers and their drugs to be placed aboard the 737. Any of the robot simulacra can

pilot it. The plane flies to a nearby private airstrip where there is ground transportation for the criminals' escape. The remaining simulacra and Ogre delay the authorities to ensure the escape of the dealers and the tainted drug. The Learjet then follows. Once the planes are airborne, the authorities won't be able to respond quickly enough to prevent the escape.

If the heroes attack without backup from the authorities, Mr. Caesar and all robots present try to subdue them, and then beat them senseless. Any drug-dealers with grudges against the heroes might help in the fight (especially if it looks like Mr. Caesar's forces are winning), although the dealers are less likely to want the heroes taken alive. (The GM must exercise his discretion to ensure that the combat is neither automatically overwhelming to the heroes or tedious because of the large number of normal combatants.) The unconscious heroes are exposed to the fatal virus and left to awaken after all have departed. Mr. Caesar believes that the virus is a more satisfying revenge than anything quicker.

Some heroes may have summoned the authorities despite what Marco told them. Some may have been shrewd enough to call the authorities but only after the meeting had begun. In any event, as soon as the authorities react Mr. Caesar knows it.

If the authorities accompany or follow shortly behind the heroes, the jet escape plan is used. Even if the authorities are not involved, if the heroes are overwhelming the opposition, the jet escape plan is initiated. The GM may wish to allow one of the criminals to have the necessary skill to pilot the jet if the robots are all occupied.

In either event, when the jet doors have closed with as many dealers and as much drugs aboard as safely possible, and as the plane begins to move forward, the real Mr. Caesar emerges from his secret base. He distracts the heroes so the tainted drugs may escape. He enjoys the satisfaction of pummeling them. The real Mr. Caesar is Mechanon (see p. 61)



Mechanon's Secret Base

The secret base is hidden underneath the hangar. Its walls, ceiling, and floor are all reinforced concrete (DEF 8, BOD 8). The base has the following dedicated installations:

1. Elevator platform: This platform rises to the secret door leading to the hangar office. The trap door opens automatically when the platform rises. The elevator is controlled by the computer in the base which responds to radio signals. It can also be controlled by foot-operated buttons on its floor.

2. Escape Tunnel: This tunnel leads some distance to a secret door in the sewers of the city. The door to the tunnel is DEF 10, BOD 5.

3. Robotics Laboratory: This laboratory contains equipment to make highly sophisticated robots, such as the robot simulacra and the robot flies. There is the technology to work in extreme miniaturization, and to create the plas-

tiskin disguises of the robot simulacra. Programming chips based on observations of the prisoners, as well as the composite personality of Mr. Caesar, which was based on movie gangsters, can be found here.

4. Biochemistry/Genetics Laboratory: It was here that Mr. Caesar produced the Rage Poison virus and contaminated the drugs with it. Some simple technology for handling the drugs is also found here.

5. Cells: Each cell has DEF 8, BOD 7 walls, and an electronic magnetic lock which requires a Lockpicking roll at -6 to open (Electronics and Security Systems being complementary skills). Inside the cells are the real Dr. Chandler, Dr. Yee, Mrs. Yee, and Nurse Wilcox. The cells have chemical toilets and are stocked with canned food. Mr. Caesar keeps the prisoners in case additional information is required to support the robot simulacra's disguises.

The cells are monitored by cameras and microphones linked to the base computer. There is also a concealed canister to flood any of the cells with knockout gas.

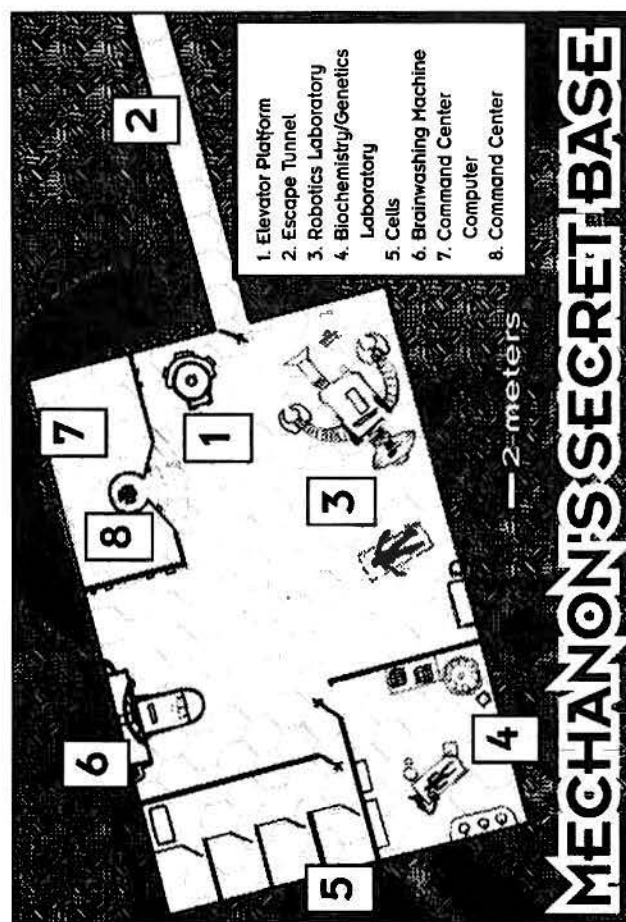
6. Brainwashing Machine: This machine (DEF 9, BOD 9) has a seat in which a victim may be placed and then brainwashed. The machine can be approximated in game terms as:

15d6 Mind Control (-1/2) no range, (-1) non-combat only, (-2) five minutes extra time to use, (-2) immobile OAF.

7. Computer: This highly sophisticated computer was designed and built by Mechanon itself. It forms the very walls of the base's command center. Mechanon can sit in the command seat with the complex control console and numerous monitors displayed in an arc around it, all within easy reach. All the functions of the command center, as described below, are controlled through the computer.

Command Center Computer

Val	Char	Cost
15	INT	5
10	DEX	+
12	SPD	100
		=
		105
Cost Powers		
10	High Range Radio (Microwave) Transmission/Hearing	
10	Eidetic Memory	
3	Lightning Calculator	
3	Absolute Time Sense	
Cost Skills		
5	Language: English	
3	Systems Operation 12-	
5	Computer Programming 13-	
Cost Programs		
1	Collect, store and collate reports from robot agents	
1	Operate elevator	
1	Program robot simulacrum	
=	Char Powers Total	
42	105 + 42 = 147 ÷ 5 = 29 points	



8. Command Center: From this point, Mechanon can communicate with any of its robot agents, receive their reports, and monitor anything their senses perceive. New programming can also be sent from here. Mechanon has its robot flies monitoring Pondsville and all Operation: Quarantine activities. It was through the observation of a robot fly spy that Mechanon became aware that Dr. Chandler was close to a breakthrough in his studies of the Rage Poison. Mr. Caesar was able to kidnap and replace Chandler so as to prevent any progress. There are also robot flies in local police stations, and offices of the FBI, DEA, PRIMUS, and SAT. A robot fly may even be monitoring the heroes if they have not yet discovered it. With a Computer Programming roll at -3, a hero can transmit "shut-down" or "self-destruct" codes to any of Mechanon's robot flies or robot simulacra.

If it chooses, Mechanon can actually interface with a robot agent, replacing its consciousness with Mechanon's and letting the villain "possess" it.

Mechanon can program the computer from here, monitor all radio and TV bands, and tap into the airport's radar and computer systems to gather intelligence. The base's antennae, radar equipment, and equipment taps are hidden amongst the airport's.

Mechanon's Secret Base

Cost	Base Characteristics
14	Size: 200 hexes
6	BOD: 8
18	DEF: 8
-	City Location
20	Underground Location

Cost	Base Characteristics
21	Concealment 18-
21	Disguise 18-
9	SC: Biochemistry Lab 18-
9	SC: Robotics Lab 18-
9	SC: Genetics Lab 18-
12	Brainwashing Machine (see text, p.45)
4	High Range Radio (Microwave) Transmission/Hearing, (-1 ¹ / ₂) OIF Immobile
14	Radar Sense, 360°, +10 range Mod, (-1 ¹ / ₂) OIF Immobile
6	+5 Perception all senses, (-1 ¹ / ₂) OIF Immobile
8	Power Plant: END Reserve: 100 END, 10 REC, (-1 ¹ / ₂) OIF Immobile
=	Base Characteristics
171	171 ÷ 5 = 34 points

ENDGAME

When Mechanon emerges to confront the heroes, it leaves open the access to its secret base. The heroes can easily enter and rescue the prisoners, including the real Richard Chandler. With Chandler's gift of blood, his sister can be saved.

The heroes may also access Mechanon's computer and discover the details of its plan and information on the Rage Poison, but not on any cure as Mechanon was never interested in developing one.

If the heroes prevented the escape and distribution of the tainted drugs, even if Mechanon escaped, they won a major victory and saved countless lives. Mechanon considers the plan a failure and moves on to another scheme to annihilate life on Earth. The drug trade in the campaign city has been dealt a substantial (although

temporary) blow. Unfortunately, other criminals will soon move in and fill the void.

The virus can be destroyed by fire. If the escaping plane exploded or crashed, the GM can consider the virus threat ended. Any tainted drugs that were scattered in the air are so diluted that they don't infect anyone (unless the GM has other plans...).

If, however, dealers escaped with some tainted drugs, the heroes (and the GM) have a problem. The drugs are on the streets within days, and infected people run rampant soon after. Chaos, bloodshed, and death follow.

In this unhappy event the GM is on his own. However, an adventure to find and stop the

tainted drugs before they can be sold may be appropriate. Otherwise, the plague spreads. Quarantine of a large city would seem impossible, so the virus could spread across the country and to other parts of the world.

The other solution may be to develop a vaccine. (See the *Rage Poison*, below, for information on this.) It is recommended that a hero be given the opportunity to do this if possible. Alternatively, Dr. Chandler can invent the cure and the heroes can take satisfaction in having rescued him.

If any hero has become infected, then the others have the challenge of stopping that hero and saving him. This can be another adventure in itself.

Further Campaign Ideas

Blood Fury is designed to be a complete adventure. However, a number of elements in this story raise questions, the answers to which could lead to further adventures.

1. What is the secret of Noella and Richard Chandler's latent mutation? Do they have latent powers? What are they? How might they be activated? Could they be controlled? Might some villain try to use them?
2. What is the secret research being done at Biotechnologies Research, Inc.? Who is financing that company? What is his secret agenda?
3. What if the Columbian drug-lord El Capataz decides to revenge himself on Marco? What form might that revenge take? What if Marco's highly-placed uncle means that El Capataz cannot kill him? What if it means that he cannot act directly against him?
4. How will the void in the criminal drug distribution network be filled? Who will rise to become drug-lord of the campaign city? Will he have rivals? Will there be a gang war? If the GM has run *Shadows of the City* or *Hudson City Blues*, then the city's underworld has suffered a number of severe blows. Can the heroes somehow strike the killing blow?
5. Will Noella Chandler become involved with any of the heroes? Noella might make a good DNPC. Into what other adventures might she and her brother draw the hero?
6. What will Mechanon's next master plan be? Will Mechanon decide that it must first exterminate the heroes to prevent their further interference with the completion of its programming?

THE RAGE POISON

The word "virus" is derived from the Latin for poison. "Rabies" is Latin for rage or fury.

The citizens of Pondsville have been infected with a disease caused by a virus, a mutated form of rabies. It, like rabies, is an acute, fatal, infectious disease of the central nervous system that can affect all mammals.

The rabies virus is microscopic and can only be seen with an electron microscope of at least 10,000x magnification. Outside a living cell, the virus is simply a dormant particle. When it enters an appropriate cell it becomes active, subverting the cell's metabolic machinery for production of new virus particles, and having other, secondary, effects on the host.

An infection of rabies most often occurs by way of an open wound such as a bite or cut. It need not be deep for infection to occur. The rabies virus can also enter a body through the mucous membranes such as those lining the mouth and nose, but this normally requires a high concentration of the virus in the air, such as has been found in caves that house large numbers of bats which carry the virus.

The virus attacks nerve tissues at the site of the infection and propagates along the tissues towards the brain. Often the virus becomes present in the host's salivary glands and is secreted in the saliva. For this reason, a bite from such an animal has a high probability of transmitting the virus.

The virus can be communicated soon after infection. However, in rabies, no symptoms are apparent during an incubation period which varies, in humans, from ten days to eight months. The usual period is between four and six weeks. Once symptoms begin to appear, death follows in 2-12 days, usually 3-5 days.

The symptoms begin with pain, burning, or numbness at the site of the initial infection. The nervous system becomes excited and the victim experiences extreme restlessness, nervousness, headaches, fever, and irritability which can explode into viciousness at any moment. Infected animals in this stage appear healthy, even friendly, but bite at the slightest provocation.

During the excitement stage, the victim begins to experience muscle contractions in his throat, making it feel full and causing pain if swallowing is attempted. Since swallowing and therefore pain is often triggered by the sight of water, it is this phenomena that has led rabies to be called hydrophobia (fear of water) when it affects humans. Eventually these throat contractions can put a halt to biting. The excitement stage culminates in body-wide convulsions.

The final stage is the depression of the nervous system. The victim becomes quiet and apathetic. Eventually he becomes paralyzed, slips into a coma, and dies.

There is no known cure for rabies once the symptoms appear. Recovery almost never occurs. If treatment is sought immediately after exposure however, a vaccine that now requires four injections has proven effective.

The Mutant Virus

This virus is a genetically-engineered mutation of the natural rabies virus. The incubation period is radically shortened, so that symptoms usually begin to appear in 6-12 hours. Then the excitement stage is significantly prolonged. Death is, however, as certain as ever.

The mutant virus still lies dormant until it enters living nerve cells. It can be administered to a host by injection or absorbed through the mucous membranes. Infection can therefore occur by using drugs that are permeated with the virus particles if those drugs are injected or 'snorted.' Thereafter, one victim can pass it on to the next in the usual fashions.

The mutant rabies virus has a two-part effect:

1. 1d6 Transformation to excitement state: cumulative (+1/2), NND (+1), continuous (+1), uncontrolled (+1/2), 0 end (+1/2), no range (-1/2), act on 14- (each die) (-1/2), one hour between rolls (-2 1/2).
2. 1d6 Transformation to nervous depression state that results in death: cumulative (+1/2), NND (+1), continuous (+1), uncontrolled (+1/2), 0 end (+1/2), no range (-1/2), act on 11- (each die) (-1), one day between rolls (-3 1/2).

The defences to the NND are Immunity to Disease, or powers blocking means of infection (e.g., Resistant Defences preventing wounds or Life Support preventing infection by breathing, non-mammalian body).

The continuous attack is halted by the administering of the appropriate vaccine (and recall that the currently-available vaccine is only effective *before* either of these stages is reached), or at the completion of the Transformation.

The Transformation can be undone by magical spells or powers that cure diseases, by massive blood transfusions from characters with regeneration, or by Regeneration: Usable By Others.

Fighting the Virus

Finding a cure for the mutant rabies is no easy matter. Characters with SC: Medicine, Immunology, Biochemistry, or a related science might make the effort, however. If a science roll

at -2 is made after one day's laboratory work, the character uncovers all of the information above (except the game mechanics). Remember that increasing the time spent can improve the roll. The character must understand this background before he can attempt a cure as follows.

An Inventor skill roll made at -3 after another day lets the scientist modify existing treatments for rabies to develop a vaccine which can be effective if administered before symptoms begin to manifest. A similar vaccine can be administered before exposure as a preventative as well. However this requires frequent booster shots to remain effective.

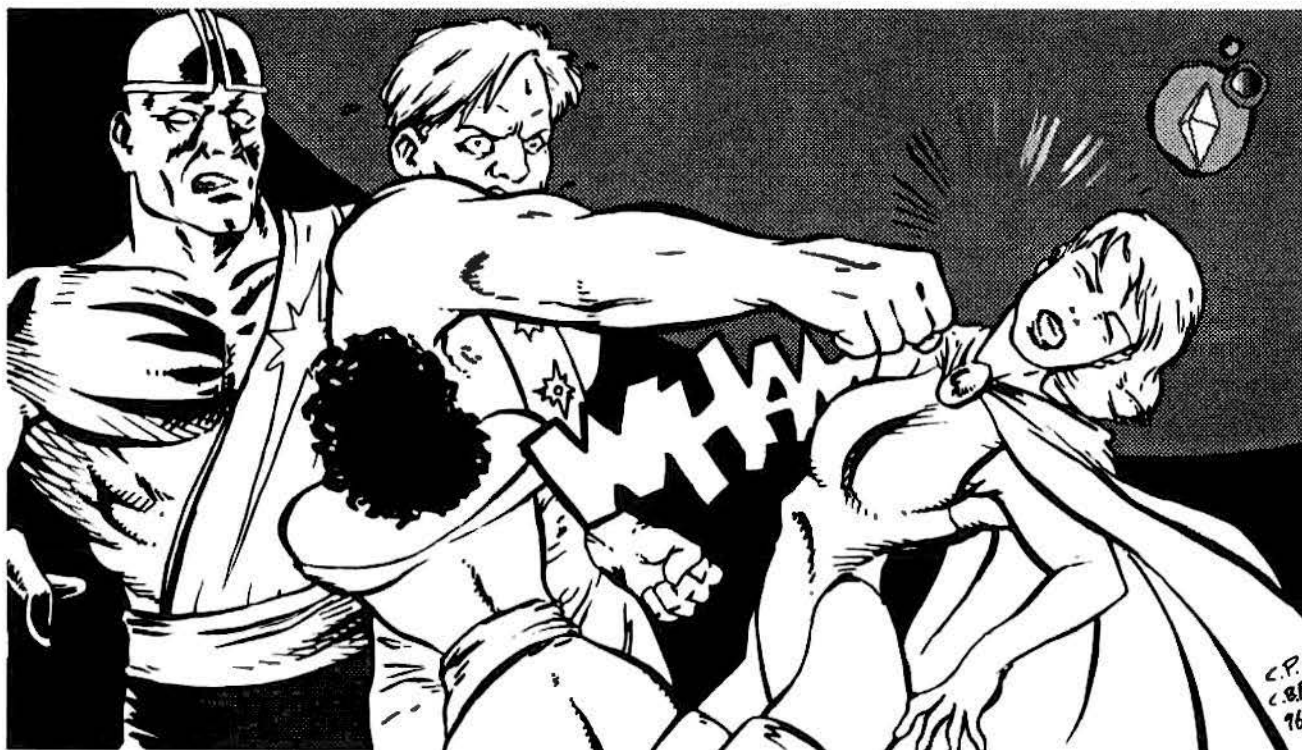
Fortunately, the engineered virus is less hardy than the natural rabies virus. An Inventor skill roll at -5 after a day creates a vaccine that is effective at any time before the nervous depression stage takes effect.

Some characters may have powers that prove effective in fighting the virus. Regeneration or Immunity to Disease protect a character from infection. A Simulate Death trance may slow the course of the disease. Aids to Body of significant duration can also slow the disease (by making the Transformation take longer) but not cure it. A "cure disease" spell or power (a Transformation from diseased to healthy) can remove the virus completely.

A Hero Berserk

A hero can easily be exposed to the Rage Poison in this adventure. In that event, the virus run its course. The relatively lengthy incubation period may let the hero complete this adventure before symptoms begin, however, unless something interferes, sooner or later (probably by the next game session) the other heroes have to cope with their partner's increasing irritability and viciousness in the excitement stage. This may be the basis for a whole separate adventure.

Average people who contract the disease have almost no chance of survival without a cure. However, heroes are, by definition, extraordinary people. Therefore, three points of Luck might enable one to survive. The GM might also rule that if the hero's Constitution or Body are above Normal Characteristic Maxima then a Constitution roll (perhaps at a penalty) might save him. Alternatively, if the hero has an unusual body chemistry, that may let him survive. Perhaps the virus interacts strangely with his chemistry triggering a "radiation" accident, or causing interesting new mutations.



CHARACTERS

Most of the characters in this adventure are normals, although some have a few points in appropriate skills and disadvantages.

Noella Chandler

8 STR, 13 INT, 18 COM, 19 STUN

Skills: KS: Campaign City University 12-, SC: Chemistry 11-, PS: Dancer 8-.

Bright, attractive and vivacious, Noella is a popular university student. She dates often but so far has no steady (despite many volunteers). If she survives this adventure, Noella has the potential to become a gifted scientist. Noella is a latent mutant with a nearly unique blood type. Fortunately, her brother is a match.

Dr. Richard Chandler

20 INT

Skills: Inventor 13-, Computer Programming 13-, Scientist; SC: Microbiology 17-, SC: Genetics 17-, SC: Immunology 17-, SC: Biochemistry 17-, SC: Chemistry 11-.

This man is a genius and a recognized leader in his fields. His is the scientific know-how behind Biotechnologies Research, Inc. The scientist lacks his sister's people skills but the siblings are very close. Like his sister, Chandler is a latent mutant with a nearly unique blood type.

Albert Gontz

8 STR, 8 CON, 16 END, 18 STUN

Skills: PS: Accounting 11-, PS: Business Administration 11-, KS: Business 12-, KS: Biotechnologies Research, Inc. 14-.

Albert Gontz is a bureaucrat. Overweight and out of shape, he has an ulcer and perspires when he's nervous - which is all the time. However, he is an efficient manager and handles all of the day-to-day operations of Biotechnologies Research, Inc.

Bart and Arnie

20/25 STR, 11 DEX, 18 CON, 8 INT, 10/15 PRE, 5 PD, 4 ED, 3 SPD, 8 REC, 36 END, 29/31 STUN

Skills: Dirty Infighting (Punch, Roundhouse, Low Blow, Kidney Blow), Streetwise 8-, PS: Pool/Billiards 13-/11-.

Note: Where two numbers are given the figure on the left is for Bart and the figure on the right is for Arnie.

These two men are the trash of society. They are rude and crude. They hold no regular jobs but earn money doing odd jobs. They don't care if the jobs are illegal. The rest of the time they hang around Tony's Rack and Roll, shoot pool, drink beer and look for fights.

Army Soldiers

These are skilled normals (see p. 134 of the *Champions Rule Book*), and carry appropriate equipment (frequently .223 (M16A1) assault rifles).

Victims of the Rage Poison

25 STR, 11 DEX, 13 CON, 8 INT, 10 PD, 6 ED, 3 SPD, 8 REC, 26 END, 30 STUN

Powers and Skills: Transformation Attack (see The Rage Poison, p. 47); 1/2 d6 KA bite and scratch.

The virus enhances nervous reaction during the excitement stage. An adrenalin rush increases the effective strength of the infected victims, at least while they are fighting. If the victims are not powerful enough to satisfy the GM, he may wish to also give them extra Hand-to-Hand attack damage, or to increase the Killing Attack.

In the nervous depression stage, the victim's characteristics drop to the levels of an incompetent normal and worse, before he slips into a coma and die. See p. 48 for notes on how the virus affects personality.

Cost	Powers/Skills	END
16	+16" Superleap (29" total)	1
5	-5 Lack of Weakness	
24	+3 Levels with Combat	
5	+1 Level with OCV	
100+	Disadvantages	
20	2x effect from Mental Powers	
15	Berserk when takes BODY 11-, 11-	
15	Psychological Limitation: Overconfident (very common, moderate)	
20	Psychological Limitation: Hates bullies (very common, strong)	
15	Bad Reputation 11-, extreme	
15	DNPC: Crippled sister (Incompetent, 8-)	
20	Hunted by UNTIL 11-	
15	Hunted by Mechanon 8-	
15	Public ID	
15	Experience	

Ogre

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats	
65	STR	55	OCV:	6
18	DEX	24	DCV:	6
28	CON	36	ECV:	5
15	BODY	10	Phases:	3, 6, 9, 12
5	INT	-5	Costs Char: 188 Base: 100 + + Powers: 77 Disad: 165 = = Totals: 265 265	
10	EGO	0		
25	PRE	15		
8	COM	-1		
28	PD	15		
20	ED	14		
4	SPD	12		
19	REC	0		
56	END	0		
75	STUN	13		
Cost	Powers/Skills		END	
12	Damage Resistance 12 PD, 12 ED			
15	Hardened Defences (all)			

RECENT HISTORY: Ogre's background appears on p. C24 of the *Champions Sourcebook*. After his most recent escape, Ogre hid himself in the sewers of the campaign city. He was still there weeks later when Mechanon came for him. Ogre tried to fight, and he tried to flee, but to no avail.

Ogre's mind was reprogrammed. His knowledge of Mr. Caesar's true identity was erased. Instead, memories of a friendly meeting with Mr. Caesar and their forging of a partnership were implanted. Ogre became a totally obedient weapon of Mr. Caesar, an enforcer who would overcome the resistance of other gang leaders and quickly propel Mr. Caesar to control of the city's drug-dealers.

PERSONALITY: Ogre is totally obedient to Mr. Caesar's orders, and will remain so until the mental programming wears off (in a few months at the earliest). Otherwise Ogre is as previously described.

POWERS/TACTICS: GM's should note that, despite Ogre's vulnerability to mental powers, in order to overcome Mr. Caesar's existing mental programming and tampering with Ogre's memories a Mind Control roll at 50+ (before applying the vulnerability) or a successful PS: Psyche Reconstruction roll after one day is required.

EXPERIENCE: To reflect his hard-earned experience, we've increased Ogre's STR and STUN, adding

a level with OCV as well. These are simply suggestions for the GM. Ogre should remain consistent with previous appearances in the GM's campaign, if any, and the GM is urged to make adjustments as appropriate.

Major Joseph Reynolds

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats		
10	STR	0	OCV: 4		
11	DEX	3	DCV: 4		
10	CON	0	Phases: 4, 8 ,12		
10	BODY	0	Costs Char: 23 Base: 0 + + Powers: 34 Disad: 57 = = Totals: 57 57		
10	INT	0			
14	EGO	8			
13	PRE	3			
10	COM	0			
2	PD	0			
2	ED	0			
3	SPD	9			
4	REC	0			
20	END	0			
20	STUN	0			
Cost	Powers/Skills		END		
2	Familiarity with Small Arms group				
6	+2d6 Hand-to-Hand Attack (unarmed combat training)				
1	Tactics 8-				
5	Bureaucratics 12-				
2	PS: Army Officer 11-				
3	KS: U.S. Army 12-				
5	KS: U.S. Army Regulations and Rules 14-				
4	KS: U.S. Army Training Scenarios and recommended solutions 14-				
6	Contacts: (Various U.S. Congressmen)				
0 +	Disadvantages				
5	Distinctive Looks: Military Man (easily concealable, noticeable)				

0 +	Disadvantages
20	Normal Characteristic Maxima
15	Psychological Limitation: Martinet, obsessed with control and appearance (common, strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Lacks initiative (uncommon, total)
2	Experience

BACKGROUND: Major Reynolds is a career Army officer, presently aged 39 years. He was a satisfactory student at West Point. He has yet to be assigned to combat duty, but is known to be an able administrator.

The command of Seraphim Springs is a very important assignment for him and he is determined to maintain security for the operation.

DISTINCTIVE QUOTE: "I'm running a tight operation here. I've got no time or patience for unprofessional conduct."

PERSONALITY: Reynolds is a smart and determined officer, with ambitions for his future. He prides himself on the standards he sets. Precision and control are his watchwords.

Reynolds is meticulous and somewhat inflexible. He tends to follow all recommended procedures by the book and is a little short on personal initiative. He finds flamboyant and unpredictable heroes difficult to deal with. However, he returns respectful and professional treatment.

If mental powers are used against Major Reynolds, to his knowledge, to reveal his thoughts or to control his actions, he is horrified and frightened by the loss of self-control. He won't easily forgive the violation of his mind. He immediately tries to have the mentalist arrested for breach of security and any other charge that fits. In the future, convinced that mentalists are a threat to privacy, dignity and freedom, Major Reynolds will campaign against them, demanding protective laws.

POWERS/TACTICS: Reynolds is a competent, respected military officer. He responds with military precision and procedure to every problem. Where the problem is unique, he may have trouble deciding what action to take, but eventually either gets instructions or acts out a similar scenario for which there is a procedure.

Obsessed as he is with control and security, all attempts at Conversation, Persuasion, or Seduction

aimed at obtaining military secrets (including any information on Operation: Quarantine) take -3 to their rolls.

APPEARANCE: Reynolds is an attractive, middle-aged man usually found in Army uniform.

Robot Simulacra

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats	
50	STR	50	OCV:	6
23	DEX	39	DCV:	6
10	CON	0	Phases:	2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
10	BODY	0	Costs Char: 172 Base: 100 + + Powers:211 Disad: 285 = = Totals: 385 385	
10	INT	0		
-	EGO	0		
20	PRE	10		
10	COM	0		
10	rPD	20		
10	rED	28		
6	SPD	27		
12	REC	0		
0	END	0		
-	STUN	0		
Cost	Powers/Skills		END	
30	0-END STR			
18	1d6 HKA (2x1d6 with STR), reduced penetration (- ¹ / ₄)(metal-hard fists)		0	
6	0-END Running			
60	Takes No Stun; only Body			
2	-1" KNB (mass 200 kg.)			
30	Full Life Support			
5	Flash Defence: 5 points (sight)			
10	High-Range Radio (Microwave) Transmission/Hearing			
24	15d6 Energy Blast Explosion: trigger (+ ¹ / ₄) (when reaches 0 BODY), one charge, not recoverable (-2), no range (- ¹ / ₂)			
9	Shape Shift (Humanoids), Persistent: one hour to activate (-2 ¹ / ₂), only in lab with access to special equipment (- ¹ / ₂), IIF			

Cost	Powers/Skills	END
	Plastiskin disguises (DEF 4) (see p. 18 for means of identification) (-1/4)	
10	Disguise and Mimicry 14-, only for Shape-Shifted form (-1/2)	
2	KS: Humanoid duplicated 11-	
5	KS or PS or SC appropriate to humanoid duplicated. (For Dr. Chandler, KS: Biochemistry 14-; for Dr. Yee, PS: Doctor 14-; for Nurse Wilcox, PS: Nurse 14-; for Mrs. Yee, PS: Secretary 14-; for Mr. Caesar's gunmen, Familiarity with Small Arms group, Piloting 13-)	
100+	Disadvantages	
10	Distinctive Features: Robot (easily concealed, noticed & recognizable, major reaction)	
15	Secret ID	
25	Psychological Limitation: Totally obedient to programming (usually includes instruction to maintain cover, kill any who penetrate cover) (very common, total)	
15	Psychological Limitation: Total shut-down if given "Shut-Down" code (uncommon, total)	
20	1d6 BODY Drain each phase if given "Self-Destruct" code (uncommon)	
15	Physical Limitation: Stunned for one phase if hit with electrical attack that does > 40 STUN	
185	Villain Bonus/Experience	

BACKGROUND: These robots were built by Mechanon, and are programmed to assume the identity of human beings. Each of the individuals Mechanon kidnapped was under observation (by robot flies and in their cells) to form the basis of each simulacrum's programming.

DISTINCTIVE QUOTE: The same as that of the person being impersonated, but usually more calm or even "machine-like."

PERSONALITY: They are programmed to impersonate others, although not always perfectly.

POWERS/TACTICS: These robots are near-perfect impostors. Their greatest flaw is that, when pre-

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sented with situations outside their programming, they may act inappropriately. For example, they may fail to recognize old friends. Also, in highly-charged emotional situations, they have trouble simulating irrationality and emotions, and may give themselves away.

In general, the robots try to maintain their masquerades and fulfil whatever missions Mechanon has given them. They observe and report every few minutes by microwave burst transmissions.

If a robot is revealed, or if its mission requires it, the robot is extremely powerful, and a match for superheroes. Each is equipped with a self-destruct device which explodes if the robot is reduced to 0 BODY or less.

(The robot simulacra can be made more powerful by adding to STR and/or eyebeam energy blasts (8d6 AP Energy Blast, 0 End is recommended). In a *Dark Champions* campaign where the heroes are relying upon conventional weapons or lower-powered attacks, the GM may wish to add a disadvantage to the robots: once a robot has taken damage, the hero can bypass its armor by hitting the damaged area (a hit location penalty of -8 plus the amount of Body damage done at that location). If the location is hit, then the attack can do $1\frac{1}{2} \times \text{BODY}$.)

APPEARANCE: With the aid of moulded plastiskin, false hair, and padding for body shaping, the robot simulacra can look like anyone. Their ability to disguise is limited only by their programming.

Robot Flies

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
-30	STR	-40	OCV: 3
10	DEX	0	DCV: 3
10	CON	0	ECV: 0
1	BODY	-18	Phases: 4, 8, 12
10	INT	0	Costs Char: -47 Base: 100 + + Powers: 232 Base: 85 = = Totals: 185 Base: 185
-	EGO	0	
10	PRE	10	
0	COM	0	
0	rPD	0	
1	rED	1	
3	SPD	10	
2	REC	0	

Val	Char	Cost
0	END	-10
-	STUN	0
Cost	Powers/Skills	END
93	7 levels Shrinking: always on ($-1/2$), OCV 3, DCV 17	
10	360° Vision	
10	High-Range Radio (Microwave) Transmission/Hearing	
30	Full Life Support	
24	Flight 8 " 0	
60	Takes no Stun, only Body	
5	Shadowing 12-	
100+	Disadvantages	
5	Distinctive Features: Robot (easily concealed)	
25	Psychological Limitation: Totally obedient to programming (very common, total)	
15	Psychological Limitation: Total shut-down if given "Shut-Down" code (uncommon, total)	
15	Secret Identity	
25	Villain Bonus/Experience	

BACKGROUND: These miniaturized robots were created by Mechanon to be its spies. They can enter almost anywhere and pass uncommented upon. They can see and hear activities, and then report by microwave burst transmissions. So long as one of its robot flies is about, Mechanon is fully informed about everything that happens.

Mechanon has these flies monitoring Pondsville and all Operation: Quarantine activities. It was through such spying that Mechanon became aware that Dr. Chandler was close to a breakthrough in his studies of the Rage Poison. Mechanon was able to kidnap and replace Chandler and prevent any progress.

At some point, but not before the heroes reveal the Chandler robot, Mechanon may assign some robot flies to monitor the heroes.

DISTINCTIVE QUOTE: "Bzzzz" (these robots do not talk).

PERSONALITY: None. These robots are programmed to mimic fly behavior.

POWERS/TACTICS: These robots look and act like flies. They are able to move about unnoticed and spy upon activities and persons of interest to Mechanon. They have no combat abilities.

APPEARANCE: Except to close scrutiny, these robots look like flies.

General Ernest Thurgood

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats	
10	STR	0	OCV:	4
11	DEX	3	DCV:	4
10	CON	0	Phases:	4, 8, 12
10	BODY	0	Costs	
18	INT	8		
18	EGO	16		
15	PRE	5		
10	COM	0		
2	PD	0	Char: 41	Base: 50
2	ED	0	+	+
3	SPD	9	Powers: 89	Disad: 80
4	REC	0	=	=
20	END	0	Totals: 130	130
20	STUN	0		

Cost	Powers/Skills	END
2	Familiarity with Small Arms group	
24	Commando Training	
5	Tactics 14-	
5	Bureaucratics 13-	
3	Oratory 12-	
3	Survival 11-	
3	Resistance +3	
4	PS: Army Officer 13-	
5	KS: U.S. Army 14-	
2	KS: World Politics 11-	
5	KS: Chemical and Biological Weapons 14-	
6	AKS: Middle East, South-East Asia, Europe 11-	
1	SC: Meteorology 8-	

Cost	Powers/Skills	END
1	SC: Chemistry 8-	
1	SC: Immunology 8-	
6	Languages: Vietnamese, Cambodian, German (each Fluent Conversation)	
13	Contacts and Favors (Various U.S. and NATO military men)	
50+	Disadvantages	
5	Distinctive Looks: Military Man (easily concealable, noticeable)	
5	Age 50+	
20	Normal Characteristic Maxima	
15	Psychological Limitation: Honorable (common, strong)	
15	Psychological Limitation: Feels responsibility of command (common, strong)	
10	Psychological Limitation: Obeys orders of superiors (common, moderate)	
10	Psychological Limitation: Patriot (common, moderate)	

BACKGROUND: Ernest Thurgood is a career Army man. He graduated from West Point with honors and was decorated for heroism during the Vietnam War. Now he is the Pentagon's acknowledged expert on chemical and biological weapons and defence against them.

DISTINCTIVE QUOTE: "Gentlemen. Ladies. The president of the United States has given us a mission. The American people are depending on us. Let's not disappoint them."

PERSONALITY: General Thurgood is an intelligent, level-headed military professional. He is currently struggling to deal with a very difficult problem. He has little patience for flippancy when peoples' lives are at stake. He has no particular prejudices for, or against super-powered or costumed beings, and listens to whatever the heroes have to tell him unless they have already alienated him. Then he asks probing questions.

POWERS/TACTICS: General Thurgood remembers some of his skills from his days of combat service but he is no match for a superhero and knows it. However, he is a high-ranking Army officer with friends in all branches of the armed forces of the U.S. and allied countries. The general can call on the

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resources of the United States Army to deal with his concerns.

General Thurgood is a crafty and determined man. All attempts at Conversation, Persuasion, or Seduction aimed at obtaining military secrets from him suffer at least -4 to their rolls.

APPEARANCE: Well into his 50s, General Thurgood exercises regularly to stay in good shape for his age. He is usually in Army uniform. Recently, he's developed dark circles under his eyes, and displays signs of exhaustion and stress.

50+ Disadvantages

10	Psychological Limitation: Fears Rage Poison/Pondsville disease (uncommon, strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Loyal to and protective of family (common, strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Distrustful of others (common, strong)
20	Normal Characteristic Maxima
5	Age 40+

Ezra McCubbin

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
10	STR	0	OCV: 4
11	DEX	3	DCV: 4
10	CON	0	ECV: 5
12	BODY	4	Phases: 4, 8, 12
13	INT	3	
14	EGO	8	
13	PRE	3	
10	COM	0	
2	PD	0	
2	ED	0	
3	SPD	9	
4	REC	0	
20	END	0	
25	STUN	3	

Cost	Powers/Skills	END
2	Familiarity with Small Arms group	
15	+5 Levels with Rifles and Shotguns	
2	PS: Farmer 11-	
4	PS: Hunter 13-	
3	Survival 13-	
3	Tracking 14-	
3	Stealth 13-	
6	+2 with Survival, Tracking, and Stealth	
20	4d6 Luck	
19	Danger Sense (Out of Combat) 13-	
5	Banjo	

BACKGROUND: On the outskirts of Pondsville is the two-story farmhouse of Ezra McCubbin. Once he lived here and worked his farm with his son, Joshua, Joshua's wife, Anna, and their three children. Now Ezra lives as a man under siege. He was forced to shoot his own son after Joshua became infected. If he hadn't, Joshua would have killed his own daughter in a fit of rage. Now, the nine-year-old is locked in the cellar, suffering from the effects of the Rage Poison. Food is thrown down to her. Ezra believes that he should kill the child to put her out of her misery, but won't so long as Anna resists the idea. Anna McCubbin and her two other children huddle together inside the house.

Ezra and his coon-hound, Banjo, keep watch from inside the barricaded home. They let no one approach the house. Ezra is sworn to protect his family and no longer trusts anyone. He has both a 12 gauge open choke shotgun and a .30-06 Springfield rifle always at hand. Anna has a rifle as well.

Ezra doesn't trust the heroes. Nor will he leave the house. He knows some neighbors who tried to leave the area and were turned back by the Army. They were attacked on their way back and became infected.

If the heroes want to help Ezra and his family, they have to force help upon them, or win them over. The latter requires Persuasion at -3 or a Presence Attack at the +20 level without using intimidation.

Banjo

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
8	STR	-2	OCV: 5
15	DEX	15	DCV: 5
13	CON	6	ECV: 2

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
8	BODY	-4	Phases: 4, 8, 12
8	INT	-2	
6	EGO	-8	Costs
10	PRE	0	
10	COM	0	Char: 14 Base: 0
4	PD	2	+ +
3	ED	0	Powers: 58 Disad: 72
3	SPD	5	= =
6	REC	2	Totals: 72 72
20	END	0	
19	STUN	0	
Cost	Powers/Skills	END	
8	Bite: $\frac{1}{2}$ d6 HKA, reduced penetration ($-\frac{1}{4}$) (2 X $\frac{1}{2}$ d6 with STR)		
10	+2 Levels with Hand-to-Hand Combat		
4	PS: Hunter 13-		
12	+4 with Perception rolls		
10	Tracking Scent		
4	+2" Running (8" total)		
10	2d6 Luck		
0+	Disadvantages		
25	Psychological Limitation: Loyal to and protective of Ezra McCubbin and his family (very common, total)		
15	Physical Limitation: No fine manipulation (animal)		
20	Normal Characteristic Maxima		
12	Experience		

Leroy Buchanan

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
20	STR	10	OCV: 6
14	DEX	12	DCV: 6
13	CON	6	ECV: 3
13	BODY	6	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
10	INT	0	
10	GO	0	

Val	Char	Cost	Costs
15	PRE	5	
10	COM	0	Char: 47 Base: 50
6	PD	2	+ +
3	ED	0	Powers: 72 Disad: 69
3	SPD	6	- =
7	REC	0	Totals: 119 119
26	END	0	
30	STUN	0	
Cost	Powers/Skills	END	
2	Familiarity with Small Arms group		
24	+3 Levels with Combat		
2	PS: Soldier 11-		
24	Commando Training		
10	Danger Sense 11-		
10	2d6 Luck		
50+	Disadvantages		
20	Psychological Limitation: Fears Rage Poison/Pondsville disease (very common, strong)		
25	Psychological Limitation: Distrustful of others (very common, total)		
20	Normal Characteristic Maxima		
4	Experience		

BACKGROUND: Much like Ezra McCubbin, Leroy realized what was happening to Pondsville and holed up. Leroy is barricaded into a sporting goods shop with several guns and lots of ammunition. Unfortunately he has cracked under the stress. He is completely irrational now, and shoots anything that moves. He received Army training in the past and saw action in Vietnam (after which he suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome).

Joanie Davis

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
8	STR	-2	OCV: 4
11	DEX	3	DCV: 4
8	CON	-4	ECV: 4

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats		
8	BODY	-4	Phases: 4, 8, 12		
10	INT	0	Costs Char: 6 Base: 0 + + Powers: 42 Disad: 48 = = Totals: 48 48		
11	EGO	2			
10	PRE	0			
14	COM	2			
2	PD	0			
2	ED	0			
3	SPD	9			
4	REC	0			
16	END	0			
16	STUN	0			
Cost	Powers/Skills		END		
4	+2" Running				
3	Concealment	14-			
3	Stealth	14-			
9	+3 with Concealment and Stealth				
3	Climbing	11-			
10	Danger Sense	11-			
10	2d6 Luck				
0+	Disadvantages				
20	Psychological Limitation: Fears Rage Poison/Pondsville disease (very common, strong)				
15	Psychological Limitation: Distrustful of others (common, moderate)				
20	Normal Characteristic Maxima				
-7	Experience				

BACKGROUND: This 13-year-old girl spends most of her time in the attic of a neighbor's home, hiding in an old trunk. Sometimes, at night, she sneaks out and finds food. Joanie was home from school with a cold for several days just before Pondsville went mad, so she wasn't infected with the Rage Poison along with the other children of the town.

Marco Caballero

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats			
13	STR	3	OCV:		4	
11	DEX	3	DCV:		4	
10	CON	0	ECV:		4	
10	BODY	0	Phases:		4, 8, 12	
10	INT	0	Costs Char: 19 Base: 0 + + Powers: 76 Disad: 95 = = Totals: 95 95			
10	EGO	0				
13	PRE	3				
12	COM	1				
3	PD	0				
2	ED	0				
3	SPD	9				
5	REC	0				
20	END	0				
22	STUN	0				
Cost	Powers/Skills				END	
17	Dirty Infighting (Punch, Roundhouse, Low Blow, Kidney Blow)					
12	Heavy Pistol: 2d6 RKA, eight charges (- ¹ /2), OAF (-1)					
3	AK: Campaign City 12-					
2	AK: Colombia 11-					
2	PS: Mobster 11-					
2	Familiarity with Small Arms group					
5	Streetwise 13-					
5	KS: Local Drug Networks and Suppliers 14-					
0	Spanish (native)					
3	English					
5	+1 Level with Hand-to-Hand Combat					
2	Perk: His uncle is a high-placed Colombian drug-lord					
2	Concealed Weapon Permit					
15	3d6 Luck					
1	PS: Pool 8-					
0+	Disadvantages					
20	Normal Characteristic Maxima					

0+	Disadvantages
15	Psychological Limitation: Macho (common, strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Wants to be a big man in the mob (common, strong)
15	Hunted by the mob (More powerful, extensive non-combat influence, mild punishment, 8-)
10	Hunted by El Capataz (More powerful, mild punishment, 8-)
15	3d6 Unluck
5	Distinctive Looks (cigar): easily concealable

BACKGROUND: Marco always knew he'd go into the family business. The fact that the family business was cocaine only meant that there was more money and more glamor for a guy like Marco. With the right connections (which he had) and the right style (which he thought he had) a man could go far in Colombia. Marco didn't know how far he'd go.

It wasn't Marco's fault that the Colombian Federal Police followed him to a sensitive operation. It wasn't his fault that El Capataz was wounded in the ensuing shoot out and still bears a grudge. (See p. C69 of the *Champions Sourcebook* for more details about El Capataz.) And it wasn't his fault that the speed boat ran out of gas when that cocaine shipment was being moved onto a ship off the Colombian shore. The Colombian navy had picked them up, hadn't they?

The cartel decided Marco had to go. But his uncle intervened on Marco's behalf, and he was transferred to the cartel's campaign-city operations. There he tried to fit in. Unfortunately, on two occasions, small accidents led to the exposure and arrest of local mob members. Soon Marco found himself being left out of important deals. No one wanted anything to do with Marco. They even called him a jinx! This ostracism was making it impossible to continue his advancement in the mob.

Marco determined that he would show them all. He was meant to be a big time drug-lord. Then Marco met Mr. Caesar and got his big chance. Mr. Caesar was smart and shrewd, had Ogre for an enforcer, and wanted to take over the city's drug networks. But Mr. Caesar didn't have what Marco had: street savvy, contacts, and a working knowledge of those drug networks. Mr. Caesar needed Marco, and

Mr. Caesar was going to be Marco's ticket to the top. An alliance was formed.

Granted, Marco wasn't prepared for Mr. Caesar's ruthlessness. He hadn't expected so many brutal deaths of high-placed drug-dealers. But there was no restraining Mr. Caesar, and Marco found himself in it deep with no going back.

Now Mr. Caesar is in control of most of the city's drug supply, and Marco is his lieutenant.

DISTINCTIVE QUOTE: "Hey. You guys better watch out. Don't you know who I am? That's right, *puerco*, me and Mr. Caesar, we're close. You're messin' with Marco Caballero!" (Marco thinks this is a serious Presence Attack.)

PERSONALITY: Marco has a dream; he wants to be a rich and powerful drug-lord, like his uncle, Don Rico. Until he becomes "Don Marco," Marco practices acting the part. He talks tough, buys drinks for people, and tries to chum with other mobsters. It gets harder as the more powerful mobsters avoid him. Still the street thugs like the beer he buys and put up with his camaraderie, so Marco thinks he's in solid.

Marco tries to ingratiate himself with more powerful people but, in truth, he is careless. He doesn't really notice the little things that can blow a plan, so he makes mistakes.

POWERS/TACTICS: Marco has few useful skills. He carries a gun but has never used it in a gunfight; he's usually too busy finding cover. Marco is a nasty customer in an unfair fight but no match for a skilled opponent, let alone a superhero.

Marco does know a lot of people and of what happens in the narcotics underworld. His mistakes and carelessness have cost the mob though, and he is out of favor with the Colombian drug-lords. If it not for his uncle, Marco would have been executed by now. (El Capataz would like to take fatal revenge but Marco's family connection prevents him from taking direct action — hence the "mild punishment" limitation.)

Marco's incredible luck, both good and bad, makes his life a rollercoaster of spectacular failures and remarkable escapes.

APPEARANCE: Marco is about 30 years old. He has a bushy moustache and almost always smokes his trademark foul-smelling Cuban cigar (his own special blend). He wears a white suit or a loud Hawaiian shirt, depending upon his mood.

Mr. Caesar

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
50	STR	40	OCV: 6
23	DEX	39	DCV: 6
10	CON	0	ECV: 0
10	BODY	0	Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
10	INT	0	
-	EGO	0	Costs
20	PRE	10	
10	COM	0	Char: 164 Base: 100
10	rPD	20	+ +
10	rED	28	Powers: 211 Disad: 275
6	SPD	27	= =
12	REC	0	Total: 375 375
0	END	0	
-	STUN	0	

Cost	Powers/Skills	END
30	0-END STR	
18	1d6 HKA (2x1d6 with STR), 0 END (+ ¹ / ₂), reduced penetration (- ¹ / ₄)(metal-hard fists)	
6	0-END Running	
60	Takes No STUN; only BODY	
2	-1" KNB (mass 200 kg.)	
30	Full Life Support	
5	Flash Defence: 5 points (sight)	
10	High-Range Radio (Microwave) Transmission/Hearing	
24	15d6 Energy Blast: Explosion (+ ¹ / ₂), Trigger (+ ¹ / ₄) (when reaches 0 BODY), one charge, not recoverable (-2), no range (- ¹ / ₂)	
9	Shape Shift (Humanoids), Persistent: one hour to activate (-2 ¹ / ₂), only in lab with access to special equipment (- ¹ / ₂), IIF Plastiskin disguises (DEF 4) (see p. 18 for means of identification) (- ¹ / ₄)	
10	Disguise and Mimicry 14-: only for Shape-Shifted form (- ¹ / ₂)	

Cost	Powers/Skills	END
2	KS: Humanoid duplicated 11-	
2	Familiarity with Small Arms group	
3	Pilot 14-	
100+	Disadvantages	
10	Distinctive Features: Robot (easily concealed, noticed & recognizable, major reaction)	
15	Secret ID	
25	Psychological Limitation: Totally Obedient to Programming (usually includes instruction to maintain cover, kill any who penetrate cover)(very common, total)	
15	Psychological Limitation: Total shut-down if given "Shut-Down" code (uncommon, total)	
20	1d6 BODY Drain each phase if given "Self-Destruct" code (uncommon)	
15	Physical Limitation: Stunned for one phase if hit with electrical attack that does > 40 STUN	
175	Villain Bonus/Experience	

BACKGROUND: No one knows where Mr. Caesar came from. No one knows who he really is. But with Ogre for an enforcer and drawing upon Marco Caballero's knowledge of the campaign city's drug networks, Mr. Caesar has launched a gang-war to take over those networks. And, he's winning.

Those who've met Mr. Caesar say he looks and acts like a movie mobster, but his mind is quick and sharp. He knows what's going on. Some believe he has spies everywhere, even in the police department. Aside from Ogre and Marco, Mr. Caesar has three cold, impersonal, and effective gunmen. No one knows anything about them, either. The rest of Mr. Caesar's mob are all recent recruits.

DISTINCTIVE QUOTE: "Alright youse guys, this town is mine now, see? You can call me Mr. Caesar."

PERSONALITY: Mr. Caesar acts just like a movie mobster, but behind it all is a cold, calculating genius. He has no regard for life.

POWERS/TACTICS: Mr. Caesar acts no better than a skilled normal mobster, unless his true nature is discovered or the distribution of the tainted drugs

is threatened. Then he uses all his power. Mr. Caesar is actually a robot simulacrum directly controlled by its creator, Mechanon. The three mysterious gunmen are also robot simulacra.

Mechanon is using Mr. Caesar to front its efforts to take control of the campaign city's drug networks. Mechanon chose to create a new drug-lord rather than replace an existing one with a robot simulacrum because it calculated that a mysterious new drug-lord was more likely to inspire the fear and respect needed to bring together the city's drug-dealers for a massive distribution of the drugs tainted with the Rage Poison. A single, widespread release of the contaminated drugs would be more effective in achieving the widespread death, chaos, and terror that Mechanon wanted.

Also, although the robot doesn't realize it, Mechanon's own massive ego drove it to become a drug-lord in its own right, rather than simply assuming another's identity.

(Mr. Caesar can be made more powerful by adding 10 STR, and/or eyebeam energy blasts (8d6 AP Energy Blast, 0 End is recommended). The GM may also decide that Mechanon has initiated a direct link-up with Mr. Caesar. In this case, Mr. Caesar has Mechanon's mental stats and is subject to mental attack: INT 25, EGO 15, PRE 25, Mental DEF 18. In a *Dark Champions* campaign where the heroes are relying upon conventional weapons or lower-powered attacks, the GM may wish to add a disadvantage to the robots: once a robot has taken damage, the hero can bypass its armor by hitting the damaged area (a hit location penalty of -8 plus the amount of Body damage done at that location). If the location is hit, then the attack can do $1\frac{1}{2} \times \text{BODY}$.)

APPEARANCE: Mr. Caesar is short and stocky. He looks and dresses like a movie mobster.

Mechanon

Val	Char	Cost	Combat Stats
60	STR	50	OCV: 8
23	DEX	39	DCV: 8
40	CON	60	ECV: 5
15	BODY	10	Phases: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
25	INT	15	
15	EGO	10	
40	PRE	30	

Val	Char	Cost	Costs
2	COM	-4	
30	PD	18	Char: 327 Base: 150
30	ED	22	+ +
7	SPD	37	Powers: 602 Disad: 779
20	REC	0	= =
90	END	5	Totals: 929 929
100	STUN	35	
Cost	Powers/Skills	END	
78	Multipower (78 point reserve)		
7u	Laser: 12d6 EB, $\frac{1}{2}$ END	3	
7u	Plasma: 10d6 EB, Affects Desolid	7	
30u	Rockets: 10d6 EB, AP-Physical, 16 charges (0), 0 END ($+\frac{1}{2}$)		
30u	Bombs: 3d6+1 RKA, Explosion, 16 charges (0), 0 END ($+\frac{1}{2}$)		
7u	Bonder: 7d6 Entangle, DEF 7	7	
7u	3d6 STUN Drain, Area Effect, $\frac{1}{2}$ END	3	
8u	Electric Charge: 9d6 EB, Damage Shield, $\frac{1}{2}$ END	3	
7	3d6 Absorption to END, Electricity only (-1)		
4	-2" Knockback (mass 200 kg.)		
30	Damage Resistance (30 PD, 30 ED)		
30	Full Life Support		
15	Mental Defence (18 points total)		
10	Flash Defence: 10 points (sight)		
18	1d6 HKA (2x1d6 with STR), reduced penetration ($-\frac{1}{4}$) (metal-hard fists)		
25	Flight 10", 4x non-combat multiple	2	
10	360° Vision		
10	High-Range Radio (Microwave) Transmission/Hearing		
3	Absolute Time Sense		
10	Eidetic Memory		
3	Lightning Calculator		
3	Scientist		
25	SC (15- each): Chemistry, Genetics, Nuclear Physics, Physics, Robotics		
10	+2 Levels with Multipower		
20	+2 Overall Levels		

Blood Fury

Cost	Perks
29	Computer (147 points)
34	Base (171 points)
60	128 Robot Flies (125 base points each)
72	8 Robot Simulacra (285 base points each)
150+	Disadvantages
20	Psychological Limitation: Megalomaniac (common, total)
20	Psychological Limitation: Overconfident (very common, strong)
20	Psychological Limitation: Sworn to destroy mankind (very common, strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Arrogant (very common, moderate)
10	Psychological Limitation: Hunts superheroes (common, moderate)
20	Bad Reputation (extreme, 14-)
25	Hunted by UNTIL (more powerful, 14-)
10	Hunted by superhero group (less powerful, 11-)
25	Susc: Lose 2d6 per phase from being in environments of extreme heat (e.g.: continuous fire or heat attacks)
25	Susc: Lose 2d6 per phase from being in Entangles that do not have the "Entangle Takes No Damage From Attack" or "Entangle and Character Both Take Damage" advantages
589	Villain Bonus/Experience

PERSONALITY: The latest generation Mechanon is still a cold, uncaring machine. It considers all humanity inferior and worthy only of contempt. In Mechanon's present scheme, humanity's own weaknesses, physical and psychological, are to be the means of its extermination. To Mechanon's mind it is only hastening the natural result.

Mechanon's current plan deviates in one respect from its typical patterns. Rather than immediately embark upon its grand scheme, which requires the robot to dominate the cocaine cartels of Colombia and contaminate

the world's cocaine supply at the source, Mechanon has decided to test its plan, first in Pondsville and then in the campaign city. If the tests are foiled, Mechanon abandons the Rage Poison as a means to fulfilling its programming. It also abandons advance testing as contributing to the plan's failure.

Mechanon believes it is coldly logical and without emotion. In fact, Mechanon hates organic lifeforms, especially superheroes, and delights in their suffering. It is also possessed of an overweening pride.

POWERS/TACTICS: Mechanon has robotic factories hidden all over the world, programmed to rebuild it with any improvements necessary to stop whatever destroyed it. The version of Mechanon above is only a suggestion. Mechanon's actual powers and characteristics should reflect its history in the campaign. Each time Mechanon is redesigned, it is possible for new defects (e.g., Vulnerabilities and Susceptibilities) to appear, remaining in the design until they result in Mechanon's defeat, at which point the design will be revised to eliminate those particular flaws.

EXPERIENCE: The version of Mechanon above differs from the one in the *Champions Rule Book*. Certain talents have been added to reflect Mechanon's computer brain. Other changes reflect the redesign of Mechanon's physical form, assuming that heroes have discovered its earlier defects and used them against the robot. The new design corrects those flaws and, in fact, heroes who use electricity against Mechanon increase its power.

However, the new design also has some inherent defects that aren't known to Mechanon. Its present configuration is susceptible to overheating so that anything which interferes with the efficient operation of the robot's cooling systems (such as high-temperature environments or obstructions blocking its ventilation) cause its performance to degrade and perhaps render it non-functional. Generous GMs may allow a hero, who studies Mechanon with Infrared Vision and/or Find Weakness and who makes a Perception roll, to notice that Mechanon has heat vents that disperse an unusual amount of heat.

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LOOK AT Me
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