



Champions Universe

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CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE

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Dedication: To the many comics creators who have, through the quality of their work, inspired us to create our own worlds and characters.

A WORD OR TWO OF APPRECIATION

Special Thanks: To all the Hero fans who playtested, testread, math-checked, and otherwise helped us make this book as good as possible; and to the Hero fans who participated in message board and mailing list discussions of what they'd like to see in this book.



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INTRODUCTION



It's tough to run a *Champions* campaign sometimes! There are lots of decisions to be made, groundwork to do, villains to prepare character sheets for, setting aspects to describe, and scenarios to plan. Not everyone who wants to GM a *Champions* game has the time or interest to create an entire campaign.

For GMs who don't want to do a whole lot of planning, or who are looking for bits and pieces from other games they can adapt for their own settings, *Champions Universe* presents an entire, ready-to-run campaign setting for *Champions*. This is what Hero Games refers to as a *setting book* or *campaign book*. It provides everything you need to run a game in Hero's "official" *Champions* setting — character creation guidelines, NPCs, scenario seeds, discussions of superhuman demographics, reviews of the major players on the superhuman scene, and much, much more.

Chapter One, *Giants Among Us: A History Of Superhumanity*, starts the book by describing and discussing the history of superhumans from their first appearance in 1938 until the present day (2002,

to be precise). It shows you how the presence of superhumans and superpowers has affected the world for the past sixty years and helped shape modern society into its current form.

Chapter Two, *Being Superhuman: Superhumanity In The Twenty-First Century*, delves briefly into the subject of how superpowers manifest in this setting, and what it means to be "superhuman." These issues impact the character creation process and many other factors involved in campaign development.

Chapter Three, *Powers And Superpowers: Superhumans And Society*, discusses the impact and place of superhumans on and in the modern world. It looks at superhumans' affect on technology, government, the media, and various subcultures (such as martial arts, business, and religion).

Chapter Four, *Worlds Upon Worlds: The Multiverse Of The Champions Universe*, describes the geography of the setting. It discusses the role superhumans play in various parts of the globe, and describes several settings (such as Millennium City and Vibora Bay) where superhuman activity is unusually prevalent or otherwise noteworthy. But it goes beyond that to look into lost civilizations, secret lands hidden from ordinary humanity, the existence of alien life and its contact with Earth, and even other dimensions and the potential threats they hold.

Chapter Five, *The Lurking Powers: Key Players And Organizations In The Champions Universe*, provides you with information about the superhumans and organizations that have the most prominent role in the setting as a whole. If you want to learn what VIPER is like, what Dr. Destroyer's been up to, who the most powerful villains in the world are, or the secret role of the Trismegistus Council in protecting the world from extradimensional horrors, this is where you should look.

Chapter Six, *The Thunder Of The Dice: Gaming In The Champions Universe*, describes various campaign standards, ground rules, and campaigning options for the setting. It includes a scenario, *Return Of The Destroyer*, that you can use to launch a campaign set in the Champions Universe. However, to keep things from becoming too schizophrenic, the rest of the book assumes the events described in the scenario have already taken place — otherwise parts of the book become much less useful to you, as GM, as soon as you run the adventure.

THE GM'S VAULT

Chapter Six also includes another important part of the book: the *GM's Vault*, which contains all the secret, GM's-eyes-only information about the Champions Universe. As much as possible, the first





five chapters of the book have been written from a “player’s perspective”: they describe what players and their characters should know about the setting. They do include some “secret” information where it’s not convenient to separate it out — for example, even though not every PC should necessarily know about the existence and activities of the Trismegistus Council, enough of them should know that it’s better for the campaign to include that information where players can read about it. (The GM can, of course, forbid certain players to read certain parts of the book, though the effectiveness of this tactic varies.)

However, there are other types of information players clearly should *not* know about. It’s one thing to provide them with character sheets for NPC heroes, for example; those can inspire and help them. But they shouldn’t have access to villains’ character sheets, or secret information about what’s *really* going on in the sewers of New York City, or the like. That’s what the GM’s Vault contains — information only the GM should know about. If you only intend to play in a Champions Universe campaign, *don’t read the GM’s Vault!* You’ll learn things you shouldn’t, and thus spoil your enjoyment of the game.

ADAPTING THE CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE FOR YOUR OWN USE

Setting/campaign books are difficult for many gamers to use. They want a pre-packaged campaign (or parts of one, at least), but they find they don’t

like some aspect or aspects of the one a published product offers. This isn’t surprising — gaming is very much a matter of personal tastes, and it’s unlikely any company can publish a setting that appeals, completely without changes or adaptation, to thousands of gamers around the world. What one gamer loves, another despises.

If you don’t want to use the Champions Universe exactly as we’ve created it, you have plenty of options. First, you can change it to suit yourself. For example, if you like the setting in general, but you hate the history of superhumans (or the relationship between supers and the government, or the unlimited sources of superpowers, or any other thing), then change it! Most parts of the setting can be changed without causing the whole thing to unravel — like many *Champions* campaigns, it’s intended to be a robust and vibrant setting, one readily suited to world-shaking events and extreme changes.

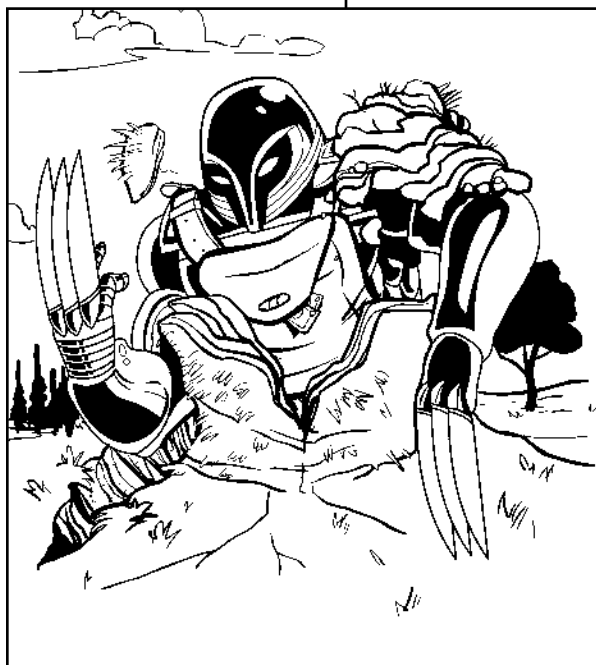
Second, you can “borrow” the parts you like, and discard the rest. You may want to do most of the work to create a *Champions* campaign (or maybe you’ve already done it), but you’re willing to save yourself some effort by adopting this book’s take on how the United States government interacts with superhumans, or substantial chunks of the CU history, or maybe just some NPC and villain writeups. Go right ahead and take what you want and leave the rest behind. There’s no rule that says you have to use the entire book just as it is — in fact, the *HERO System* specifically tells you to only use what you like and change or get rid of the rest, and that applies to a setting even more than to a rules system. As long as you have fun with *some* part of the CU, that’s what matters.

CHARACTER SHEET NOTATION

Generally, the text of the character sheets in this book should be pretty straightforward and easy to understand. Consult the Glossary in the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, and the example powers in that book, if you have any questions about abbreviations, terms, or notations. The *Writer’s Guidelines*, available on the Hero Games website, also provide some information about character sheet formatting.

In a Multipower, a “u” next to the cost indicates a Fixed (or “ultra”) slot, and an “m” a Flexible (or “multi”) slot.

Under the END column, a number in brackets indicates Charges (however, the bracketed number next to STR is an END cost).





CHAPTER ONE: GIANTS AMONG US: A HISTORY OF SUPERHUMANITY

Although superheroes are regarded — and properly so — as a twentieth-century phenomena, the history of costumed adventurers in America dates back well before that. Additionally, many events of the distant past have influenced the

world of superhumanity today, or left behind relics and long-lost peoples who surface in modern times to cause havoc or, more rarely, grant someone superpowers. Thus, to understand superhumanity today, one must be aware of a great sweep of history.

A HISTORY OF SUPERHEROES



The Champions Universe has had a tradition of costumed adventuring dating back centuries, although the “superhero” in its modern idiom originates in the 1930s. Certainly such heroes as Robin Hood and the Scarlet Pimpernel can be seen as precursors to modern superheroes, fighting for justice and the oppressed while disguising their true identities. And, if legends and tales are true, men and women with remarkable powers have existed throughout history: sorcerers like Merlin or John Dee, mighty warriors like Heracles or Hippolyta. Modern events, such as the revelation of the existence of Atlantis and her water-breathing inhabitants, lead scholars to believe that the old myths and stories may have more than a few grains of truth to them.

THE EARLY COSTUMED ADVENTURERS

Nevertheless, most historians agree the first “costumed superhero” in America, land of superheroes, and thus in the world, was the legendary Black Mask. The first man to wear the mask was John Ward, who fought against the British colonial government in Massachusetts while married to the daughter of his fiercest enemy, Colonel Hensworth. To protect his wife and children from reprisals by the British while he was engaged in acts of sabotage, Ward wore a mask, and when his campaign of harassment became highly successful, the legend of the Black Mask spread throughout the colonies. As the Revolutionary War raged on, Ward became a special agent of General Washington himself, and the Black Mask, a symbol of resistance to tyranny.

Ward’s son, Timothy, inherited the Black Mask from his father, and was the first to use it as a symbol of justice against criminals instead of the British. In 1797, he wore the mask while battling a band of thieves who had been terrorizing Boston. Between then and 1818, Timothy put on the mask several more times, using his wits and the psychological edge the costume gave him to defeat smugglers, pirates, thugs, and swindlers. When his own son, Samuel, took over the role in 1822, and moved to Philadelphia, legends began to spread across the country that there was only one man wearing the mask, who was immortal and undefeatable. The various wearers of the mask have occasionally acted in furtherance of that legend, which is generally not believed except by the most credulous of criminals — especially now that the tenth Black Mask is a woman.

BLACK MASK I

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
15	CON	10	12-	
11	BODY	2	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
12	COM	1	11-	
6	PD	3		Total: 11 PD (5 rPD)
5	ED	2		Total: 10 ED (5 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
8	REC	4		
40	END	5		
33	STUN	6		Total Characteristic Cost: 106

Movement: Running: 6”/12”
Swinging: 6”/12”

Cost	Powers	END
4	<i>Customized Matchlock Pistol:</i> RKA 1d6; OAF (-1), 8 clips of 1 Charge each (-1), Increased Reloading Time (2 Full Phases; -¼), No Knockback (-¼) [1]	
4	A second Customized Matchlock Pistol [1]	
16	<i>Whip:</i> Multipower, 32-point reserve; all OAF (-1)	
1u	1) <i>Lash:</i> HKA ½d6 (½d6 with STR); OAF (-1), No STR Bonus (-½) 1	
1u	2) <i>Reach:</i> Stretching 3”, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), Always Direct (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼) 0	
1u	3) <i>Swingline:</i> Swinging 6”; OAF (-1), Lockout (cannot use other slots in a Phase when uses Swinging; -½) 1	
9	<i>Rapier:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼) plus +1 OCV; OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼) 1	
	<i>Martial Art: The Manly Arts Of Fisticuffs</i>	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes	
4	Block +2 +2 Block, Abort	
4	Dodge — +5 Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort	
4	Punch +0 +2 5d6 Strike	
5	Roundhouse -2 +1 7d6 Strike	
	<i>Martial Art: Fencing</i>	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes	
5	Lunge +1 -2 Weapon +4 DC	
5	Thrust +1 +3 Weapon	

- 4 *Padded Suit:* Armor (2 PD/2 ED); OIF (-½) 0
 5 *Night-Eyes:* Nightvision 0

Perks

- 2 Contact: Colonel Hensworth 8-, useful resources, limited to normal identity
 5 Money: Well Off

Talents

- 3 Ambidexterity (-2 Off Hand penalty)
 6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)

Skills

- 4 +2 OCV with Customized Matchlock Pistols
 6 +2 with Whip Multipower

- 5 Acrobatics 14-
 7 Acting 15-
 3 Breakfall 13-
 3 Climbing 13-
 3 High Society 13-
 1 Language: French (basic conversation; English is native)
 1 Language: German (basic conversation)
 3 AK: Boston 13-
 5 KS: British Army 15-
 5 KS: Colonial Rebel Activities 15-
 3 PS: Farmer 13-
 3 Riding 13-
 3 Shadowing 13-
 3 Stealth 13-
 2 Survival (Temperate) 13-
 5 Tactics 14-
 3 Trading 13-
 1 TF: Carts & Carriages
 5 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Early Firearms, Whips

Total Powers & Skills Cost:
162

Total Cost: 268

150+ Disadvantages

- 15 DNPC: Mary (his wife) 11- (Normal)
 20 DNPC: Timothy and Elizabeth (his children) 8- (Incompetent; x2 DNPCs)
 25 Hunted: British Army 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
 15 Psychological Limitation: Devoted To American Independence (Common, Strong)
 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (John Ward) (Frequently, Major)
 28 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 268

Background/History: John Ward was born the son of a Massachusetts farmer in 1749. Like

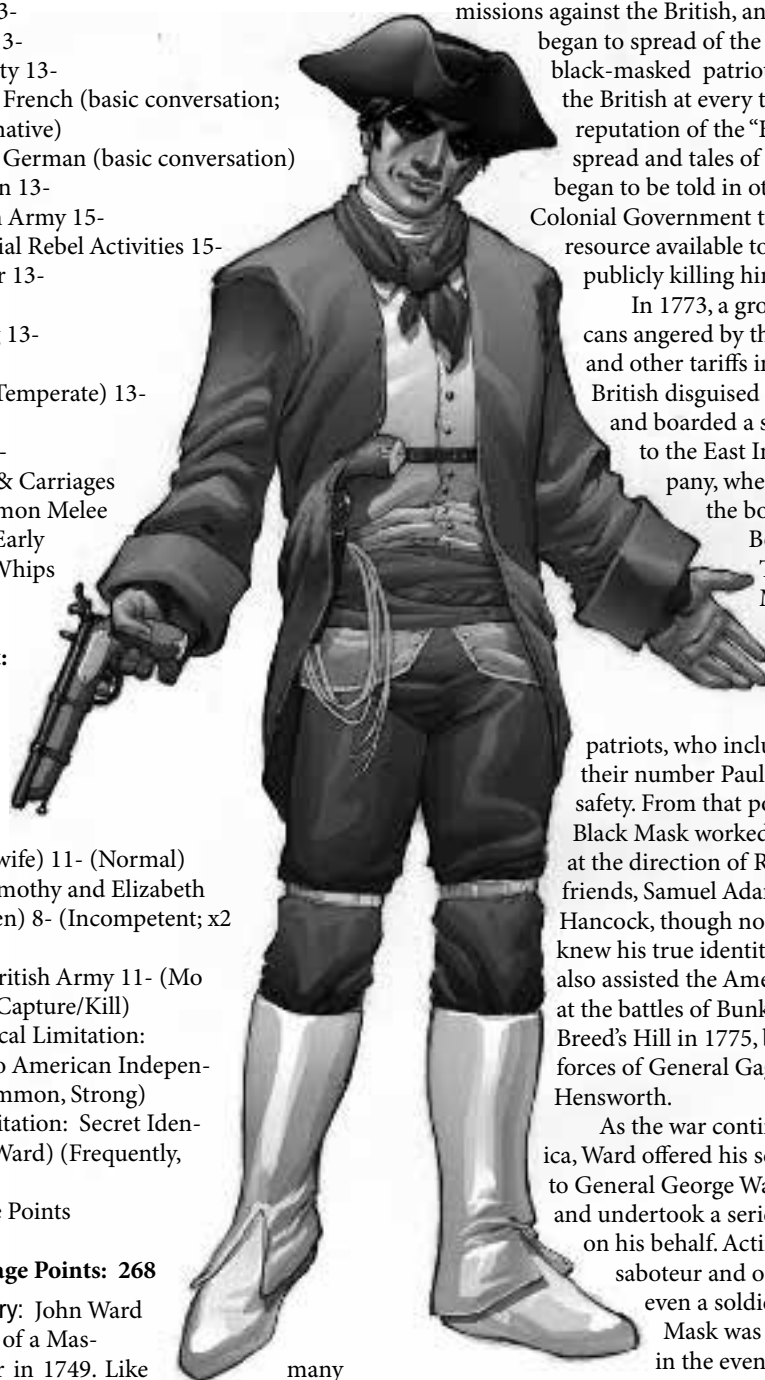
young men his age, he was swept up with the revolutionary spirit of the times and believed strongly in American independence from England. By 1765 he had joined the secret society of American patriots and rebels known as the Sons of Liberty. However, he had also fallen in love with Mary, the daughter of Colonel Peter Hensworth, who was the top aide to Thomas Gage (the Colonial Governor of Massachusetts), and married her in 1770. Unable to openly display his revolutionary beliefs for fear of exposing his wife and children to Hensworth's wrath, Ward instead wore a black mask while helping a group of patriots perform acts of sedition and sabotage against the British Army. Mary knew of her husband's activities, and though she still loved her father, chose to support her husband's activities secretly as well.

Ward was both brilliant and daring in his missions against the British, and word soon began to spread of the mysterious, black-masked patriot who vexed the British at every turn. As the reputation of the "Black Mask" spread and tales of his exploits began to be told in other cities, the Colonial Government turned every resource available to capturing and publicly killing him.

In 1773, a group of Americans angered by the Stamp Act and other tariffs imposed by the British disguised themselves and boarded a ship belonging to the East India Tea Company, where they threw the boxes of tea into Boston Harbor.

The Black Mask used his own wiles and skills at stealth to help the patriots, who included among their number Paul Revere, to safety. From that point on, the Black Mask worked alongside and at the direction of Revere and his friends, Samuel Adams and John Hancock, though none of them knew his true identity. Black Mask also assisted the American army at the battles of Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill in 1775, battling the forces of General Gage and Colonel Hensworth.

As the war continued in America, Ward offered his services directly to General George Washington and undertook a series of missions on his behalf. Acting as a spy, saboteur and occasionally even a soldier, the Black Mask was instrumental in the eventual defeat of



many

the British Army and the establishment of American independence. Ward became an associate and friend to notable patriots like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, to whom he never revealed his true identity. After the Revolutionary War was over, Ward retired to his farm and family life, not suspecting the legend he had begun would outlive him by many generations.

Personality/Motivation: John Ward is a noble and honorable individual with a strong belief in personal rights, individual responsibility, and the cause of American independence. Although he'd prefer to resolve America's quest for freedom peacefully, he recognizes that isn't going to be possible. Having committed himself to the cause, he's going to see it through to the bitter end, no matter what sacrifices it may require of him. The only thing that ever gives him pause is concern about what will happen to his beloved wife and children if he should be badly injured or killed.

Quote: "We'll never rest until America is a free land."

Powers/Tactics: As the Black Mask, Ward is a master of psychological warfare. He knows instinctively how to raise the morale of his compatriots-at-arms and civilians with equal ease. Further, he spends most of the war carrying on a campaign of harassment against the Colonial Government of Massachusetts and especially his father-in-law, Hensworth, with amazing effectiveness. He fully understands that every man Hensworth sends out to find him is another man not fighting for the British at the front. Though he does not use more violence than is necessary to complete his mission, he is willing to kill as a last resort in the name of American independence.

In battle, Black Mask frequently tries to strike from surprise, firing his pistols from cover before swinging into the fray with his whip. Though he is a skilled fencer, he generally won't engage in swordplay against unarmed opponents. He prefers to use his environment to tactical advantage; he often tries to arrange confrontations for nighttime or dark places, situations in which his superior night-vision is a major asset.

Appearance: John Ward stands just short of six feet tall, broad-shouldered with jet black hair, grey eyes and a warm, friendly demeanor. In action he favors nondescript padded leather jackets and buckskins, with a tricorner hat and a wide black domino mask. He carries two matched flintlock pistols in his jacket and a whip at his belt, and usually wears a rapier as well.

THE BLACK MASK IS NOT ALONE

Meanwhile, a few other notable events were occurring. In 1790 Baron Frankenstein successfully created an artificial man, named by him Adam but better known to later generations simply as "Frankenstein's Monster," and wound up pursuing him into the Arctic wastes after the creature killed his wife. In the American Southwest of the 1820s, perhaps inspired by the legend of the Black Mask, the costumed vigilante swordsman known as *El Lobo* (the Wolf) battled oppressive Mexican authorities. And in the 1840s, Auguste Dupin developed his

reputation as the greatest detective in Europe; some scholars now believe Dupin possessed very minor precognitive powers.

In 1853, Matthew Ward became the fourth Black Mask. At first he too operated out of Boston, but when the Civil War began he joined the Union Army. (The South also had a costumed combatant, the mysterious Grey Ghost, and the two often clashed, though never decisively.) After the war, Matthew moved the legend to Chicago, where he became a policeman. In 1871 James Lee Ward became the fifth Black Mask, and seeking new adventures he moved to Arizona. The Black Mask legend underwent another transformation as it approached its first centennial — James became a costumed lawman and bounty hunter in the Wild West, and adopted the first teen sidekick in Marvin Carr, whose father James had known before his death. James himself, however, would have the shortest career of all the Black Masks when he was killed by the notorious outlaw known as Sidewinder in 1876. Since James' own son was only two, Marvin became the new Black Mask, the first outside of the Ward family line.

THE EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN OF VICTORIAN ENGLAND

Not all the early heroes and men of mystery were to be found in America. Across the Atlantic, Victorian England was developing its own tradition of men (and sometimes women) with that special blend of bravery and a thirst for justice that makes a true hero.

In London, Sherlock Holmes and his partner John Watson opened the first "Consulting Detective Service" in the 1870s, turning Holmes' formidable mind (perhaps, like Dupin's, one with minor precognitive powers) to the purpose of thwarting criminals such as Professor James Moriarty. Holmes continued to battle criminals throughout the 1880s, encountering the vampire Count Dracula in 1887 and Jack the Ripper in 1888. Dracula returned to London in 1890, but was destroyed by the vampire hunter Abraham Van Helsing.

Holmes apparently met his death in 1891 in an encounter with his archenemy Moriarty at Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland, though it would later be revealed both men survived the encounter. In Moriarty's absence, his criminal empire was taken over by a network of international criminal masterminds calling itself simply the Cabal. Meanwhile, Holmes' brother Mycroft ascended to head of the British Secret Service, using only the letter "M" as his code name.

Several British inventors, drawing on the Industrial Revolution's technological advances, made the first forays into what would today be called "super-technology." Though their creations were much more limited than modern technology, and prone to failure and breakage, they nevertheless opened up astounding vistas and inspired future generations of crimefighters and criminals. For example, in 1883, Dr. Henry Jekyll developed a mysterious chemical formula that transformed him into the monstrous criminal Mr. Hyde, and in 1902,



the brilliant but deranged scientist Hawley Griffin invented a skin-bleaching formula and went on an invisible rampage throughout London and the surrounding countryside. And in 1887 the mysterious island of the brilliant Dr. Moreau was discovered, and his laboratory accidentally destroyed by his half-human, half-animal creations. Such was all too often the pattern; only a few of the renowned Victorian scientists, such as Professor Holcomb Merriweather, managed to retain their sanity and use their inventions and processes for good rather than evil.

MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE STATES...

In New York City, ever a hotbed of adventure, the now-storied Empire Club opened in 1879. A private "Gentleman's Social Club" (though it did have at least two notable female members) for professional adventurers, explorers, and other daredevils, the Empire Club achieved its greatest fame during the 1920s and '30s, but was by no means inactive before then.

The first Toastmaster of the Empire Club was Axel Lidenbrock, who had discovered dinosaurs in a massive cave beneath the Earth in the mid-1860s. Other early members included Ned Land and George Challenger.

In 1896, Marvin Carr retired as Black Mask VI, and passed the mantle back to Jason Ward, son of Black Mask V. Jason moved back to Chicago, taking Marvin's own son Andrew as his sidekick for a brief period.

There were few costumed heroes between the turn of the century and the 1920s. The seventh Black Mask was still active in Chicago, and the mysterious Black Eagle flew top secret missions as a British aviator during World War I. An orphaned girl in the depths of Africa grew up to be Ryanna the Jungle Queen in the late 1910s and early 1920s. And in

Atlantis, Princess Mara was born.

MYSTERY MEN OF THE PULP ERA

The 1920s and '30s, known as the "pulp era" due to the popular magazines of the time, saw the first true flowering of the costumed adventurer concept. The number of "mystery men" and adventurers (and their adversaries) increased dramatically, and the concept of costumed crimefighting firmly entered the public consciousness.

1926 saw the first appearance of the enigmatic Raven. Battling mobsters on the streets of Hudson City with the aid of his assistants, the lovely Velvet Phantom and the Midnight Brigade, the Raven was armed with phenomenal accuracy and fast reflexes, and a mysterious deck of tarot cards which reputedly allowed him to foresee the future. In 1929, Black Mask VII died, and the mantle passed to his son, Jeffrey Layton Ward, who was also a policeman in Chicago. And in 1932, the brilliant scientist Jimmy Tompion first appeared in London fighting the machinations of the villainous Air King.

It wasn't until the mid-1930s that the floodgates really opened, however. For example, in 1936 Bill Jeffries declared his personal war on crime in Philadelphia, developing *two* alternate identities: the street thug Lefty LeGrand, who would learn of some crime about to be committed; and the mysterious dark avenger Black Owl, who would then thwart it. In 1937, King Oceanus of Atlantis was betrayed and killed by Dargon the Usurper, a political rival who opposed Oceanus's plans for peaceful first contact with the surface world. Turning the army against Oceanus with carefully-constructed lies, Dargon and his ally, the wizard Nereus, seized the throne. Dargon intended to legitimize his claim by marrying the young princess Mara, by force if necessary, but she fled the castle. Nereus sent a sea-monster after her, but she escaped, and rather than face Dargon's wrath Nereus lied and claimed she had died. Mara wound up on the rocky coast of New England, where she first befriended "landers" like the wheelchair-bound orphan Amy Levesque, and Navy Lieutenant Barry Colville. Later that year, she rescued the crew of a sinking destroyer off the coast of Massachusetts, and the press gave the mysterious figure the nickname Sea Hawk.

Other crimefighters and adventurers whose names frequently made the front pages during this period included: the Cobra, who used martial arts abilities learned in the mysterious Orient to battle crime in New York City; the fast-flying, foe-fighting Futurian, with his fantastic Rocket-Pack and fearsome Electro-Pistol; and the Grey Guardian of San Francisco.

THE MODERN AGE OF SUPERHEROES BEGINS

Despite the fact that some of the early adventurers of the 1800s and the pulp era may have possessed minor paranormal abilities, or used unusually advanced technology, the true Age of Superheroes was yet to come.

In the summer of 1938, as Hitler planned the conquest of Europe, his Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels was secretly assembling a team of powerful mystics, the *Reichsamt für die Sicherung völkischer Kulturgüter* (Reich's Office for the Safety and Security of National Cultural Items, or RSvKg), led by the mysterious Erich Hessler. Seeking a magical weapon to use against Germany's enemies before her armies commenced their march across Europe, the sorcerers gathered in a mountain redoubt on May 1st and performed several powerful occult rituals. But their spells did not have the outcome they expected. Instead of leading them to artifacts that would satisfy their masters, the arcane energies they released somehow enhanced, or perhaps unleashed, the latent magic underlying all reality — thus making the creation of true superhumans possible.

There were two immediate effects. First, Hessler's conjurations successfully summoned a powerful demon, who merged with his body and transformed him into the horrible, skeletal creature known as *Der Totenkopf*, or the Death's Head. Second, and much more importantly, the heightened mystical energies now active in Earth's dimension created the world's first true superhuman, transforming an ordinary soldier named Walther Flenner into the superpowerful *Sturmvogel* (Stormbird). Scant days later, the cosmic scales were balanced when Don Randall, of Haynesville, Kansas, was endowed with the superpowers that made him Captain Patriot (see page 86).

Soon superhumans began appearing around the world, though at first mostly in America and Europe. During that summer, for example, Robert MacDonald traveled to Egypt and visited the Great Pyramid. While there, he had a vision in which he encountered the god Osiris and was granted powers of light and darkness. Returning to Harlem, he adopted the identity of Dr. Twilight. Scientist Harrison Chase also traveled, in his case to Yellowstone National Park, where he found a mysterious rock that gave him vast energy-manipulation powers as long as he was in contact with it. He carved the rock into a ring, and became the crimefighter MeteorMan. Takashi Osuru was caught in a horrible chemical fire, but instead of dying emerged with the power to psychically create and control fire, and fought for the Japanese military under the code name *Tasho*, or "Flamethrower." And Albert Stebernow was subjected to a series of strange medical tests by Totenkopf and emerged with massive strength and the ability to grow to over thirty feet tall. When he went to the front he was called *Donner*, or "Thunder."

Of course, even with superhumans emerging, there were still other new heroes who put on costumes and battled evil without powers. Young millionaire playboy Drake Wilson adopted the iden-

tity of Optimus as he sought perfection in matters mental, physical, and ethical. "Kid" Brown, a trick-shooter with the Funtime Family Circus also secretly acted as a bounty hunter under the moniker Cowboy. And a San Francisco showgirl named Leticia Henry put on a mask and skimpy outfit, called herself the Nightingale, and soon had criminals lining up to be captured.

The Defenders Of Justice

America was still neutral in the growing conflicts overseas when a completely different threat manifested. On October 30, several alien spacecraft landed near Grovers Mill, New Jersey, and the passengers swiftly massacred several policemen and a National Guard unit before assembling gigantic tripods armed with heat rays and poisonous gas. All the superheroes in the greater New York area wound up working together to destroy the tripods and defeat the invaders (later identified as Sirians) before they could do too much damage, and decided to remain together as an organization in case of trouble too big for any one of them. The group, christened by its members *the Defenders of Justice*, had Optimus, Dr. Twilight, Cowboy, and Sea Hawk on its first roster. The press quickly began referring to them as "the DOJ" for short.

In 1939 the DOJ recruited two more members, Captain Patriot and MeteorMan, while continuing to battle menaces such as Liquidator, Sub Zero, The Mink, and the Bundist spy organization called the Black Legion. As war heated up abroad, Captain Patriot also participated in forming the secret government organization called the "Haynesville Project," a team of scientists working at a hidden base in Cap's old home town to study the nature of superpowers and how the government could control and artificially create them. At the same time, Der Totenkopf and his counterpart in Japan, the powerful sorcerer Iron Father, cast a series of interlocking spells to protect the Axis nations from Allied superbeings — any enemy superhuman who entered Axis territory would suffer a terrible wasting sickness, first losing his powers and then falling into a lifeless coma.

World War II

The DOJ continued to battle criminals through 1940, while the war continued in Europe. MeteorMan's wife Abigail found a magical spellbook and became the mystical heroine Lady Mystery, while Sir Peter Tanfield used his phenomenal skill with the bow to battle Nazis as the Scarlet Archer. Several of America's most powerful criminals united under the name of the Society of Evil and went on a crime spree that summer, hard pressing the DOJ before the heroes' eventual victory.

1941 saw increased concern, as Germany pressed its advantage on all sides in Europe, and more *Übermenschen* seemed to appear every day. Arlequin, Loge, Moorbrand and Nordwind struck fear into the hearts of their enemies, even superhumans like the Russian General Winter and the Brit-



ish Lady Lightning. Dargon pledged assistance to Hitler from Atlantis — not only did his forces plague Allied shipping in the North Atlantic, the mighty Atlantean warrior Steel Shark joined the Übermenschen. On December 7, America finally entered the war after a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor by Japanese forces. Few are aware that the third wave of attackers, strange dragon-riding warriors from another dimension summoned by Iron Father, was only barely thwarted by the DOJ. The DOJ attempted a counterattack on the Japanese mainland, only to fall victim to the defensive spells and barely escape with their lives.

Once America was in the war, the DOJ pledged their services to the War Department and became part of the Haynesville Project. Major Leslie Groves divided the team in two. The super-powered members remained in the Defenders and were assigned to protect the homefront against Axis spies and superhumans, including new members like the superfast Streak, the high-flying American Eagle, and the World's Mightiest Non-Com, Sergeant Battle. Optimus took command of the other team, a unit of mystery men and supersoldiers called the Freedom Battalion, who were unaffected by the Axis protection spells and thus able to fight in Europe. In addition to the Scarlet Archer and Nightingale, he also recruited crimefighters like Swashbuckler and Bulletproof, who wore a suit recently created by the Chinese scientist Dr. Ping. The Defenders were also aided by the scientific genius of Professor Michael Maven, whose inventiveness provided them with vehicles, weapons, and other devices to battle the Axis.

Over the course of the war, these two teams had countless adventures, and some tragedies.

American Eagle disappeared in action in 1943, and Lady Lightning was killed by Sturmvogel in 1944. However, Sea Hawk and Optimus, who had fallen in love, were able to kill Dargon and retake the throne of Atlantis — their wedding was one of the rare happy moments during the war, though it meant both had to leave the DOJ to rebuild her nation. Cowboy, who had changed his name to Liberator, led the Battalion for the rest of the war.

Finally, in 1945 the Freedom Battalion led Allied forces into Germany in time to witness Hitler's suicide. The final battle between the Übermenschen and the Allied heroes was a bloody and tragic one, with losses on both sides. Liberator and Swashbuckler were killed, as was Sturmvogel. Within a couple of months, America dropped two atomic bombs on Japan and forced its surrender, and World War II was over.

With the end of the war, several heroes retired, but the remaining members of the DOJ reformed the team into a unit of crimefighters. Captain Patriot, MeteorMan, and Lady Mystery retired within months of the end of the war, and Bulletproof disappeared after a battle with a mysterious alien. Dr. Twilight left the team to concentrate on street-level crime after several debates about the violence of his methods. Streak, Nightingale, and Sgt. Battle tried to keep the team together, but there were few costumed menaces to fight, and eventually the remaining members of the DOJ voted to disband in 1948.

Meanwhile, after several years of marriage, Optimus and Mara were having trouble, and decided to divorce in 1948. Optimus returned to the surface world and went to work with the United Nations, later helping to form UNTIL



in the mid-1960s. The early 1950s saw little in the way of superhuman activity, though Scarlet Archer and Black Mask remained active and Captain Patriot regularly appeared in public as an associate of Senator Joseph McCarthy. When Dr. Twilight's true identity and former Communist party connections were revealed, the DOJ and superheroes in general were disgraced publicly. By the time McCarthy himself was finally discredited, the first generation of heroes had largely retired or gone underground.

THE 1950s AND '60s

But a second wave was soon to arrive. National Park ranger Tom Teller found a meteor fragment similar to Chase's, and began using it quietly to rescue people from disasters. When Chase found out about this, he gave his blessing (and some training), and Teller became the second MeteorMan in 1956. That same year saw the debut of the ninth Black Mask, David Matthew Ward, and also the first appearance of El Espectro, a Mexican wrestler whose enchanted silver mask enabled him to find and destroy the vampires, mummies, and zombies that plagued his country. Still, the superheroes of the so-called "Silver Age" were cautious, acting behind the scenes and shunning the spotlight.

In 1959, however, all of that changed. Jeffrey Sinclair found an alien artifact that transformed him into the flying powerhouse known as Vanguard. He became New York City's leading hero and revived the Justice Squadron, a superteam whose members had mostly retired after the war. That in turn seemed to signal a revival of superheroes across America, and the world. Alan Betts put on the suit of armor designed by his old friend Potter and became Rocketman, defender of the American South. And five friends traveled into space on a homemade ship to protect Earth from a comet, which turned out to be the home of a mysterious alien race bent on colonization. Exposure to strange radiation while thwarting that plan turned them into the Fabulous Five (Amazing Man, Siren, Streak II, Diamond, and Kid Chameleon.)

As if in response, the costumed villains began to return as well. Each hero seemed to bring with him a "Rogues' Gallery" of villains, some comically inept or bent only on humiliating their foe, others deadly serious and menaces to all of society. The Gargoyle, Dr. Macabre, Rockslide, Bookworm, Humbug, and Cyrax the Conqueror, among others, all first appeared in the late 1950s. By the early 1960s, the supercrime problem had reached such proportions that the United Nations established a new agency, UNTIL, to address it (see page 105).

DR. MACABRE PLOT SEEDS

During a strange solar eclipse, the powers of the Janus Key flare, grant Dr. Macabre five times as much power as he's ever had before! Not knowing if these newfound abilities will last, Macabre decides to clean out his "revenge list" in one fell swoop — no matter how much destruction or death he has to cause to do it!

While using the Janus Key to travel between dimensions, Dr. Macabre accidentally ends up in 2002 Millennium City. How will he react to the future? How will the future react to him? Perhaps the Janus Key is more powerful in 2002....

After conjuring some demonites, Dr. Macabre gets knocked out, ending up in a coma for several days. The demonites, freed of any bond of loyalty to him, go on a rampage, becoming more and more powerful as they soak up the life-energies of Earth's dimension.

DR. MACABRE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	Lift 75 kg; 1½d6 HTH
17	DEX	21	12-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
15	CON	10	12-	
9	BODY	-2	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
5	PD	3		Total: 10 PD (5 rPD)
6	ED	3		Total: 11 ED (5 rED)
4	SPD	13		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
7	REC	4		
40	END	5		
24	STUN	3		Total Characteristic Cost: 83

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
62	<i>Mesmerism:</i> Multipower, 62-point reserve	
12m	1) <i>Super-Hypnotism:</i> Mind Control 10d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	2
12m	2) <i>Sleep Command:</i> Ego Attack 5d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	2
12m	3) <i>Hypnotic Visions:</i> Mental Illusions 10d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	2
10	<i>Mental Wards:</i> Mental Defense (13 points total)	0
12	<i>Crystal Ball:</i> Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Groups), 16x Range (2,400"); OAF Fragile (-1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Extra Time (1 Minute; -1½)	5
17	<i>The Janus Key:</i> Extra-Dimensional Movement, x2 Increased Weight, any location in a related group of dimensions (the Cosmic Axis); OAF (-1)	4
24	<i>Demon Bell:</i> Summon 8 150-point Demonites, Loyal (+½); OAF (-1), Gestures (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½)	7
20	<i>Lotus Dust:</i> Drain EGO 4d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing]; +½); IAF (dustpouch; -½), 2 Charges (-1½)	[2]
9	<i>Smoke Pellets:</i> Darkness to Sight Group 3" radius; OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼)	[4]
8	<i>Ring of Protection:</i> Force Field (5 PD/5 ED), IIF (-¼)	1
4	<i>Padded Cloak:</i> Armor (4 PD/4 ED); OAF (-1), Activation Roll 11- (-1)	0

Talents

3 Simulate Death

Skills

5 Acting 14-
5 Disguise 14-
4 KS: Arcane & Occult Lore 14-
7 Power: Magic 15-
3 SS: Parapsychology 13-
3 Shadowing 13-
3 Stealth 12-

2 WF: Handguns, Staffs

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 237

Total Cost: 320

150+ Disadvantages

5 Age (40+)
10 Distinctive Features: weird, spooky aura (Concealable With Effort; Noticed And Recognizable)
15 Hunted: MeteorMan 8- (As Pow, Imprison)
25 Hunted: FBI 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Imprison)
15 Psychological Limitation: Greedy (Common, Strong)
20 Psychological Limitation: Arrogant; Assumes He's Smarter Than Everyone He Meets (Very Common, Strong)
15 Psychological Limitation: Seeks To Own Any Magical Item He Hears About (Uncommon, Total)
10 Reputation: Loser supervillain, 11-
15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Paul Lund) (Frequently, Major)
40 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 320

Background/History: Paul Lund was assistant curator of the Northwestern Museum of Natural History in Oregon in 1966, when the museum received an unusual donation from a mysterious private collector. Among the items was a strange golden key inscribed with mysterious markings. Lund became obsessed with studying the key, about which he was unable to gain any information. Convinced it was of ancient provenance, he began studying old texts and determined the markings were actually words in an archaic Greek dialect, but including letters and words he found completely unfamiliar.

As he stumbled through yet another attempt at translation one dark night, the key itself began to glow with a cool blue light. Hesitantly reaching out to it, Lund felt strange energies wash over him. His consciousness was opened to the mysteries of the cosmos, and he realized he could now bend the minds of others to his own will through the forces of what he called "super-mesmerism." That night he determined to use his new powers and those of the key, which he now understood was actually a portal to other mystical dimensions, to revenge himself on everyone who had ever bullied, ignored, or laughed at him. He would be... Dr. Macabre! But first, he needed to find other magical devices, to increase his powers further....

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Dr. Macabre was a second-rate supervillain, constantly on the prowl for new magical items to steal from museums or private collections, dig out of ancient ruins, or otherwise sneak off with. He most frequently crossed swords with the second MeteorMan and the demonic hero Mountain, but met pretty much every hero of the Silver Age at least once or twice. While he was no pushover, he never quite made it into the first rank of public menaces. He spent most of the 1980s in jail, and died

of colon cancer in a Seattle hospital in 1993. His personal effects, including the Janus Key, vanished; their whereabouts remain unknown.

Personality/Motivation: Many villains seek power for its own sake, or to prove something to others or themselves. Doctor Macabre seeks it mainly for revenge. He feels he's been ignored, bullied, taunted, pushed around, and treated shabbily his whole life... and he won't take it anymore! He wants not only to make everyone who ever so much as hurt his feelings suffer, but to become powerful enough and feared enough that no one will ever sneer at him again.

Long-term exposure to the energies of the Janus Key has moved Dr. Macabre along the sanity spectrum from eccentric to outright barmy. His success with the Key has given him the idea that having other magical items will make him more powerful still, so he looks for such things with a fanatical obsession. He's managed to lay hands on quite a few so far, but if he hears about another one, he'll soon be trying to make it his own. He'll be pretty much unable to resist attempting to steal any magical artifact or device he hears about, and while he'll be careful to make plans that minimize personal danger, he will frequently make rash decisions in the heat of the moment that are based on his own delusions or fairly nutty theories he's heard about.

Quote: "Curse you, MeteorMan! Your infernal luck won't protect you the next time we meet!"

Powers/Tactics: Despite his fairly impressive mental powers, Dr. Macabre isn't a front-line fighter, and he knows it. As a general rule he employs the most powerful henchmen he can get to follow his orders; if none are available he relies on his summoned demonites (decidedly minor members of the Infernal Hierarchy) to do the heavy fighting while he slips away in the shadows.

Macabre's powers derive either from exposure to, or use of, enchanted items. His "arsenal" includes a crystal ball, a magical ring, a bell that summons demonites, and other items, most relatively minor. The Janus Key, on the other hand, is a powerful artifact from the days of the wars of Atlantis. In the hands of a skilled user, it could probably do a lot more than open dimensional portals....

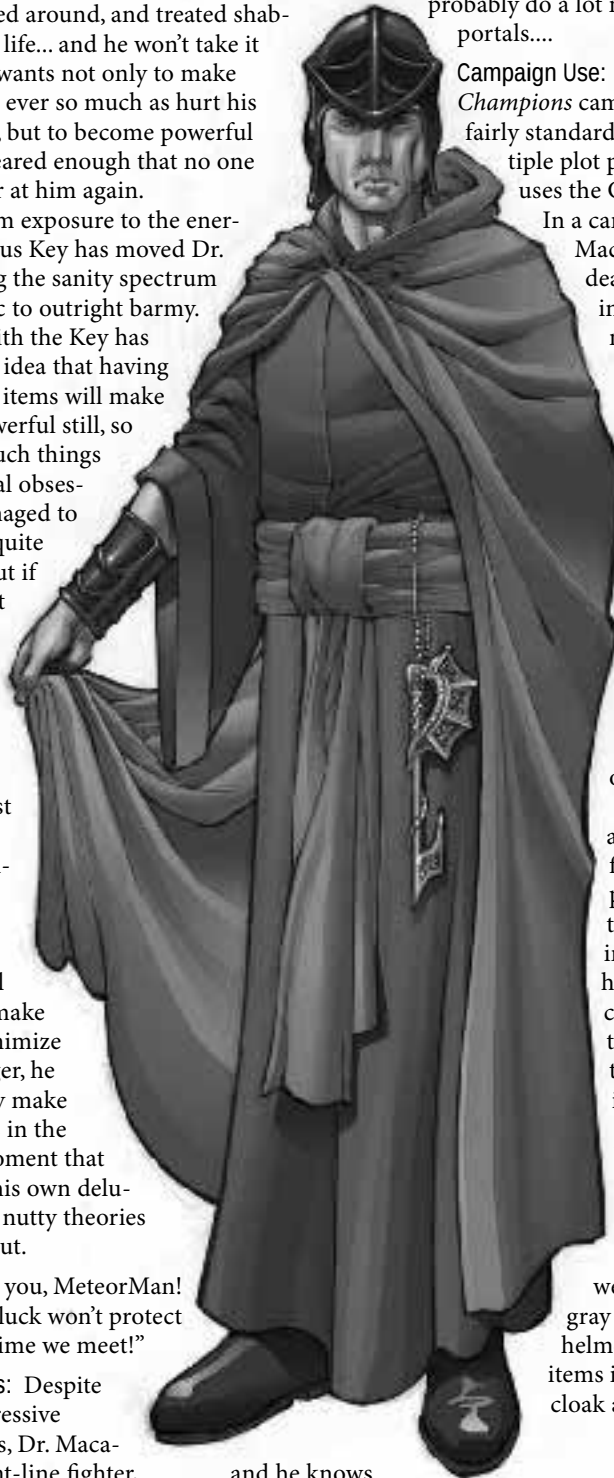
Campaign Use: In a *Golden* or *Silver Age* *Champions* campaign, Dr. Macabre serves as a fairly standard villain, though one with multiple plot possibilities due to all the weird uses the GM can make of the Janus Key.

In a campaign set in the modern day, Macabre might return from the dead somehow, or travel forward in time... or be succeeded by a new Dr. Macabre, one wielding a Janus Key that has had more of its awesome energies unleashed.

If Dr. Macabre is too weak for your campaign, increase his SPD to 5 (or even 6), give him more Janus Key-based powers, or equip him with some additional enchanted items (or maybe the ability to cast minor spells). If he's too strong, reduce the Active Points in his Mental Power and remove a few of his enchanted weapons.

Doctor Macabre is an annoying Hunter who can fixate on an enemy for the most petty of reasons, and show up to cause problems at the most inopportune moments. Typically he launches a scheme, leaving carefully-planned clues designed to lead his foe into an ambush, then captures him and puts him in a deathtrap.

Appearance: In his prime, Dr. Macabre is a thin man in his early 40s, with short black hair (that he dyes the gray out of) and brown eyes. He wears a dark green tunic under a gray cloak and an open-faced black helmet. He carries his enchanted items in concealed pockets in his cloak and tunic.



THE SENTINELS

In 1961, the computer intelligence Ultivac tried to take over the world by seizing control of the United States's and USSR's nuclear missile launch codes. His plan was thwarted by an unlikely team-up of heroes, who chose to remain together as The Sentinels. The original lineup, which stayed together until 1965, included MeteorMan and Rocketman, as well as Microman (a brilliant physicist who developed the Shrinking Ray), Dr. Phantom (the daughter of Professor Maven, and a brilliant scientist in her own right, who invented a dimensional phasing device), and Beowulf (the legendary warrior-king summoned by a mild-mannered college student). This team seized the popular imagination like none before, and its members became international celebrities. Unfortunately, the same could not be said for several other heroes debuting in the early 1960s — the teenage hero Hornet always seemed to run into more than his share of mistrust from authorities, as did the monstrous Mountain (transformed into a hideous creature by a demon) and Dr. Scarab (the son of Dr. Twilight, who fought a mystic secret war against his brother Serpentine).

The world needed the efforts of every one of these heroes in the 1960s, as new menaces seemed to appear every day. The villainous agency VIPER first appeared and became a public menace during this time, and mad villains like Revenger, The Guru, and Plague struck terror into the hearts of millions.

The Mocker, Jack Flash, and Typhoon, among many others, committed their crimes and battled their respective foes.

The turbulence of the Sixties affected the superhuman community in turn. Several supers manifested during the conflict in Vietnam, and Rocketman was only the most famous of American heroes to volunteer to serve overseas, battling the few indigenous supers and the Soviet military superteams also on hand. Other heroes, like Hornet and Dreamsinger, actively opposed the war and became symbols for the “hippie” movement. (Dr. Scarab was probably the most popular hero of the peace and love crowd, but he was mostly bemused by their affection and did nothing to encourage it.) New heroes continued to emerge in the second half of the decade: a second Scarlet Archer, the illusionist Masquerade, and the aquatic mutant Sea King.

THE 1970s

As the Sixties ended, a new generation of heroes came to the fore. The Outcasts, a band of freaks and monsters who stayed together mostly for self-protection, took up residence in Vibora Bay. The Chinese-American martial artist Mantis joined the Sentinels, as did the Iroquois weather-controller Rainmaker, the first two minority members of that august collection of heroes. In 1970 Amazing Man and Siren retired from their life of adventure and exploration to raise their infant son Peter; the Fabulous Five continued on, with the addition of the alien birdwoman Kestrel and the young wind-controlling mutant Scirocco.

THE EARLY '70s

The early 1970s were a quiet period. Several heroes from the beginning of the Silver Age retired, like Rocketman and Beowulf. In 1972, the active members of the Sentinels traveled to the other side of the galaxy when they were caught up in an intergalactic war, and were believed dead for several months. When they finally returned, there was a great deal of public celebration and attention, but also a certain tinge of resentment over all of the public ceremony and mourning that had been unnecessary. From this point on, the public frequently refused to ever believe that a superhero was actually dead, and “sightings” of deceased heroes in truckstops and island resorts became commonplace (and topics of humor on late-night TV).

In 1974, two separate scandals rocked the public's faith in their government. The first was the Watergate scandal, in which President Nixon was discovered to have participated in the cover-up of a burglary. The second was that an UNTIL agent, Pavel Borovik, had used his access and authority to serve as a highly effective Soviet spy, passing secrets on the U.S. nuclear program that he had acquired when UNTIL had supported the Sentinels in thwarting one of Plague's schemes. This incident only confirmed to many Americans the wisdom of having never signed the UNTIL treaty or allowed UNTIL agents to operate on U.S. soil.



THE LATE '70s

The relatively peaceful years of the early 1970s gave way, in 1975, to a half-decade of supervillainous mayhem that left the world reeling. On March 5th of that year, the most feared supervillain in world history — the awesomely powerful and utterly ruthless Dr. Destroyer — made his first appearance. Using powerful gunships equipped with gravitic flight technology and mounted blasters, Destroyer and his minions attempted to conquer California as a prelude to conquering the world. With the U.S. military largely blinded and crippled by Destroyer's initial attacks on their communications and command systems, the superheroes of America responded. The Fabulous Five, the Justice Squadron, and the Sentinels, aided by several independent heroes, clashed with Destroyer near San Francisco. After a day of fierce fighting, the master villain's forces were routed, and he himself forced to escape via a teleportation device — but victory was not without its price. Kid Chameleon of the Fabulous Five and Ocelot of the Justice Squadron were both killed by Destroyer's powerful energy bolts, and over a dozen other heroes suffered serious injuries.

Destroyer was not the only villain to make his debut during this time. Others included Leviathan, the Slug, Buzzsaw, Rictus, Dark Seraph, and the Griffin. An even greater blow was the loss of the superheroine Scirocco, who turned to a life of crime after struggling with depression and mental illness. Some of the most spectacular supercrimes ever committed, including the Griffin's looting of the Antwerp diamond exchange, Leviathan's sinking of the cruise ship *Windward*, and the Slug's almost-successful attempt to transform all the citizens of New York into Elder Worms, took place during this period.

The Pyrrhic victory over Destroyer, and the increasing tide of villainy, seemed to take the wind out of the sails of many heroes. The Fab Five reorganized for the last time, adding two young mutants named Draco and Dart, but the group disbanded in 1979. The second Streak was hired as a morning television personality by ABC, and Diamond (who seems not to age) joined the Sentinels.

THE 1980s, 1990s, AND TODAY

The 1980s brought a new explosion of superheroes onto the scene, as if in answer to the villainy in the previous decade. The early years of the decade saw the debut of several new solo vigilantes, such as the sword-wielding Crusader in New York City and Brainwave in San Francisco. A new MeteorMan joined the Sentinels. In 1985, Great Britain's official superteam, the New Knights of the Round Table, rescued a superintelligent gorilla called Dr. Silverback from the clutches of his creator, Dr. Philippe Moreau, and helped him establish his legal rights in a landmark court case. Silverback has since gone on to become one of the foremost scien-



tists on the planet.

But evil never rests, and as the 1980s wore on several of the most dire super-menaces threatening the world today launched their first schemes. In 1985, Mechanon appeared, nearly taking control of America's nuclear arsenal and using it to destroy all life on Earth before the Sentinels managed to defeat him. In 1987, Takofanes the Undying Lord cut a swath of destruction across the eastern United States, killing half a dozen superheroes in the process (see page 101). A bizarre accident in 1986 led to the creation of the fearsome Grond, who has

METEORMAN
PLOT SEEDS

MeteorMan wakes up one morning to find that someone has stolen his ring right off his finger while he was sleeping! Bereft of his powers, and unable to contact any of his usual allies for some reason, he turns to the PCs for help retrieving the ring.

Aliens from the world where MeteorMan's ring's meteor originated come to Earth, all armed with similar rings. The heroes of the world have to team up to stop the invasion, with MeteorMan leading the charge.

MeteorMan claims he's hearing voices in his head, voices that tell him to give up the ring to a worthier owner and retire. Is this a plot by some mentalist supervillain, or is one of America's superheroes going insane?

caused billions of dollars of property damage over the decade. Eurostar, perhaps the most dangerous villain team in the world, got its start in 1988.

The Superhuman World — and indeed, all of humanity — was rocked by tragedy in 1992, when Dr. Destroyer attempted to conquer the United States from a secret facility in Detroit. With the world's superheroes arrayed against him, and defeat seeming inevitable, Destroyer triggered a suicide device that killed him, dozens of heroes, and tens of thousands of people, and razed the city. Over the past decade, America and many prominent corporations and charities, together with numerous superhumans, pitched in to rebuild Detroit as Millennium City, the City of the Future (see page 76). Today Millennium City is a hotbed of superhuman activity, home to the young (but increasingly prominent) superteam the Champions, as well as independent heroes like Kinetik and Nigh-twind. Around the country, other new heroes have emerged to take the place of ones slain battling Destroyer: Shugoshin in San Francisco, Straight Arrow in Baltimore, and Proteus in Seattle, to name just a few. There is even now a new Black Mask, daughter of the last, operating in Vibora Bay.

New villains have arisen, too: Gravitator, mutant mistress of gravity; Firewing, an alien super-gladiator who arrived in 2001 to challenge the heroes of Earth; the lunatic Foxbat; the powerful gang called the Ultimates; Freakshow; and countless others — including the long-thought-dead Dr. Destroyer. The Champions Universe is a dangerous place, but thankfully there are always heroes willing to put their lives on the line for humanity every day.

METEORMAN III

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
18	CON	16	13-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
13	EGO	6	12-	ECV: 4
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
20	COM	5	13-	

8	PD	5	Total: 13 PD (5 rED)
8	ED	4	Total: 13 ED (5 rED)
6	SPD	30	Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
9	REC	4	
66	END	15	
35	STUN	6	Total Characteristic Cost: 143

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Flight:	30"/60"
	Tunneling:	7"/14"

Cost	Powers	END
60	<i>Energy Manipulation Powers:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve	
12m	1) <i>Power Blast:</i> EB 12d6	6
12m	2) <i>Widebeam Blast:</i> EB 6d6, Area Of Effect (7" Cone; +1)	6
12m	3) <i>Blinding Flash:</i> Sight Group Flash 12d6	6
12m	4) <i>Meteoric Flight:</i> 30" Flight	6

12m	5) <i>Overdrive Flight:</i> 20" Flight, MegaScale (1" = 10 km; +½)	6
12m	6) <i>Protective Field:</i> Force Field (30 PD/30 ED)	6
12m	7) <i>Wall of Energy:</i> Force Wall (12 PD/12 ED)	6
6m	8) <i>Holograms:</i> Sight Group Images, Increased Size (256" radius; +2)	3
6m	9) <i>Invisibility:</i> Invisibility to Sight Group, No Fringe	3
2u	10) <i>Energy Bubble:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing, Safe Environment (High Pressure, High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum))	0
12m	11) <i>Solid Energy Fields:</i> Telekinesis (32 STR), Fine Manipulation	6
8m	12) <i>Energy Drill:</i> Tunneling 7" through DEF 9 material	4
1u	13) <i>Penetrating Vision:</i> N-Ray Perception (Sight Group) (not through energy fields or super-dense minerals)	0
2	<i>Goggles:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (5 points); OAF (-1)	0
10	<i>Bulletproof Costume:</i> Armor (5 PD/5 ED); OIF (-½)	0

Perks	
9	Contact: Sentinels (organization) 12-

Skills	
15	+5 with Energy Manipulation Powers Multipower
3	Electronics 12-
1	AK: Los Angeles 8-
3	KS: Music 12-
3	KS: Los Angeles Recording Scene 12-
5	Oratory 14-
3	Power: Energy Manipulation 13-
3	PS: Play Guitar/Bass 13-
3	Streetwise 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 239
Total Cost: 382

200+ Disadvantages	
20	DNPC: Elisa Perez (girlfriend) 11- (Normal, unaware of character's Social Limitation: Secret Identity)
20	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
10	Hunted: a member of his rogues' gallery chosen by the GM 8- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
20	Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
15	Psychological Limitation: Headstrong; Doesn't Always Think Things Through (Common, Strong)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Roberto "Bobby" Marrero, musician) (Frequently, Major)
82	Experience

Total Disadvantage Points: 382

Background/History: Roberto “Bobby” Marrero is the third man to adopt the name MeteorMan. The first was astronomer Harrison Chase during World War II, who used a ring he fashioned from a piece of a meteor he found while exploring Yellowstone National Park. The second was Tom Teller, a National Park Ranger in Colorado who found a similar piece of glowing stone and also gained powers from touching it. (Teller also turned his stone into a ring after meeting Chase and practicing his powers with him in the late 1950s.) Teller retired in 1981, finally marrying his longtime girlfriend, Dawn Simmons, and moved to Pollard, a small beach town near San Diego.

In Pollard, the Tellers became friends with a young neighbor, Bobby Marrero, who was a struggling musician and superhero fan and fairly quickly discovered Teller’s secret identity. Marrero, who was born in 1965, had lived his whole life in Pollard and longed for a more adventurous existence. He persuaded Teller to tell him stories of his exploits nearly every night, and soon Teller began to see in this young man the next wearer of the ring. In secret, he began to train Marrero to use it at night out in the desert.

In early 1985, just before Teller was prepared to give Marrero the ring and his blessing to act as the next MeteorMan, the supervillain Korrex attacked and defeated the Time Elemental Entropus, and thus triggered the Secret Crisis, a war across space and time involving almost all of the heroes that had ever existed. At the request of the Fabulous Five and the Sentinels, Teller resumed his costume and battled alongside the force of good, and died in combat with the monstrous Decay.

Though eventually the heroes were victorious in the Secret Crisis, Marrero was left at loose ends with the death of his mentor. After drifting for a few months, he tracked down Harrison Chase, now nearly 80, and finished his training with the remarkable old man. Chase sympathized with Marrero’s desire to avenge Teller, and gave the younger man his own power ring. Marrero eventually brought Decay to justice, and then joined the Sentinels himself.

Marrero served with the Sentinels for over a decade, until the team was reorganized in 1997 by Black Rose and the second Amazing Man. By that time he was beginning to question the extent to which the ring had taken over his life and his inability to maintain a relationship in either of his identities. He then moved back to Los Angeles, where in his secret identity he’s decided to try to restart his career as a professional musician while occasionally working with the informal West Coast hero team the California Patrol. He also retains reserve status with the Sentinels and occasionally works solo as a hero. He recently met a nice young lady at the recording studio near his apartment, though he hasn’t yet shared his secrets with her.

Personality/Motivation: Although the latest incarnation of MeteorMan is just as heroic and powerful as his predecessors, beneath the mask there’s a man with a headful of worries. He’s concerned he’s not really worthy to carry on the famous name — that he doesn’t have what it takes, and that when the chips are down, he’ll fold. So far that’s never happened, but that hasn’t done anything to alleviate his fears... yet.

MeteorMan comes across as full of energy and enthusiasm, and he is. Unfortunately, even though he’s now in his late 30s, he’s still got too much of the headstrong nature of youth. He prefers to charge into battle rather than wait and think things through, a tendency that sometimes gets him into real trouble.

Quote: “All right! Action at last! I was starting to get bored....”

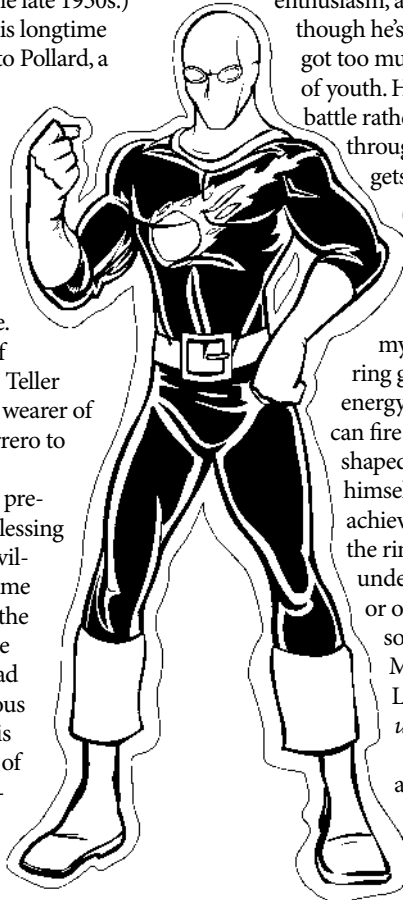
Powers/Tactics: MeteorMan’s powers derive from his ring of mysterious meteoric metal. The ring grants him broad powers of energy manipulation and control; he can fire energy bolts, move objects with shaped solid energy fields, fly, protect himself and others from harm, and achieve many other effects. However, the ring is inconspicuous, worn under a gauntlet, and doesn’t glow or otherwise indicate that it’s the source of his powers, so MeteorMan doesn’t apply the *Focus Limitation* to his *Energy Manipulation Powers Multipower*.

MeteorMan is a versatile and effective fighter most of the time, particularly when he uses his invisibility for surprise attacks. However, in the heat of battle he occasionally for-

gets to think first and just blasts away at close range. Fortunately, he’s a good team player and takes advice from the stronger tacticians among his teammates.

Between the flashy nature of his powers and the tradition that goes with the name, Bobby finds himself a well-known and highly publicized hero. Over the years he’s gotten pretty comfortable dealing with the press, which is reflected by his *Oratory Skill*. In the public eye he has often been considered the leader of the Sentinels, a job he never had, or had any interest in.

Appearance: Roberto “Bobby” Marrero stands about 5’9”, lean and muscular at 160 pounds. He’s got dark, curly hair and an infectious grin. As MeteorMan, he wears a black body suit with red gloves, belt and boots, and a stylized red meteor leaving a white trail across his chest. Over his head is a full mask and cowl, with goggles over the mask’s eyeholes. When he uses his powers, his entire body gives off a bright, white glowing aura, which also leaves a sparkling trail behind him as he flies. His power ring is hidden under his glove, and there is no obvious visible link when his powers manifest — only a few people know about the ring itself and its connection to his powers.



CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE TIMELINE



To help you keep the events of the Champions Universe straight, here's a brief timeline of major incidents involving, or related to, superhumanity. You can make note of additions or changes specific to your own campaign in the sidebars. This timeline does *not* include specific dates from incidents listed in the *GM's Vault* (see page 116), since that would reveal them to players.

Circa 2 million BC: The mysterious alien Progenitors tamper with the genetic code of humanity's ancestors, leading to the rise of humans.

Circa 500,000 BC: Further experiments by the Progenitors result in the creation of the immortal superhuman race called the Empyreans.

Circa 37,000 BC: The Lemurians use a potent magical weapon, the *Mandragalore*, against the Empyreans, but it backfires, causing the continent of Lemuria to sink. Only the Mole Men, Lemurians who had already moved into the cave systems, survived.

Circa 32,000 BC: The Dominion of Atlantis becomes one of the predominant political powers on Earth, transforming the Valdorian Age into the Atlantean Age.

Circa 30,000 BC: War between Vondarien of Atlantis and Sharna-Gorak the Destroyer causes the Cataclysm, sinking Atlantis beneath the waves and reshaping the world.

Circa 10,000 BC: The era of the gods and heroes of Egyptian, Greek, Norse and other mythologies begins about now and lasts for about ten thousand years.

Circa 4,000 BC: Shaderon, one of the wisest and most influential of the second generation Empyreans, develops his philosophy of Silence, or transcendence of the body, and creates the Temple of Silence in Arcadia. Over the next few centuries, dozens of Empyreans join him in rejecting their mortal forms and seeking a higher plane of existence through meditation.

Circa 460 AD: The first Shaolin Temple is founded in China.

490-540: King Arthur rules England from Camelot. Giles de Morphant, the Black Paladin, wreaks great evil, but is eventually slain by Lancelot. Arthur's realm, and his Round Table of knights, eventually falls due to the repercussions of Lancelot's affair with Queen Guinevere.

1090: The Ancient Order of Assassins is founded by Hassan ibn-al Sabah.

1199: Robin Hood is active in English countryside, bedeviling King John Lackland and the Sheriff of Nottingham.

1459: Vlad Tepes, voivod of Transylvania, becomes a vampire under uncertain circumstances. One legend suggests he is transformed by an Atlantean "dark mage." Tepes is later known as Dracula ("little dragon.")

1749: John Ward, the first Black Mask, is born on a farm outside of Philadelphia.

1772: Ward first adopts the identity of the Black Mask, to protect his family while he performs acts of sabotage against the British Army.

1788: Ward retires the identity of Black Mask.

1797: John Ward's son, Timothy, a Boston silver-smith, becomes the Black Mask and battles a band of criminals.

1818: Black Mask II is killed in action. The training of his son, Samuel, is taken over by his grandfather, the first Black Mask.

1822: Black Mask III debuts in Philadelphia. By now the legend has grown across the northeastern United States, and the first rumors of the immortality of the young nation's hero begin to spread.

1850: Sherlock Holmes is born in London. He and his brother Mycroft are raised by roving gypsies after the death of their parents.

1852: John Watson is born in Coventry, England.

1853: Matthew Ward becomes Black Mask IV, at first operating out of Philadelphia.

1860-1865: The American Civil War. Matthew Ward, as Black Mask IV, fights alongside the Northern Army, while the mysterious Grey Ghost aids the Confederates.

1866: Captain James Nemo launches the first submarine, called the *Nautilus*. He preys on illegal slave-traders heading across the Atlantic to South America.

Matthew Ward moves to Chicago and continues his adventures as the fourth Black Mask.

1867: Oceanus ascends to throne the of Atlantis after the death of his father.

1868: Sherlock Holmes is tutored in advanced mathematics by Professor James Moriarty, later to become the greatest criminal figure of Victorian England.

Around this time, James Harmon I, ancestor of Defender, explores Africa and begins building the family fortune.

1871: James Lee Ward inherits the Black Mask upon his father's death. He moves to Arizona and transplants the legend, acting as a vigilante lawman.

1872: Marvin Carr begins to act as Black Mask V's sidekick.

1876: Black Mask V is killed by the notorious criminal Sidewinder in a shoot-out in Show Low, Arizona. Since James's son Jason is only two, Marvin Carr becomes the sixth Black Mask and the first not to be part of the direct lineage.

1877: Sherlock Holmes opens his private "consulting" detective agency in London.

1878: Oceanus and Orana marry.

1879: The Empire Club, a private "Gentleman's Social Club" for adventurers, explorers, and other daredevils, is founded in New York City.

1881: Sherlock Holmes and John Watson meet at St. Bartholomew's Hospital during the case known as *A Study In Scarlet*.

1883: Dr. Henry Jekyll first uses the mysterious chemicals he discovered to become the monstrous Mr. Hyde.

1887: Sherlock Holmes encounters Dracula in Transylvania for the first time.

1888: Jack the Ripper terrorizes London.

Sherlock Holmes involved in the famous cases, *The Sign of the Four* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

1889: Adolf Hitler born in Braunau, Austria.

1890: Count Dracula terrorizes London, before he is destroyed by vampire-hunter Abraham Van Helsing and young Jonathan Harker.

1891: Sherlock Holmes pursues his nemesis Moriarty to Switzerland, where they apparently both perish at Reichenbach Falls. In Moriarty's absence, the Cabal rises to supremacy in the European underworld.

1892: Mycroft Holmes becomes the director of the British Secret Service. He is referred to only as "M" (as have his successors).

1894: Oceanus slays the traitor Gangar.

Sherlock Holmes returns to London after traveling the world undercover.

1896: Marvin Carr retires as Black Mask VI. The mask is given back to Jason Ward, son of Black Mask V, who moves back to Chicago. For a time, his partner is Andrew Carr, Marvin's own son.

1902: Sherlock Holmes is consulted by the police when a brilliant but deranged scientist, Hawley Griffin, develops the power to become invisible and goes on a rampage in London.

1903: Sherlock Holmes retires from public life.

1908: A massive explosion occurs near Tunguska in northern Siberia. The exact nature of the explosion remains unknown, though it levels trees for miles around. Scientist later theorize that a comet or meteor struck the Earth.

1917: Albert Zerstoiten is born in Bavaria.

1918: Corporal Adolf Hitler, serving on the Western Front in World War I, is temporarily blinded by mustard gas. While undergoing treatment, he has a vision that the Teutonic Gods have selected him for a great purpose, which he translates as restoring the purity of the Aryan people and bestowing on Germany the "Thousand-Year Reich." He gives up his career in art and goes into politics, becoming a leader of the National Socialist Party after the war.

1920: Mara (Sea Hawk) is born in Atlantis.

1924: Orana dies. Oceanus, grief-stricken, refuses to remarry. Mara begins her formal schooling.

1925: The Satanic cult DEMON is founded.

1926: The Raven is first seen fighting crime on the streets of Hudson City.





1927: First appearance of the Raven's partner, the Velvet Phantom, and his group of assistants, the Midnight Brigade.

1929: Black Mask VII dies, and the mask passes to his son, Jeffrey Layton Ward. Black Mask VIII operates in Chicago, but moves to Haynesville, Kansas when he joins the Defenders of Justice during World War II.

James Harmon II, Defender's grandfather, serves with Eliot Ness in the "Untouchables" in Chicago.

1936: Bill Jefferies declares his personal war on crime. He develops two alternate identities, the costumed avenger known as the Black Owl, and a common street thug called Lefty LeGrand. As LeGrand, he uncovers criminal activity that he then thwarts as the Black Owl.

1937: Oceanus is overthrown and killed by Dargon the Usurper. Dargon tries to wed Mara, who instead escapes.

She later befriends several "landers" and becomes known to the world as the heroine Sea Hawk after she rescues the crew of a sinking destroyer.

1938: On May 1, Arcane experiments conducted by the Nazi RSvKg cause the increase of ambient magical energy on Earth, thus making it possible for superhumans and superpowers to exist. Both Der Sturmvoegel and Captain Patriot gain their powers.

Robert MacDonald travels to Egypt. There, he encounters the mysterious ancient god Osiris, who grants him power over light and darkness.

In Yellowstone National Park, Harrison Chase finds a mysterious rock that gives him fantastic powers when he is in direct contact with it.

In October, Earth is invaded by aliens who first land at Grover's Mill, New Jersey. A majority of the New York-area crimefighters team together to defeat the alien tripods. Optimus, Cowboy, Dr. Twilight and Sea Hawk form the Defenders of Justice.

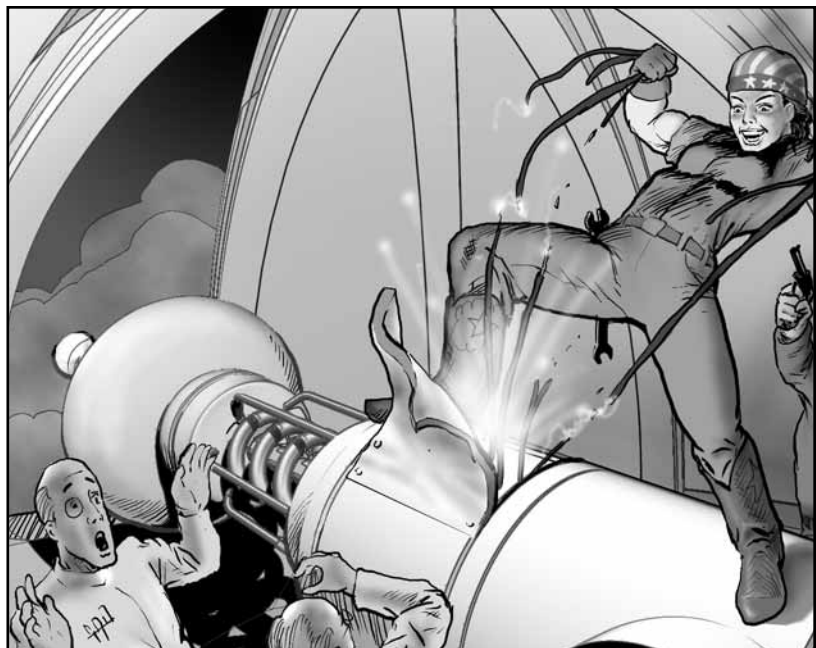
1940: The Japanese sorcerer called Iron Father works with the RSvKg to cast a series of spells protecting the Axis countries. Superpowered enemies of the Axis are unable to enter these nations' borders without succumbing to a "mystical weakness," losing their powers and eventually falling into comas.

1941: The Haynesville Project, the top secret government program to study and employ superhuman powers, begins. The Defenders of Justice officially join the army, along with several solo heroes, and are divided into two separate teams: The Defenders, who protect the homeland, and the Freedom Battalion, who fight overseas (and are mostly made up of the sneakier mystery men and professional soldiers on the team).

Pearl Harbor is attacked by the Japanese, and America is drawn into World War II.

1942: The first Russian superhero, General Winter, appears.

1943: James Harmon III, father of Defender,



becomes a U.S. Army Ranger, and earns the Congressional Medal of Honor for his valorous conduct during the War. After hostilities cease, he becomes an industrialist and quintuples the family's already considerable fortune.

1948: The Haynesville Project officially closes its doors.

Princess Mara and Drake Wilson divorce. Wilson returns to the surface world and goes to work for the United Nations, later helping sculpt UNTIL into its modern form.

1949: Despising the Communists in China, Dr. Yin Wu moves to San Francisco, adopting the identity of an art supply dealer while working to restore the China he has known and loved for centuries. He later moves back to China, secluding himself in his castle.

1953: Black Mask VIII retires.

The British government establishes Bureau S to study the country's superhuman resources (and threats).

1955: Mexican wrestler El Espectro receives his magical silver mask and begins combating supernatural evil while defending his heavyweight title.

1956: David Matthew Ward becomes Black Mask IX, while working full time during the day as a Chicago policeman.

The second MeteorMan makes his first appearance.

1959: Five Americans, entering space in a home-made rocketship to protect Earth from a comet, are exposed to strange radiation and transformed into the Fabulous Five.

1960: Princess Mara remarries, this time to Andros, Subchieftain of the Moray barbarian tribe.

1961: The Sentinels form when the malevolent computer Ultivac attempts to take over the world. The original lineup, which will change constantly over the years, is MeteorMan II, Dr. Phantom, Microman, Beowulf, and Rocketman.

1963: Teen hero The Hornet begins his star-crossed career.

The U.N. establishes a commission, the Tribunal on International Law, to study superhumans and related issues.

1964: Revenger travels to the Moon and conquers the Selenites.

1965: Earth is invaded by the alien Qularr, who attempt to use giant monsters from alien worlds as weapons against it. Tokyo is nearly destroyed for the first time. After several attempts at conquest, the Qularr are finally defeated and driven from Earth's galaxy, though several of their monsters remain on Earth (most confined to the research facility on Monster Island).

UNTIL is created by U.N. treaty — a treaty not signed by the United

States, which refuses to allow UNTIL agents to operate within its territory.

1966: In Great Britain, Bureau S becomes the Ministry of Superhuman Affairs, a publicly-acknowledged branch of government responsible for protecting British citizens from superhuman threats.

1967: The People's Republic of China establishes its own government superteam, the Tiger Squad.

The Fabulous Five thwart a second invasion attempt by the "Martians" of 1938, who are revealed to actually be from a planet in the Sirius system.

1968: The Iroquois superhero called Rainmaker makes his public debut.

Steel Shark, an Atlantean rebel and supervillain, temporarily seizes control of the Atlantean army and attacks Florida. He is narrowly defeated by the Fabulous Five and Queen Mara.

DEMON steals the Basilisk Orb and becomes regarded by the world as a significant superhuman threat.

The Soviet Union establishes the People's Legion, its official superteam. The Legion disintegrates in the late '80s as the Soviet Union itself crumbles.

1969: Peter Renton, son of Amazing Man and Siren of the Fabulous Five, eventually to become the second Amazing Man, is born.

The United States reveals its first "official" superhuman, the All-American.

A Star*Guardian is assigned to our Solar System for the first time by the Odragans. Brin Rei Tarn, of the planet Dendris, establishes a base on Jupiter's moon Europa, and then comes to Earth regularly. While here, he becomes an unofficial member of the Sentinels.



1970: The Fabulous Five free the Selenites on the Moon. Amazing Man and Siren retire from the team, and are replaced by Kestrel and Scirocco.

1971: The Ministry of Superhuman Affairs sponsors the creation of the New Knights of the Round Table, Britain's official superteam.

1972: Jennifer Anne Ward (Black Mask X) is born.

Dr. Yvette Ste. Germaine founds L'Institut Thoth, a think tank and research laboratory devoted to the study of all aspects of "paraphysics."

The United States Department of Defense issues its first Superhuman Survey.

David Farquar begins the newsletter that will eventually become *SuperWorld Magazine*.

1973: The Mandaarians, an enigmatic alien species, first visit Earth as peaceful explorers. Later visits occur in 1979, 1984, 1991, and 1999.

1974: James Harmon IV (Defender) is born. Brendan Grant (Kinetik) is born. Bethany (Witchcraft) and Pamela (Talisman) Duquesne are born.

The Advanced Research Group is founded as a corporation.

The American superhero Ricochet, while working for the CIA, is killed in Paris by GRU assassins.

1975: Dr. Destroyer first appears. His attempt to conquer California and the world is narrowly defeated by a large group of superhumans; Kid Chameleon and Ocelot are killed.

David Ward's wife, Sharon, dies. David never remarries, and since he has no son, assumes the Mask will either pass to another family or the legend will end with him.

Mark Whitaker (Nighthawk) is born in Detroit.

Kenji Hayashida (Shugoshin) born in Japan.

1976: Queen Mara's twins, Prince Marus and Princess Thalassa of Atlantis, are born.

1977: The Gadroon attempt to conquer Earth and are driven off by a force of Earth's superhumans that includes many supervillains (Dr. Destroyer among them).

1978: The United States completes the construction of Stronghold, the world's first prison designed solely to contain superhuman criminals.

Canada establishes an official superteam, the Northern Guard.

Dark Seraph first appears.

Great Britain passes a law concerning the registration of superhumans.

Scirocco succumbs to mental illness and becomes a supervillainess.

1979: General Lorenzo João Garrastazu e Silva takes power in Chiquador.

The Slug appears, and nearly succeeds in transforming everyone in New York City into Elder Worms.

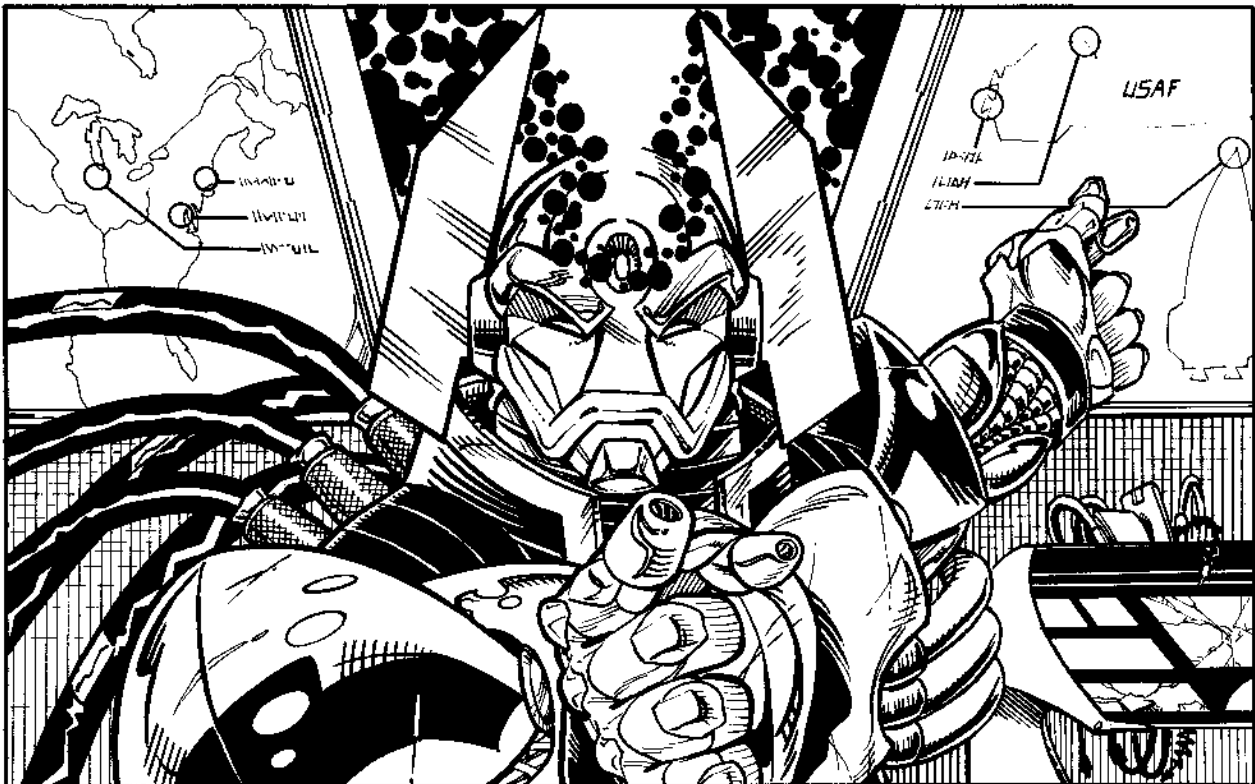
1980: The Advanced Research Group changes its name to the Advanced Research Group Enterprises (ARGENT) as a marketing ploy.

Following an attempt by Dr. Destroyer to conquer the United States using several supervillains as pawns, Congress passes the American Superhuman and Paranormal Registration Act.

1981: The gorilla who will be known as Dr. Silverback is captured by mercenary animal traders in Rwanda and sold to Dr. Phillippe Moreau.

Corazon Valenzuela (Sapphire) is born in Los Angeles.

DEMON lures four superheroes and several



UNTIL officers into an ambush, slaughtering them all as a sacrifice to dark underworld gods.

The first Northern Guard team splits up.

Scandal rocks the New Knights of the Round Table, significantly diminishing the group's reputation.

1982: Don "Captain Patriot" Randall dies of a heart attack.

Annette Berkelheimer founds the Institute for Human Advancement (IHA) to champion the cause of "true humans" over mutants and superhumans.

1983: ARGENT is exposed as a criminal organization. Its leaders flee the United States.

All members of Ameriforce One, the United States's superhuman SEAL team, are killed when a Soviet sub they are trying to recover explodes.

Danar Nicole quits the European Parliament in disgust, undergoes the treatments that transform him into the villainous Fiacho, and begins forming Eurostar.

1984: Dr. Phillippe Moreau's experiments in "genetic advancement" have their first, accidental success when he grants superhuman intelligence to the gorilla who will become Dr. Silverback.

The second Gadroon invasion is easily defeated.

Canada forms a second Northern Guard.

Doctor Sebastian Poe founds the Parapsychological Studies Institute (PSI) to study superhuman phenomena.

1985: Mechanon first appears, attempts to destroy humanity with America's nuclear arsenal, and is defeated by the Sentinels.

Doctor Silverback is rescued from Professor Moreau's labs by the New Knights of the Round Table. He is taken in by Dr. Dina Morrison and other employees of Cambridge Biochemical Labs.

The Secret Crisis, a war across space and time involving almost all of the heroes that had ever existed, occurs.

1986: The United States government founds PRIMUS, an anti-supercrime law enforcement agency roughly equivalent to UNTIL.

A terrible industrial accident creates the monstrous Grond.

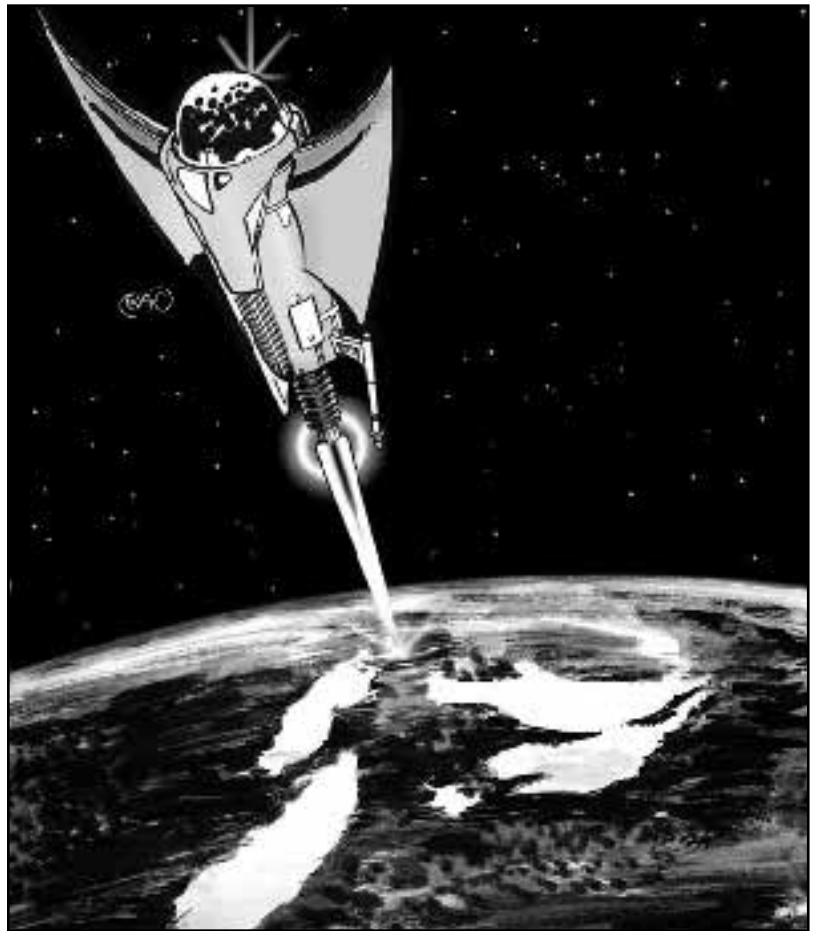
The French government passes a law requiring the registration of superhumans.

Thomas Cassidy founds SNN, the Super News Network.

1987: In a landmark ruling for nonhuman intelligences on Earth, Dr. Silverback wins his independence and legal status as a citizen of the British government.

Andros, Prince Consort of Atlantis, dies in a tragic accident while exploring.

Takofanes the Undying Lord arises in Oklahoma and begins marching toward the East Coast. After he kills several superheroes who try and stop him at the Mississippi River, a larger group of superheroes band together to defeat him in eastern Kentucky.



1988: David Ward (Black Mask IX) retires from adventuring and becomes Police Commissioner of Chicago.

The Chaos-Beast and his horde of reality-warping demonic beings attempt to invade the Earth and are defeated by the Justice Squadron.

Eurostar first appears, releasing its *Eurostar Manifesto*.

UNTIL founds its own official superteam, UNITY.

The New Knights of the Round Table stop an attack by Samhain, thereby restoring themselves to the public's good graces.

1989: Kristina Pelvanen, formerly the superheroine Rowan, founds the Ravenswood Academy, nominally an ordinary (if highly exclusive private school), but secretly intended primarily to train young superhumans in the proper use of their abilities.

The second Northern Guard team splits up.

1990: Brin Rei Tarn dies. His replacement is the first human Star*Guardian, Andre Almena.

Juan Martinez retires as Secretary-Marshal of UNTIL, and is replaced by Wilhelm Carl Eckhardt.

The Great Stronghold Breakout occurs due to a series of unfortunate mishaps.

The Cottonmouth Incident: Authorities capture the VIPER supervillain Cottonmouth, who reveals much of the inner workings of the organization before being assassinated by his former employers.

1991: Doctor Destroyer launches his artificial island, Destruga, in an attempt to gain statehood.

When that scheme fails, he turns toward Hawaii, but is defeated by the combined might of the United States military and American superheroes.

The California Patrol, an informal team of West Coast heroes, is founded.

The German government passes a law requiring the registration of superhumans.

1992: July 23 — The “Battle of Detroit”: Dr. Destroyer is defeated battling Earth’s superheroes, but activates a device that destroys most of Detroit. Later that year, the American government, several major corporations, and numerous charitable foundations form the Millennium Project to rebuild the city.

1993: As a response to public outcry over the destruction of Detroit, the United States signs the Tribunal Treaty, allowing UNTIL agents to operate freely in American territory.

Black Paladin first appears.

Eurostar launches an invasion of Poland with an army of cloned soldiers created by Teleios, the Perfect Man. Teleios’s existence is revealed to the world in the aftermath of the thwarted attack.

Foxbat first appears and attempts to steal the Empire State Building.

Canada forms a third Northern Guard super-team.

1994: Dr. Silverback moves to Millennium City to work at the American headquarters of Cambridge Biochem.

The Justice Squadron thwarts an ARGENT-sponsored coup in Guamanga.

Kristine Griswold gains solar energy powers and becomes the superheroine Victory, working for the United States Air Force.

Annette Berkelheimer dies and is replaced as the leader of the IHA by Archer Samuels.

PSI is revealed to be a criminal organization employing supervillains with psionic powers.

Project Sunburst takes place.

The Warlord first appears, and attempts to conquer Vietnam.

1995: Li Chun the Destroyer is accidentally freed in China. After defeating the Tiger Squad in a two-day running battle, he mysteriously disappears.

The United States Army initiates “Project Greenskin” in an attempt to take control of the supervillain Grond; the project fails, leading to a destructive rampage by Grond and the deaths of most of the scientists involved.

The FBI completes the Stalwart powered armor suit, thus giving it an official superhero to supplement its Hostage Rescue Teams.

1996: Jennifer Anne Ward, now a private investigator in Vibora Bay, adopts the identity of Black Mask X, against her father’s wishes (at least at first).

UNTIL completes the construction of its GATEWAY space station.

The “VIPER-Eurostar War” begins in Europe, and lasts until 1998.

1997: *Los Defensores de Méjico* (the Mexican Defenders), a Mexican superhero team, disintegrates when several members are implicated in a

corruption scandal.

Nightwind begins fighting crime in the still-under-construction Millennium City.

Following the death of his daughter in a New York City superbattle, Senator Phillip Glassman becomes an ardent campaigner against superhumans and a supporter of the IHA.

Black Rose and Amazing Man II re-organize the Sentinels; MeteorMan III chooses to retire from the team.

Daniel James Johnson becomes the Golden Avenger of PRIMUS.

1998: Canada’s latest attempt to establish the Northern Guard, a team of official heroes, fails as the team votes to dissolve itself.

Istvatha V’han first attempts, and fails, to conquer Earth’s dimension.

Scorpius and Feuermacher murder Professor Muerte, loot and destroy his facilities, and defect from Terror, Inc. to join Eurostar.

The United States Department of Defense reveals Janissary, a superhuman soldier it has succeeded in creating. A program is begun to test the feasibility of creating more superhuman soldiers.

Thomas Cassidy launches the SNN Sidekick television network.

1999: Late this year, the rebuilding of Detroit is substantially completed, and the new metropolis is christened Millennium City.

Defender becomes a part-time superhero in New York City.

Sapphire’s mutant powers manifest.

Mark Whitaker (Nighthawk) is injured in a VIPER attack on Millennium City University; inspired by the event, he becomes a crimefighter.

A lab accident gives Brendan Grant super-powers, and he becomes Kinetik.

Shugoshin receives his Spirit Swords and begins his crimefighting career in San Francisco.

The San Francisco-based Freedom Patrol suffers a major defeat at the hands of ARGENT.

2000: Dark Seraph and the Crowns of Krim steal a valuable book from a Paris museum, in the process killing 43 UNTIL agents and the French superhero Skydragon.

2001: Defender moves to Millennium City and founds the Champions. Sapphire and Nighthawk join soon thereafter; Ironclad arrives on Earth and joins the group as well. Witchcraft joins the group late in the year.

The Binary Corporation presents Binary Man, its official corporate superhero and representative, to the world. Binary Man begins fighting crime and performing heroic deeds.

Firewing comes to Earth to challenge its superhumans to combat.

2002: Firewing battles Hyperion in London; the fight ends inconclusively, but results in significant property destruction.



CHAPTER TWO: BEING SUPERHUMAN: SUPERHUMANITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Since superhumans first emerged in 1938, countless scientists have spent thousands, if not millions, of man-hours analyzing issues pertaining to superpowers. How do superpowers manifest, and can their manifestation be controlled or induced?

How many superhumans are there in the world? Where's the dividing line between "human" and "superhuman," and what does it imply for ordinary humanity? This chapter looks at these issues.

DEFINING 'SUPERHUMAN'



As discussed on pages 57-58 of *Champions*, when you create a superhero campaign, it's important to know what "superhuman" means, since who qualifies for that designation and who doesn't can have significant ramifications for your game. *Champions* lists several factors for GMs to consider when deciding where "normal human" ends and "superhuman" begins. Here's how those factors play out in the Champions Universe.

CAMPAIGN REALISM

The Champions Universe strives for a middle-of-the-road level of realism, one that makes possible the fabulous and fantastic events of the typical comic book while not totally relegating normal humans to the back burner. The vast majority of people aren't superhuman, but the most dedicated among them can come close to that pinnacle through training and other enhancements. People, historical and current events, geopolitics, and technology are usually identical to what you'd find in the "real world," though the influence of the existence of superhumans, and of advanced technology, may be apparent.

CAMPAIGN GUIDELINES

Beginning characters in the Champions Universe are built as Standard Superheroic characters, with a base of 200 Character Points, and up to another 150 Character Points from Disadvantages. Other guidelines for Standard Superheroic characters generally apply. Chapter Six has more information about campaign ground rules and the like, beginning on page 114, but don't read that section

without GM's permission.

Generally speaking, superpowers and Characteristics don't have to be tightly related in the Champions Universe. Although normally they're fairly tightly related, if necessary, just about any sort of superpowers could justify a high rating in most Characteristics (particularly high COM; superhumans in the Champions Universe often have quite striking appearances). Superpowers often interact with human bodies and brains in very unpredictable ways.

SPECIES

Most characters in the Champions Universe are human. However, that's not the only option available for player characters; there are a number of lost races, alien species, and the like in the setting as well. See Chapter Four for details.

Rating Characters and Characteristics

For purposes of analyzing characters and their Characteristics, the *HERO System* uses seven categories: Weak, Challenged, Average, Skilled, Competent, Legendary, and Superhuman. The accompanying table describes the Characteristic ranges for the Champions Universe. You can find more information on the categories on pages 57-58 of *Champions*.

Of course, a Champions Universe character doesn't have to have Superhuman-range Characteristics to be considered a "superhuman." The Super-

human label is simply a convenient one for defining a specific threshold. Being a superhuman depends primarily on having superhuman abilities of some sort, or an appropriately superhuman origin for one's Characteristics, not on crossing that threshold. For example, look at Victory on page 41. None of her Primary Characteristics fall into the 31+ range for "Superhuman" in the Champions Universe. And yet, she's clearly superhuman — she can fly, fire energy bolts, and so forth.

CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE CHARACTERISTICS STANDARDS

Char	Weak	Challenged	Average	Skilled	Competent	Legendary	Superhuman
STR	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-30	31+
DEX	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-30	31+
CON	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-30	31+
BODY	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-30	31+
INT	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-50	51+
EGO	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-50	51+
PRE	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-50	51+
COM	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-13	14-20	21-30	31+
PD, ED	0-1	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-10	11-15	16+
SPD	1	1-2	1-2	2-3	4-5	6-7	8+
REC	1	1-2	2-4	5-6	7-10	11-13	14+
END	2-4	6-10	11-20	21-26	27-40	41-60	61+
STUN	3-4	7-11	12-20	21-27	28-40	41-60	61+
Running	1"	2-3"	4-6"	7-8"	9-10"	11-13"	14"+
Leaping	0"	1"	2"	3"	4-5"	6-11"	12"+
Swimming	0"	1"	2"	3"	4-5"	6-9"	10"+



THE NATURE AND EXISTENCE OF SUPERPOWERS

As with any *Champions* campaign, it's important for a GM running a game set in the Champions Universe to understand how superpowers can exist, and what sources they come from, and just how many superhumans there are running around out there.

SOURCES OF SUPERPOWERS

The Champions Universe is what *Champions* describes, on page 45, as an “unlimited source” campaign. All of the major sources of superpowers that book describes — Alien Species, Extradimensional Energies, Genetic Manipulation, Magic and Mysticism, Mutation, Psionic Powers, Super-Science, Supernatural Forces, and Training — exist in the Champions Universe and can give rise to superpowers. And they're not necessarily the only sources, just the major ones; some superhumans have powers whose nature and source don't fit neatly into one (or even several) of these categories.

Here are some examples of characters with each of the main sources of superpowers (most of these characters are described in other books):

Alien Species: Firewing, Ironclad, Nebula, Vibron

Extradimensional Energies: Tesseract, many energy projectors

Genetic Manipulation: Dr. Silverback, Teleios

Magic and Mysticism: Dark Seraph, the Morbanes, Takofanes, Talisman, Witchcraft

Mutation: Binary Man, Brainchild, Cateran, Gravitator, Hummingbird, Sapphire

Psionic Powers: Brainchild, Mentalla, Menton, Psimon

Super-Science: Binder, Defender, Dr. Destroyer, the Warlord

Supernatural Forces: Samhain

Training: Nighthawk, Shugoshin

Similarly, *Champions* describes, beginning on pages 59-60, the most common “origins” for superhuman characters. All of those types of origins, and others, exist in the Champions Universe. Here are some examples of characters with each of the typical origins (most of these characters are described in other books):

Alien: Firewing, Ironclad, Nebula, Vibron

THE HERO UNIVERSE

If you're interested in finding out more about the Hero Universe concept mentioned in the main text, visit the "Free Stuff" page on the Hero Games website (www.herogames.com). One of the many fun and useful free downloads you can find there is a document describing the Hero Universe. Most of the settings published by Hero Games fit into this "meta-setting" at some point, so even if you don't have any interest in genres other than *Champions*, you may find ideas for characters and plots from the rest of the Hero Universe — ancient evils come back to haunt the modern world, threats from the far future that have traveled back in time, and the like.

KELVARITE

In 1996, a strange meteorite of unknown origin crashed to Earth in western Kentucky. An unusually large specimen, the meteorite seemed to contain common minerals and metals, but emitted an unusual glow that caused the people who found it to alert the authorities, who in turn contacted experts at various universities. The meteorite proved to be mostly made of a glowing, greenish mineral heretofore unknown to Earth science. Dubbed, for reasons none of the scientists can now recall, "kelvarite," the mineral defied most standard methods of analysis.

More importantly from the perspective of the Superhuman World, kelvarite proved oddly

Build Gadgetry: Binder, Defender, Dr. Destroyer, Steel Commando, Utility, the Warlord

Godly Ancestry/Bestowal: Anubis, Dark Seraph and the Crowns of Krim, the Morbanes

Mental Training: Just about any superhuman with a lot of Skills

Mutant: Binary Man, Brain-child, Cateran, Gravitar, Hummingbird, Sapphire

Mystic Family/Race: the Sylvestris, the Vandaleurs

Mystical/Magical Training: Stingray, the Morbanes, Takofanes, Talisman, Witchcraft

Physical Training: Black Mask, Nighthawk, Shugoshin, Steel Commando, Utility

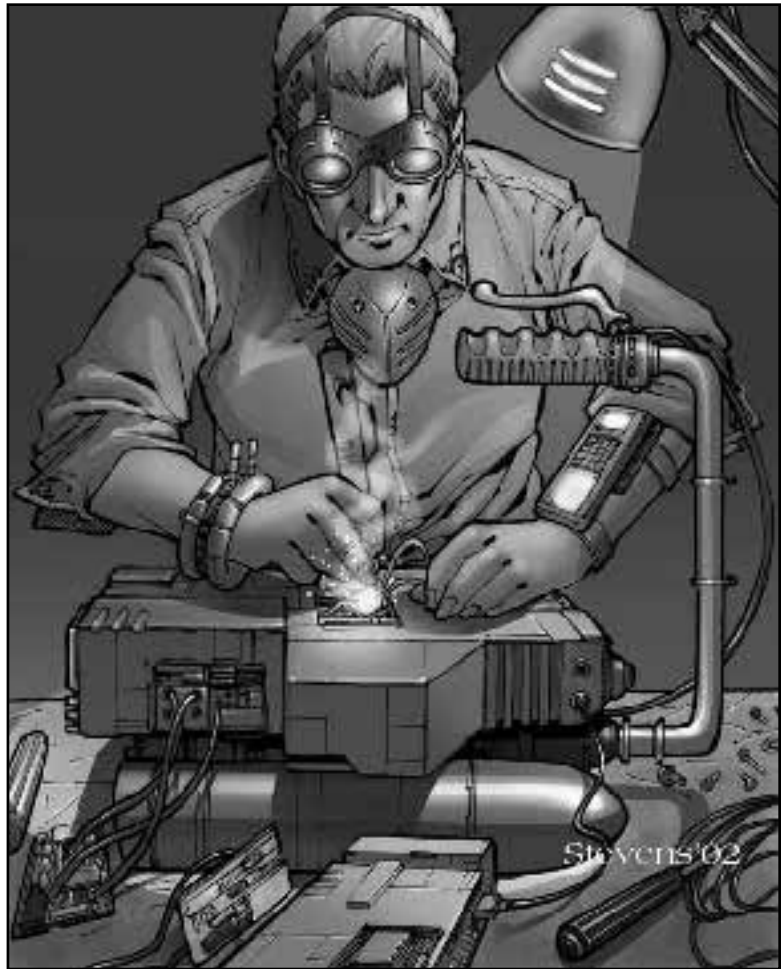
Radiation Accident: Kinetik, Tachyon, Thunderbolt I (and II), Victory

Subject Of Experimentation: Dr. Silverback, Oculon, Pulsar, Ripper

However, this raises the question of how superpowers can exist at all. Ordinarily efforts to build powered armor fail, and people zapped by lightning while standing in a laboratory full of strange chemicals die instead of manifesting superpowers. Yet, in the *Champions Universe*, some characters can build super-tech devices, and some gain superpowers from things like radiation accidents.

In the Hero Universe (the "meta-setting" of which the *Champions Universe* is just one part), superpowers can exist because magic exists. The Hero Universe is suffused with magic. Sometimes, as in the distant past, the level of ambient magic rises to the point where virtually anyone can cast spells or control mystic forces, and the gods themselves can walk the Earth. At other times, like the far future, the level of magic ebbs to such a low point that almost no one can practice it or use it, superpowers cannot exist, and anything associated with either concept is generally regarded as superstitious claptrap, a misunderstanding, the result of miscommunication and ignorance, or the like (in short, people come up with rational explanations for mystic phenomena and superpowers).

The level of ambient magic in the Hero Universe, and thus the *Champions Universe*, had remained quite low for several centuries prior to 1900. It began to rise again in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1938, it had risen to the point where RSvKg, a group of mystics working for the Nazis, were able to perform rituals that "forced" the level



of ambient magic higher still. Their intent was to magically propel Germany to world dominance. What actually resulted was a situation in which superpowers became possible.

Because of the ambient magic in the *Champions Universe*, accidents that would normally kill or maim people sometimes — very rarely, but sometimes — lead to the manifestation of superpowers instead. It also makes genetic mutations that create superpowers possible, and allows some extremely gifted inventors to create technology the general public can't necessarily understand, use, or reproduce. But it's important to remember that this has *no effect* on the special effects of any given character's superpowers. The special effects of Defender's powers are "super-technology," even though it's the ambient magic that allows him to manufacture his suit of powered armor and make it work. The special effects of Sapphire's powers are "mutation," even though it's magic that made so beneficial a mutation of her genes possible. Neither character registers as in any way magical — because they're not.

SUPERHUMAN DEMOGRAPHICS

True superhumans first appear in the Hero Universe — in other words, the “Champions Universe” part of that meta-setting truly begins — in 1938. (Some low-powered superhumans may have existed before then, but those incidents were isolated and short-lived, the mere precursors of the flood to come). Initially, the number of superhumans was relatively low — about one in ten million, at most, and much lower than that in the less advanced regions of the world.

Over time, the number of superhumans steadily increased. By the late 1960s, it had reached one in five million in the most super-populous regions of the world, and by about 1980 it was at around one in three million. Today, there is approximately one superhuman for every one million people on Earth — or about 6,000 altogether, give or take a few hundred. However, that’s not the whole story of superhuman demographics. There are several other factors to consider.

SUPERHUMAN DISTRIBUTION

First, there’s the distribution issue. Superhumans are not spread evenly across the globe — you cannot, simply by consulting the population data for a country or continent, accurately gauge how many superhumans exist there. For reasons no one can satisfactorily explain, superhumans are more likely to arise in certain areas — primarily those areas that are more advanced technologically, polit-

ically, and culturally. In short, superhumans exist in much greater frequencies in the First World (the United States, mainly, but also places like Europe and Japan) than in Third World regions. This even holds true for mystically-powered superhumans, despite the fact that mysticism is more prevalent in the Third World than the First. In the United States, the number of superhumans in some areas is as high as one per 100,000, whereas in Africa and most of Asia, the numbers drop as low as one per ten million or even fifty million. (See accompanying text box.)

Theories abound as to why this state of affairs exists. Some experts claim, and not without justification, that the “radiation accidents” which create many superhumans are more likely to occur in the high-tech environments of the First World. This does not, however, wholly explain why mystic-powered superhumans abound just as much in the First World.

Other students of the subject advance more esoteric theories. For example, one school of thought claims democracy and mass media attract more of the “forces” that create superhumans by building a more open, free-thinking society. In essence, these theorists believe superhumans result somehow from the unconscious thoughts and feelings of people, which are better or more frequently expressed in free societies. Some even claim that the existence of comic books chronicling the adventures of superheroes — a media phenomena mostly non-existent outside the First World — acts as a “lightning rod” to attract “superhuman energies,” thus making superhumans more common in the United States, Europe, and Japan. But proponents of these theories cannot explain why free-thinkers in democratic societies should be any more likely to create superhumans than oppressed or impoverished Third Worlders yearning for a better life.

Even more radical are conspiracy-oriented theories that the movers and shakers of the First World arrange for the creation of superhumans as a way of keeping the Third World relegated to second-class status on Earth. No solid evidence in support of this idea has ever been made public, but that hasn’t stopped a lot of people from agreeing with it.

Superhuman Migration

Complicating this issue is the fact that it’s not always possible to tell where a superhuman manifested, but only to determine where he’s currently engaging in superpowered activity. It is widely believed that a percentage of the superhumans active in the First World were actually born in Third World countries, but used their superpowers to emigrate to the United States or Europe — which are not only “where the action is,” but better places to live generally. Some estimates claim as many as one-third of the superhumans in the First World are actually from the Third World, but given the difficulty in researching the subject, it’s unlikely scientists will ever have solid data on the question.

Continued from last page

unstable and prone to explosions — disasters which sometimes imbued ordinary humans with superpowers when their bodies were bombarded with fragments of kelvarite, or absorbed intense radiation given off by the blasts. The supervillains Tachyon and Thunderbolt II both gained their powers in this fashion; many others may have as well.

Superhumans who gain their powers from kelvarite often exhibit powers involving high STR, fast or unusual forms of movement, and greater than normal resilience, but not always. They also tend to have various Disadvantages in common, such as Susceptibilities (either to kelvarite itself, or to earth-related powers that effect the mineral fragments in their bodies). The bizarre kelvarite radiations also tend to make them more vulnerable to various attacks and effects, including Drains and electricity.

The exact amount of kelvarite on the planet remains unknown. All that was recovered from the Kentucky meteorite is kept carefully secure by the United States government or various research universities — but other meteorites may have fallen to Earth undetected, or been brought to this world by aliens.

PREVALENCE OF SUPERHUMANS

The following chart indicates the approximate prevalence of superhumans in various regions of the world as of 2002.

Region	One Superhuman Per...
North America	
The United States	One million to 100,000
Canada	One million to 250,000
Mexico	Twenty to five million
Central America	Twenty to six million
South America	Twenty to three million
Europe	
British Isles	One million to 750,000
Western Europe	One million
Eastern Europe	Two million
Russia	Four to three million
Africa	
Saharan Africa	Seven million
Subsaharan Africa	Fifty to ten million
Asia	
The Middle East	Eight million
Central Asia	Fifty to ten million
India	Twenty to ten million
Southeast Asia	Fifty to ten million
China	Five million
Japan	One million
Oceania	Fifty to ten million
Australia	Five million

SUPERHUMANS AND DARK CHAMPIONS

The superhuman, trained superhuman, and gadgeteer statistics discussed in this section do not include the vigilantes and other characters found in *Dark Champion* settings such as Hudson City. Despite the fact that they share the same world, the two groups do not intermingle (at least not in official Hero Games publications), and *Dark Champions* characters aren't considered a part of the Superhuman World.

A World Apart

Even in the regions where they're most common — such as the United States — costumed superhumans rarely mingle with normal humans to any significant extent. The average citizen of the United States has never knowingly met a superhuman, and never will. Like movie stars and famous professional athletes, they are something people read about, and see pictures of, but never experience.

SUPERHUMAN POWER LEVEL

The study of superhuman demographics must also consider the question of how powerful the average superhuman is. In other words, of the roughly 6,000 superhumans existing on Earth today, how many are powerful enough to participate in the "Superhuman World" as costumed criminals or crimefighters?

The best data currently available suggests that for every superhuman of notable power (*i.e.*, who, in game terms, qualifies as at least a Low-Powered Superheroic character), there are one to four superhuman individuals whose powers aren't nearly so extensive or effective. In most cases, these persons probably don't even consider themselves "superhu-

man." They may simply have faster reflexes than their friends, or experience unusual flashes of intuition, or be remarkably smart, or be highly resistant to injury or disease. Others recognize that they possess superhuman abilities, but also realize they're not powerful enough to act as crimefighters (or criminals), and simply conceal their powers or use them to accomplish everyday tasks. The highly-publicized, but essentially trivial, healing powers of the renowned physician Dr. Jeremiah Mugembe, which have done more to diminish the threat of AIDS in Africa than all the pharmaceutical companies in the world combined, are but one prominent example of this phenomenon.

And of course, the mere fact that someone has sufficient power to be a costumed superhuman doesn't mean he *will* be. Being a costumed hero or criminal requires more than just superpowers — it takes a certain attitude (be it heroic or villainous). Some psychologists have argued that *all* costumed superhumans suffer from significant mental problems, and while that may or may not be true, the fact remains that some people with superhuman powers don't want to parade around in gaudy costumes and undertake adventures or commit crimes. They keep their powers hidden, or secretly use them for civilian jobs, and don't get involved in the so-called Superhuman World. For example, Habitat For Humanity workers in Atlanta have frequently received mysterious help from an unknown superhuman who somehow constructs entire houses overnight. Whoever this person is, he prefers to keep his identity (and powers) secret and simply go on about his life like a normal person — but he also apparently enjoys helping out with charitable projects from time to time.

Taking all of this into account, most experts estimate that only about 40% of the world's 6,000 superhumans are powerful enough to become costumed heroes (or villains) *and* actually do so, yielding a world population of no more than about 2,400 costumed superhumans. This roughly tallies with the best efforts to date to obtain a "head count" of "capes" (as researchers sometimes call them).

TRAINING, GADGETEERING, AND ALIENS

The figure of approximately 6,000 superhumans in the world includes only those persons with innate superpowers, such as the ability to



fly or fire beams of energy from the eyes. It does not include three groups of persons who may also participate in the Superhuman World: people with advanced training; people able to build super-technology devices; and aliens.

Some otherwise normal humans, through disciplined and intensive training, can develop athletic prowess, martial arts, various skills, and related abilities to such a degree that they can compete with superhumans, despite having no true superpowers themselves. The superhero Nighthawk and the supervillain Utility both fit into this category. Although some scientists argue that these individuals — referred to by some researchers as “TSHs,” or “trained superhumans” — possess “latent superpowers,” or superpowers at so low a level they cannot be detected, most people believe these “super” humans are not superpowered at all.

Many TSHs use weapons or high technology, such as Utility’s Omni-Pistol, and that leads to another category of non-superhuman “superhumans”: builders of super-technology (known to both superhumans and researchers generically as “gadgeteers”). While some of these people are definitely superhuman (such as the supervillain Cybermind, with his innate ability to control, understand, and use machines despite no formal training as an engineer or technician), most simply seem to be scientists or tinkerers with a certain spark of genius that lets them achieve breakthroughs that elude more normal persons. The superhero Defender and the supervillain Binder both belong to this group of individuals. Again, some researchers advance the “latent superpowers” theory, but most people believe gadgeteers are not superhuman as that term is generally understood — yet they frequently participate in the Superhuman World. Indeed, the two superhumans widely regarded as the most dangerous on the planet — Dr. Destroyer and Mechanon — both derive their abilities solely from technology.

Lastly, any analysis of the superhuman population has to consider the issue of aliens living on Earth. While most aliens known to be living on Earth — like Ironclad, Nebula, and Vibron — have definite superpowers of their own, it’s possible that other aliens live on this planet, lacking true superpowers but possessing abilities derived from their alien physiognomy that essentially qualify as “superpowers.” If so, those aliens keep their existence secret from the world at large, so no accurate estimate of their numbers exists or can be derived.

According to the best data available, the number of TSHs and gadgeteers ranges from 0% to as high as 35% of the number of costumed true superhumans in a given region. That leads to an estimated world population of about 500-600 such persons, which again roughly agrees with the existing statistics.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

One last question concerns scholars studying superhuman demographics: of the active costumed superhumans (and related characters) in the Champions Universe, what percentage are “heroes” and what are “villains”? As researchers use these terms, a “villain” is a costumed superhuman who primar-



ily uses his superpowers for selfish ends including criminal gain, the acquisition of power, the infliction of pain on others, flouting the law generally, and the like; whereas a “hero” is a superhuman who uses his powers to oppose supervillains, assist others, prevent disasters, and generally “do good.”

Studies have shown that over the course of the “Superhuman Era,” the ratio of heroes to villains has averaged 40% to 60%. In other words, there are about half again as many villains as heroes. Sometimes the ratio tips a little one way or another, but in most cases it remains close to this figure. As of 2002, the ratio holds.

Reasons for this unequal division of superhuman resources are not difficult to discern. Being a “hero” is difficult. It requires discipline, self-sacrifice, and a willingness to risk one’s life for little or no gain. Villainy, on the other hand, suffers from few of those drawbacks, and in the best cases can lead to significant material gain. It may also lead to punishment by the justice system, but many villains clearly don’t worry about that possibility too much — experience has shown they can usually avoid capture, or find a way to escape if necessary. It’s only human nature that so many superhumans would turn to crime (even if it’s just petty crime made easier by the use of superpowers). What’s surprising — but gratifying — is that so great a percentage of superhumans would choose to become heroes.



CHAPTER THREE: POWERS AND SUPERPOWERS: SUPERHUMANS AND SOCIETY

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of any *Champions* campaign is deciding to what extent the existence of superhumans has changed modern society, and how. Thinking about these issues provides gamers with the opportunity to play a few fascinating rounds of “what if?,” and GMs with a chance to define and dis-

tinguish their campaigns in ways that are both consistent with the comics they know and love, and relatively “realistic.” This chapter of *Champions Universe* discusses how superhumans have affected the world of the CU, and how modern society (primarily in the United States) has been shaped by, and reacts to, their presence.

SUPERHUMANS AND GOVERNMENT

Governments, being inclined to monitor, regulate, and exploit things of potential danger or power, have taken a major interest in superhumans since they first arose. Sometimes they outlaw or regulate them, sometimes they oppress them, sometimes they recruit or hire them.

THE UNITED STATES

As the site of the majority of superhuman activity on Earth, and the home of most of the world's superhumans, the United States has paid more attention to superhuman-related issues, and spent more money on superhuman matters, than any other government. Its involvement with superhumans began in World War II, when it first began working with newly-emerged superheroes and costumed crimefighters to combat the Nazi super-menace in all its many forms.

America's approach to its superhumans was a relatively relaxed one until the social turmoil of the late 1960s, when certain elements in the government became concerned about the possible threat superhumans posed to national (and even world) security. It was during this time that the FBI first began monitoring domestic superhumans, and the Department of Defense issued its first Superhuman Survey in 1972. In 1969, the government fielded its first "official" costumed agent, the All-American, who was the product of an only partly-successful superhuman-soldier experiment called Project Perseus. America also used several superpowered espionage agents during the Cold War geopolitical maneuvering of the period, most notably the shapeshifting Reflection (who scored numerous intelligence coups against the Russians) and the speedster Ricochet (who was killed in Paris by Bulgarian assassins acting on orders from the GRU in 1974).

SUPERHUMAN REGISTRATION

In 1980, following an almost successful attempt by Dr. Destroyer to conquer the United States using several American villains as his pawns, Congress responded to widespread public outcries by passing the American Superhuman and Paranormal Registration Act. ASPRA required all innately-powered superhumans to register with the federal government (specifically, with

the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms), providing information on their true identities, the nature and extent of their powers, and so forth. Costumed crimefighters using super-technology were also required to register with the BATF under different provisions of the Act, and to reveal the capabilities (but not precise technical details) of their devices. Although public support for ASPRA was extensive, it was coldly received in the superhuman community. Relatively few superheroes, and no villains, came forward to register, forcing the government to declare them outlaws.

The truth of the matter, though, was that the law was toothless; the government couldn't pursue superheroes directly due to not only the negative publicity involved in targeting popular heroes, but the simple fact that without superheroes, America would be helpless before any number of superhuman threats (not to mention the likes of VIPER). Recognizing this, the government adopted a strategy of attrition. As supervillains were captured, they were identified as extensively as possible, and the information entered in the ASPRA databases; when superheroes needed government assistance or law enforcement sanction (as they often did), the price for cooperation was registration. Neither side was very happy with the result, but in the end it (mostly) got the job done, and allowed



the United States government to build the world's second-largest database on superhuman powers (after the one maintained by UNTIL).

ASPR, or the "Registration Act" as most superhumans refer to it, has been updated and revised several times since then, but never abolished. Responsibility for registration and record-keeping was turned over to PRIMUS when it was founded in 1986. Many states and local governments have patterned their own registration laws after it. Today, superhumans are far more used to, and forgiving, of the Act's requirements, and compliance with its mandates is more common than ever. The government can proudly point to the fact that the ASPRA databanks have *never* been penetrated by outsiders, nor has any information obtained through the Act ever improperly been used against a registered superhero (on the other hand, ASPRA information about villains is freely distributed to law enforcement agencies that need it).

The Department Of Superhuman And Paranormal Affairs

In 1986, following Mechanon's initial appearance and near-destruction of the United States, President Reagan authorized the creation of two new agencies specifically to cope with superhuman issues. The first, PRIMUS, was a law enforcement arm of the Department of Justice (see page 43). The second, and more important, was the new Department of Superhuman and Paranormal Affairs (DOSPA), a Cabinet-level agency. DOSPA's mandate then, and today, is this: to coordinate the United States's reaction and response to superhuman-related issues; to manage the activities of all of America's superhuman assets (regardless of what specific part of the government they might work for); and to research and investigate issues pertaining to superhumanity, superpowers, super-technology, and the like.

Given the extent of the superhuman threats to the United States, DOSPA's power has grown rapidly over the years, making it one of the most publicly-visible parts of the federal government. Ultimately all superhumans associated with the American government answer to it, even if they normally work directly with some other agency, and it has jurisdiction over any superhuman- or paranormal-related matter. This wide-ranging authority

causes some friction with other branches of the government (particularly the military), but has proven so successful in practice that no significant support exists for changing it.

DOSPA is organized into eight primary divisions, whose responsibilities are evident from their names: Alien Affairs; Diplomatic Affairs; Military Affairs; Mystic Affairs; National Security Affairs; Research & Development; Supertech-nology Affairs; and World Security Affairs. An Undersecretary heads each division and reports to the Secretary, who in turn reports to the President as requested or required by law.

Although the current DOSPA Secretary, Andrew Rochester, is a good man who's well-regarded both within and without the Superhuman World, not everyone who works for his Department is so nice. Some of his underlings, including at least one of the people in line to replace him should he have to leave the job, have decidedly harsher and/or less trusting attitudes toward superhumans.

SECRETARY OF DOSPA ANDREW ROCHESTER

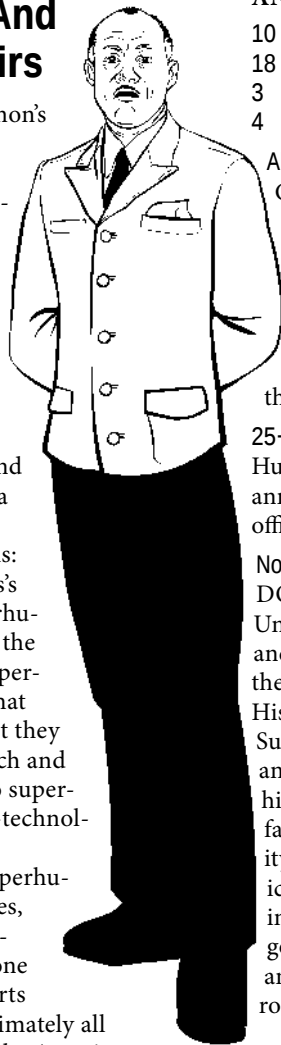
10	STR	12	DEX	12	CON	10	BODY
18	INT	13	EGO	15	PRE	10	COM
3	PD	2	ED	2	SPD		
4	REC	24	END	21	STUN		

Abilities: Bureaucratics 14-, Conversation 12-, Criminology 8-, Deduction 13-, High Society 12-, AK: Northern Virginia 13-, CK: Washington, D.C. 13-, KS: Superhuman World 13-, KS: Superpowers 12-, KS: US Government 14-, Oratory 12-, Persuasion 12-, PS: U.S. Government Official 13-, PS: U.S. Soldier 11-, WF: Small Arms, 50 points' worth of Contacts in the U.S. government and military

25+ Disadvantages: DNPCs (wife and children), Hunted (some supervillain who's currently annoyed with him), Rivalry (various government officials who want his job)

Notes: Only the fourth person ever to head DOSPA, Andrew Rochester is a veteran of the United States Army who fought in Desert Storm and achieved the rank of Major before leaving the military to join the Department of Defense. His stellar work there on the annual Superhuman Survey drew the attention of the White House, and in 2001 President George W. Bush appointed him Secretary of DOSPA. Rochester has a keen fascination for issues pertaining to superhumanity, and holds superheroes such as the All-American, the Champions, and the Justice Squadron in high regard. Under his administration the government has been much more cooperative and friendly toward non-sanctioned superheroes than it was under some previous Secretaries.

Rochester is in his early 50s. He lives in suburban Virginia with his wife and two daughters.



THE ALL-AMERICAN

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
20	CON	20	13-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack 4d6
20	COM	5	13-	
15	PD	11	Total: 21 PD (6 rPD)	
12	ED	8	Total: 18 ED (6 rED)	
5	SPD	20	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12	
10	REC	4		
40	END	0		
50	STUN	10	Total Characteristic Cost: 178	

Movement: Running: 11"/22"
Leaping: 8"/16"

Cost	Powers	END
13	<i>Rocket-Powered Punch:</i> HA +8d6; OIF (-½), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½), 4 Charges (-1)	[4]
12	<i>Stars:</i> HKA ½d6 (1d6 with STR), Ranged (+½), Autofire (5 shots; +½), Penetrating (x2; +1); OAF (-1), 12 Charges (-¼), No Knockback (-¼)	[12]
36	<i>Stripes:</i> Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF, Explosion (+½); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½)	[8]
<i>Martial Arts: Commando Training</i>		
	Maneuver	OCV DCV Notes
3	Aikido Throw	+0 +1 8d6 + v/5, Target Falls
4	Boxing Cross	+0 +2 10d6 Strike
4	Choke	-2 +0 Grab One Limb, 4d6 NND (2)
4	Escape	+0 +0 55 STR versus Grabs
4	Hold	-1 -1 Grab Three Limbs, 50 STR
4	Judo Disarm	-1 +1 Disarm, 50 STR
4	Kung Fu Block	+2 +2 Block, Abort
16	+4 Damage Classes (already added in)	
12	<i>Armored Costume:</i> Armor (6 PD/ED); OIF (-½)	0
3	<i>Polarized Mask Lenses:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (5 points); OIF (-½)	0
1	<i>Improved Lung Capacity:</i> Life Support (Extended Breathing: 1 END per Turn)	0
10	<i>Fleet-Footed:</i> Running +5" (11" total)	1
4	<i>Strong Leaper:</i> Leaping +4" (8" forward, 4" upward)	1
2	<i>Strong Swimmer:</i> Swimming +2" (4" total)	1
7	<i>Mask Radio:</i> Radio Perception/Transmission; OIF (-½)	0

Perks

60	Contacts: scads of them in the U.S. military and government
3	Fringe Benefit: Federal Police Powers
7	Fringe Benefit: Security Clearance
9	Reputation: America's national hero (throughout Earth, 14-) +3/+3d6

Skills

20	+2 Overall
20	+4 Hand-To-Hand
3	Acrobatics 13-
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Combat Driving 13-
3	Combat Piloting 13-
3	Computer Programming 13-
1	Electronics 8-
3	High Society 13-
2	AK: Fort Benning & Environs 11-
2	CK: Atlanta 11-
2	KS: United States History 11-
2	KS: Military History 11-
2	KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 11-
2	KS: The Superhuman World 11-
2	KS: U.S. Military Procedure & Protocol 11-
1	Lockpicking 8-
1	Mechanics 8-
3	Oratory 13-
3	Paramedics 13-
3	PS: U.S. Army Soldier 13-
1	Security Systems 8-
3	Stealth 13-
2	Survival (Temperate/Subtropical) 13-
3	Systems Operation 13-
3	Tactics 13-
3	Teamwork 13-
11	TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles, Parachuting (Basic, Advanced), SCUBA, Small Motorized Boats, Small Planes, Large Planes, Combat Aircraft, Helicopters
7	WF: Small Arms, Blades, Flamethrowers, Grenade Launchers, Heavy MGs, Shoulder-Fired Weapons

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 339**Total Cost: 517****200+ Disadvantages**

20	Hunted: Institute for Human Advancement 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
20	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
20	Psychological Limitation: True-Blue American (Common, Total)
20	Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (James "Jack" Tiptree) (Frequently, Major)
20	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
202	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 517

Background/History: In the late 1960s, with public anger over Vietnam heating up and patriotic feelings at their lowest ebb ever, concerned officials in the Pentagon decided they needed someone to serve as a powerful, easily-recognized symbol of American patriotism, American virtues, and the strength and honor of the United States military.

Looking around for a way to create this symbol, they hit upon some experiments being performed by an Army scientist named Herman Olafson. Doctor Olafson was the head of Project Perseus, an offshoot of the Haynesville Project and the latest in the military's long line of "superhuman soldier" projects. He had reached the stage where, through drug and radiation treatments, he could augment a human being's natural physical and mental capabilities significantly. But he had not yet achieved the breakthroughs necessary to induce true superhuman abilities — or even full augmentations approaching superhuman levels.

The concerned officials decided Perseus was good enough for their purposes — in fact, maybe the Perseus subjects would make *better* symbols for America, since they'd be more like "the common man." They ordered Olafson to suspend work and turn over all his data to them. After they reviewed his work, including detailed background and psychological profiles of all of his subjects, they chose Gerald Thomaston to be their symbol — the man they were going to call "the All-American."

Reluctant at first, Thomaston soon warmed to the role. The concerned officials presented him with a red, white, and blue costume, complete with weapons: razor-sharp throwing stars; tangle grenades; and special gauntlets that allowed him to deliver a "rocket-powered punch" several times a day. And they trained him to use his Perseus-given physique and mental acumen. Within just a few months, the All-American was presented to the media as a new symbol for America.

Thomaston spent several years in his new role, fighting crime, helping American soldiers with missions, and rescuing disaster victims. A crippling injury removed him from the superhero game, so the concerned officials had to find a replacement. After reviewing thousands of military personnel files, they selected another candidate, got him to agree to the Perseus treatments, and awarded him the mantle of the All-American.

Since then, four more men and one woman have worn the costume and carried the legacy of the All-American. Now recognized by the American public, and the world, as "America's official superhero," the All-American has come to represent just the sort of heroic patriotism that the concerned officials cynically created for their own purposes. And just as cynically, their successors have used the concept for their own gain and in their own ways. But as often as not, in spite of their most manipula-

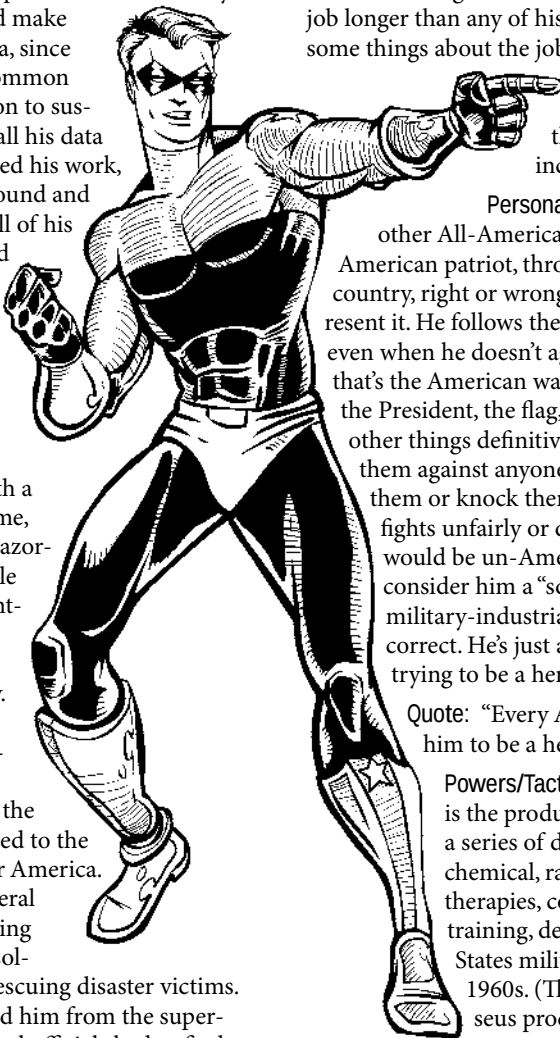
tive efforts, the All-American has been a true hero, not simply a soldier following commands. More than one person who wore the costume was fired from the job for refusing to take orders he considered wrong.

The latest in this long line of heroes is Jack Tiptree, the son of a South Dakota car salesman. After he joined the Marines in 1989, he was selected to become the All-American when his physical showed him to be perfectly suited for Perseus treatments. Jumping at the chance to serve his country in such a prominent role, Tiptree soon found himself garbed in the All-American's familiar stars-and-stripes costume. Over a decade later, he's still serving his country, having held onto the job longer than any of his predecessors. Though some things about the job concern him from time to time, usually he just gets to be a hero, and that's more than enough incentive to keep the mask.

Personality/Motivation: Like the other All-Americans, Jack Tiptree is an American patriot, through-and-through. It's his country, right or wrong, and he's proud to represent it. He follows the orders of his superiors, even when he doesn't agree with them, because that's the American way as he sees it. He respects the President, the flag, Mom, apple pie, and all other things definitively American, and defends them against anyone who would challenge them or knock them — though he never fights unfairly or dishonorably, since that would be un-American. Many Americans consider him a "square," or a tool of the military-industrial complex, but neither is correct. He's just a plainspoken American trying to be a hero in a complex world.

Quote: "Every American has it within him to be a hero."

Powers/Tactics: The All-American is the product of *Perseus treatments*, a series of difficult (and expensive!) chemical, radiation, and psychological therapies, combined with specialized training, developed by the United States military beginning in the late 1960s. (The exact nature of the Perseus process, including how suitable candidates for the treatments are chosen, remains highly classified and known to only a few high-ranking federal employees.) While these treatments don't grant superhuman powers, they do enhance the subject's natural physical and mental gifts. In game terms, they permanently boost Characteristics. Most subjects receive ratings of 20 in Primary Characteristics, but some go higher (though they never reach the specified campaign standards for "superhuman"). Jack Tiptree is typical of the All-Americans in most respects, and thus has 20s in his STR, INT, and other Primary Characteristics (making him about four times as strong, agile, smart, and charming as the average person).



Like every All-American, Jack has been trained in the arts of hand-to-hand combat, acrobatics, and the like. He's picked up a wide variety of other skills through his military training and on-the-job experience. He carries three weapons for use in combat. His *Stars* are five-pointed shuriken (throwing stars) with an almost monomolecularly-sharp edge, which makes it possible to embed them in nearly any target. His *Stripes* are flexible red and white bar-shaped tangle grenades capable of effecting numerous targets over a small area. Lastly, his *Rocket-Powered Punch* is a right-hand gauntlet with compressed-air jets that lets him deliver a devastating blow, but only four times a day. He saves the Punch for desperate moments and foes who won't fall to his normal blows. He sometimes uses a *Stripe* to hold a target motionless long enough to deliver a Rocket-Powered Punch.

Campaign Use: In most cases, the All-American should function simply as an NPC superhero with whom the PCs might sometimes ally themselves. If the PCs are wanted by the law, or otherwise not on good terms with the government, the All-American might end up cast in the role of "villain" as he tries to help the authorities bring the heroes in for questioning. He'd never Hunt a superhero otherwise, and if pressed by his superiors to apprehend someone he believes to be a genuine hero, is likely to defy orders — which would make him work with the PCs (to help prove to the government that his judgment was correct, if for no other reason).

If the All-American is too powerful for your campaign, tone down his weapons and Martial Arts a bit, but don't reduce his Characteristics unless it's absolutely necessary. If he seems too weak, increase his SPD to 6, add some Damage Classes to his attacks, provide him with some additional weapons, and/or give him another Overall Level or two.

Appearance: The All-American wears a distinctive red, white, and blue costume well-known to the citizens of the United States for over thirty years (thanks to extensive media campaigns promoting him, and his numerous appearances on the broadcast news and in the papers). The shoulders and arms are blue, with his white Stars mounted six each on his outside upper arms (when detached for throwing, they reveal a similarly-shaped patch of white cloth to maintain the appearance). The rest of the torso is red, the trunks and belt are white (with special compartments to hold his Stripes), and the legs are red as well. His boots and gauntlets are made of blue-colored metal; the gauntlets have distinctive flares at the end to hold the compressed air technology that enables his Rocket-Powered Punch. He conceals his identity with a blue domino-style mask.

The Department Of Defense

The Department of Defense has been involved with superhumans since World War II, when its predecessor worked closely with them to coordinate efforts to oppose Nazi superhumans and related military assets. Following the end of the

war, most of those heroes retired, and the Department did not make any serious efforts to replace them. It wasn't until the 1960s, during the height of the Cold War and the fighting in Vietnam, that the DoD first tried to both actively recruit superhumans for the military, and create "superhuman soldiers" of its own (see below).

As of 2002, the Department of Defense employs five superhumans: Victory, who belongs to the Air Force; Fusillade and Bulwark, who are members of the Army; Swordfish, who belongs to the Navy; and an unidentified superhuman employed by the DIA. Bulwark, Fusillade, and Victory have all seen action during the fighting in Afghanistan, and made valuable contributions to the war effort. Additionally, many superheroes contribute their knowledge, skills, or technical resources to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) on an occasional basis.

THE SUPERHUMAN SURVEY

The DoD's best-known involvement with the Superhuman World in the modern day is its preparation of the annual Superhuman Survey for the United States government. Begun in 1972, the Superhuman Survey (more formally referred to as the "Survey of Superhuman and Paranormal Threats to National and World Security") assesses the current superhuman and paranormal threats to not only the safety of the United States and its citizens, but the world; it also analyzes the past year's activity in the Superhuman World and discusses any important implications.

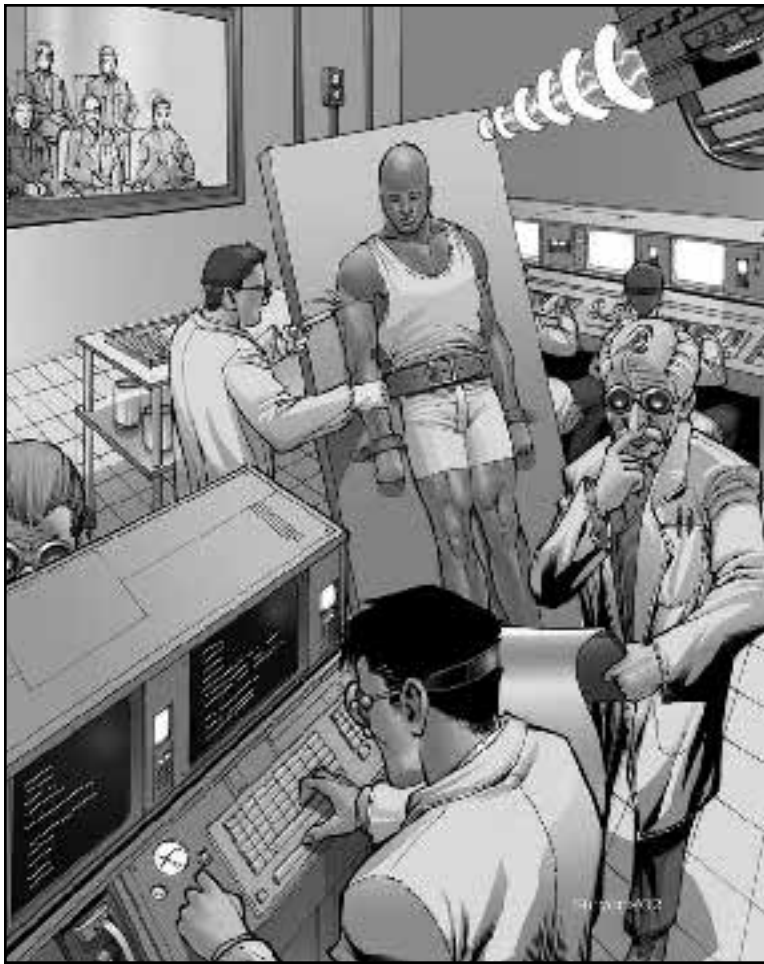
The Survey ranks supervillains and supervillain teams in four "classes": Omega, Delta, Beta, and Alpha. An Omega-class supervillain has the power to threaten the security, safety, and/or existence of the entire world; a Delta-class supervillain poses a credible threat to the national security of the United States. Most villains fall into the much less dangerous Beta and Alpha categories.

The Superhuman Survey is widely distributed throughout the government, and versions with classified or sensitive information redacted are sold to the public. (Among the information redacted is the government's confidential opinion regarding the reliability, trustworthiness, and threat level of known superheroes.) More than one supervillain has been known to brag about his position in "the rankings."

The Survey includes a short appendix assessing threats to other countries and regions of the world. Many nations prepare their own version of the Survey to evaluate threats to themselves, and UNTIL likewise reports on threats to world safety.

The Superhuman Survey 2002

The 2002 edition of the Superhuman Survey contains relatively few surprises, with the exception of the return to the report of Dr. Destroyer after a ten-year absence that so many officials hoped was permanent. Destroyer resumes his position at the top of the Omega-class list, a ranking he held virtually every year from 1975 to 1992. Other villains on the Omega-class list include Gravitator, Istvatha V'han, Mechanon, Menton, PSI, Takofanes the



PROJECT SUNBURST

One of the government's most unusual attempts to create superhuman soldiers was Project Sunburst. Begun in 1994 by a group of rogue generals, Sunburst was intended to measure soldiers' resistance to the effects of nuclear war, and to create superhuman soldiers with the ability to survive a nuclear war and keep fighting.

The generals and their scientists gathered a group of over 200 soldiers, who were told they were participating in a "wargame" involving a nuclear weapon scenario. They equipped these hapless guinea pigs with special protective suits which they wanted to test, which also included instruments designed to measure the effects of the experiment.

Undying Lord, and the Warlord and his organization.

VIPER is the most prominent name on the Delta-class list; as usual, it fails to make the Omega list only because its size makes it so much easier for the government to track its general movements and activities. Other Delta-class threats include ARGENT, Dark Seraph and the Crowns of Krim, DEMON, Eurostar, Holocaust, Masquerade, Teleios, the Ultimates, and Dr. Yin Wu. Note that not all of these villains are necessarily violent; Masquerade makes the list primarily because of his/her ability to effortlessly infiltrate government installations.

The Beta-class list includes some surprisingly powerful villains, such as Firewing and Grond. Ordinarily villains of such power could easily ascend at least into the Delta-class rankings, but their motivations or *modus operandi* keep them from posing a greater threat to the United States. Both can be extremely destructive, but neither has any sustained interest in conquest or similar activities. Other "Betas" include Anubis, Black Paladin, Cybermind, and Tesseract.

Any villain not on one of the other three lists ends up as an Alpha. As the DoD itself always notes in the preface to the Survey, a villain's ranking depends solely on his general ability to threaten the world, America, or substantial numbers of people. Even an Alpha-class villain, such as Ankylosaur or Lodestone, poses an extreme risk to any individual or business.

SUPERHUMAN SOLDIER PROJECTS

The Department of Defense, like many similar organizations around the world, has from time to time attempted to create its own superhumans for military purposes. Its results have been decidedly mixed. (Note that "superhuman soldier projects" differs from "super-soldier projects," which are attempts to create enhanced human soldiers that aren't truly superhuman. The All-American is, technically, a super-soldier, since his abilities don't qualify him as a true superhuman and the Perseus Project failed in its goal to create superhuman soldiers.)

America's initial efforts to create its own superhuman soldiers were haphazard affairs by the Department of War during World War II, when the existence of superpowers was still so new that no systematic knowledge of them was available. Several scientists, either employees of the War Department or independent researchers, approached the government with various theories and processes that would supposedly create superhumans. Virtually all of these experiments failed of their own accord, though a few were sabotaged by the enemy. Only two, Project Achilles (created by Dr. Malcolm Merriweather) and Project Ascension (created by a group of War Department scientists) succeeded. Their end results — the superheroes Achilles and the Comet — both died in action during the war. Later analysis strongly suggests that Project Ascension succeeded only because its test subject was a mutant, and that the Ascension process itself does not work; the data from Project Achilles remains highly classified.

Also of note during World War II was the Haynesville Project, which began in the Kansas farming town of the same name after Captain Patriot was revealed to the world. Initially devoted to studying the nature and strength of various superpowers, the Project quickly shifted toward trying to find ways to create superhumans. Without the Haynesville Project's data and assistance, neither Achilles nor Ascension would have succeeded. The Project was declassified and shut down following the war.

The Department of Defense renewed its efforts to create superhuman soldiers in the late 1960s with Project Perseus, which yielded only the All-American. However, the information obtained through Perseus was carried over into a variety of projects during the 1970s, one of which, Project Yeoman, succeeded in 1977. Six Navy SEALs who underwent the Yeoman process emerged with low-level superpowers (mainly superhuman strength and toughness), and were formed into a powerful elite forces unit christened Ameriforce One. Ameriforce One performed many valuable secret missions for the United States until 1983, when its members were killed when a stranded Soviet sub they were trying to recover exploded.

The DoD's researches progressed through the 1980s, as DARPA began to explore the possibility of cybernetic or biological augmentation instead of efforts to induce "normal" superpowers. It achieved a few temporary successes, but nothing of lasting value. It redoubled these efforts after 1992, when public outcry over the Detroit disaster led to increased funding of superhuman soldier projects by Congress. In 1998, scientists working on what was dubbed Project

Onslaught revealed a new superhuman soldier, code-named Janissary, to top Pentagon officials. Created largely by splicing genetic material from animals into his DNA, Janissary performed superbly in all tests set for him by the military, though some doubts were raised about his mental fitness for duty; the treatments seem to have left him prone to violent outbursts and rebellious behavior. The DoD is currently trying to decide whether the program is worth continuing, in light of these problems and its tremendous expense.

VICTORY

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 [3]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
22	CON	24	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
18	COM	4	13-	
10	PD	4		Total: 13 PD (3 rPD)
14	ED	10		Total: 17 ED (3 rED)
6	SPD	29		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	0		
74	END	15		
40	STUN	4		Total Characteristics Cost: 171

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 20"/80"

Cost	Powers	END
75	<i>Plasma Manipulation:</i> Multipower, 75-point reserve	
7u	1) <i>Plasma Bolt:</i> EB 15d6	7
7u	2) <i>Plasma Blast:</i> EB 10d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
7u	3) <i>Plasma Burn:</i> EB 10d6, Armor Piercing (+½)	7
7u	4) <i>Plasma Burst:</i> EB 10d6, Explosion (+½)	7
50	<i>Plasma Shields:</i> Multipower, 50-point reserve	
6m	1) <i>Personal Plasma Shield:</i> Force Field (10 PD/10 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
10m	2) <i>Energy Screen:</i> Force Wall (8 PD/8 ED; 5" long and 2" tall)	5
45	<i>Power-Flight:</i> Multipower, 45-point reserve	
4u	1) <i>Flying:</i> Flight 20", x4 Noncombat	4
2u	2) <i>Spaceflight:</i> FTL Travel (4 LY/day), Costs Endurance (-½)	0
52	<i>Energy Consumption:</i> Absorption 6d6 (energy), any physical Primary Characteristic one at a time (+¼), Can Absorb Maximum Of 60 Points' Worth Of Energy	0
9	<i>Energy-Infused Form:</i> Armor (3 PD/3 ED)	0
20	<i>Energy-Infused Form:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing, Diminished Eating: Once Per Week, Safe Environments: Intense Cold, Intense Heat, High Pressure, High Radiation, Low Pressure/Vacuum)	0
15	<i>Eyes Of The Sun:</i> Sight Group Flash	

Defense (15 points) 0
6 *Wrist Communicator:* HRRP; OIF (-½), Flashed As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½) 0

Perks

30 Contacts: various in the U.S. military and government
3 Fringe Benefit: Federal Police Powers
7 Fringe Benefit: Security Clearance
6 Reputation: American military hero (throughout Earth, 14-) +2/+2d6

Skills

12 +4 with Plasma Manipulation Multipower

2 Animal Handler (Equines) 14-
3 Bureaucratics 14-
3 Combat Piloting 13-
3 Computer Programming 12-
3 High Society 14-
2 AK: Seymour Johnson AFB & Environs 11-
2 AK: Cape Canaveral & Environs 11-
2 KS: Gardening 11-
3 KS: The Superhuman World 12-
2 KS: U.S. Military Procedure & Protocol 11-
2 Navigation (Space) 12-
3 Power: Plasma Powers 13-
2 PS: U.S. Air Force Pilot 11-
2 PS: Astronaut 11-
3 Riding 13-
3 SS: Astronomy 12-
2 SS: Biology 11-
3 SS: Meteorology 12-
3 SS: Physics 12-
3 Stealth 13-
3 Tactics 12-
3 Teamwork 13-
6 TF: Combat Aircraft, Large Planes, Parachuting (Basic, Advanced), Small Planes, Spaceplanes

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 443

Total Cost: 605

200+ Disadvantages

15 Distinctive Features: glowing form and eyes (Not Concealable; Noticed And Recognizable)
25 Hunted: Mechanon 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
25 Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
20 Psychological Limitation: Code Of The Hero (Common, Total)
20 Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Kristine Griswold) (Frequently, Major)
20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
20 Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Drains (Common)
254 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 605

Continued from last page

They put the volunteers into the field and detonated a special low-yield nuclear weapon several hundred yards away from them.

Most of the volunteers died instantly, or over the next several weeks from intense radiation poisoning as doctors monitored their vital signs but did little to ease their pain — the "protective suits" were useless as a defense, though they did gather some data the generals considered valuable. But a handful of volunteers did *not* die; instead, they were mutated in various ways. One, Randall Gordon, showed only minor physiological changes; others were somehow imbued with the energies of the blast. Most of the survivors fell into deep comas.

The generals hid the survivors, placing most of them in a top secret, heavily-secured facility nicknamed "the Crypt," and putting others elsewhere. Since then, at least three of the survivors have manifested super-powers and turned to crime: Randall Gordon gained the ability to control an experimental suit of armor and became the Armadillo; Jason Matthews lost his voice and was turned into the "walking radiation bomb" known as Radium; and Tim Colton was liberated from the Crypt by none other than Dr. Destroyer to become Gigaton, the Doctor's chief of security (and the most powerful Sunburst survivor to date).

The generals behind Project Sunburst continue to keep things secret and maintain the Crypt. They live in fear that other survivors will develop super-powers, and that one will eventually expose them. Only time will tell if they are right to fear.

Background/History: An astronomer and Air Force combat pilot, Kristine Griswold was fortunate enough to be accepted into the U.S. astronaut program. After years of training, she finally had the chance every astronaut dreams of — to be part of a Space Shuttle mission!

The mission was going perfectly until an unpredicted, and unusually intense, burst of solar radiation bombarded the Shuttle. Kristine's fellow astronauts seemed basically unaffected, but the strange cosmic energies had a definite effect on her. She began to feel poorly, and her temperature rose. After a day of fever, she was suddenly better, and in fact had begun to emit a strange yellowish glow. Her now-pupilless eyes glowed, too.

The mission was quickly scrapped and the Shuttle returned to Earth. Scientists examining Kristine couldn't explain exactly what happened, but their tests confirmed that she'd somehow been granted powers of energy manipulation and control. Rather than waste such a valuable asset as a simple astronaut, the American government persuaded her to become one of its "official" superhuman assets.

Kristine was reluctant to become a hero at first, but she soon found she enjoyed it. As "Victory" (a name chosen for her by the Air Force), she could do more to help people than she ever could as an astronomer and astronaut. Even better, as her powers developed, she gained the ability to survive in space, and even to travel faster than light! She ended up with the best of both worlds.

Victory has served her country as a superhero for nearly a decade now, and has worked with most other official American superheroes, and plenty of non-sanctioned ones as well when she needed to. She's fought beside the Army in places like Afghanistan, rescued trapped space station workers, helped with the demolition or creation of federal facilities, assisted disaster victims, and stopped the crimes and schemes of numerous supervillains. Although her duties leave her with relatively little time to pursue her hobbies (horseback riding and gardening), she wouldn't give up her life for anything.

Personality/Motivation: Victory is a genuinely kind-hearted and sympathetic person who gains a deep sense of satisfaction from her heroic activities. Although she's sometimes troubled by the implica-

tions and repercussions of having to follow questionable orders when her *Subject To Orders* clashes with her *Code Of The Hero*, she usually finds a way to resolve the conflict to her own satisfaction. She's had to refuse to follow orders less than half a dozen times during her career, and each time her decision was upheld by higher-ranking officers.

Unfortunately, Victory's powers and duties have left her somewhat isolated from society, making her feel lonely (though she'd never admit it). Unable to hide her energy glow and glowing eyes, she can't go anywhere in public without being mobbed by admirers and fans, making it difficult to go on dates, spend a little time shopping, or attend cultural events. She tends to socialize mostly with fellow officers or other superhumans. She'd really like to break out of this rut, but so far hasn't found a way to do so.

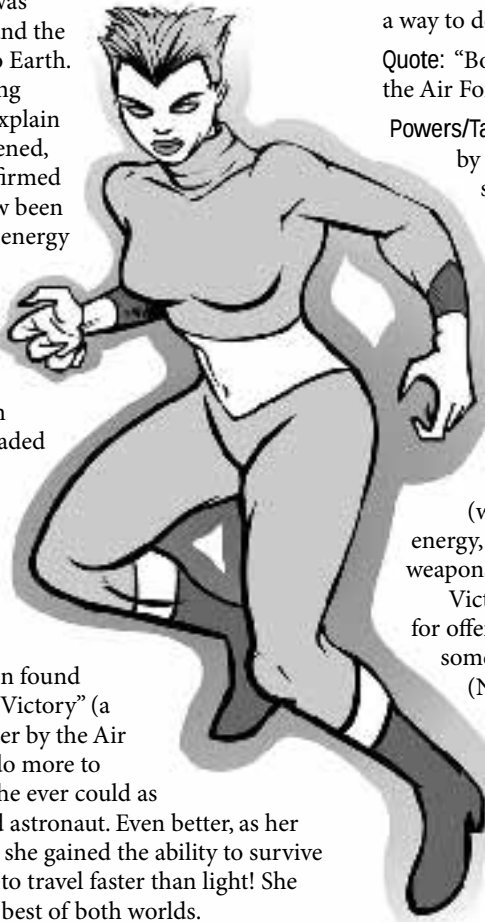
Quote: "Bombs and missiles aren't the only things the Air Force has that you need to worry about."

Powers/Tactics: Through means not understood by conventional science, exposure to intense solar radiation caused Victory to develop energy manipulation powers. (She does not register as a mutant to standard detectors.) The energy she emits and controls is basically similar to plasma, but has some odd differences scientists can't fully account for or explain. The mystery of her powers doesn't really concern Victory, but it has attracted the interest of other parties, including, most ominously, Mechanon (who would like to capture her, drain her energy, and use it to power one of his super-weapons).

Victory can emit bolts and blasts of energy for offensive purposes, or protect herself (and sometimes others) with shields of energy.

(Note that the slots in her defensive Multipower are Flexible, so she can mix and match Force Field and Force Wall to obtain the best result for any given situation.) She can also absorb energy, using it to boost her strength, agility, or resilience. (She also absorbs ambient light and radiation, "feeding" on them so she only has to consume physical food about once a week.) Since her entire body is infused with energy, she doesn't have to breathe, can withstand the effects of environments that would kill normal humans, and can fly. In space, she can attain velocities exceeding the speed of light; she sometimes goes out "exploring" the greater galaxy, but rarely goes far for fear of getting lost or being away from Earth when she's needed to cope with some emergency.

Campaign Use: Besides using Victory as you might other official government heroes (*i.e.*, to create stories based on the conflict between duty and ethics), the most interesting thing you can do with her is delve into the mystery of her origin. What caused the unusual solar flare? Why did it grant her powers, and no one else? Will her powers continue



to grow and strengthen, perhaps to the point where she becomes a danger to others?

Victory should be powerful enough as-is for most campaigns. If she proves a little too weak, boost her defenses, and perhaps allow her Absorption to feed into her *Plasma Manipulation* Multipower reserve and Energy Blasts. If she's too strong, trim a few points off SPD and other Characteristics, drop her *Plasma Manipulation* Multipower to 60 Active Point powers, and reduce her other powers accordingly (you may also want to get rid of her Absorption entirely).

Victory is not the sort to Hunt anyone unless ordered to do so. As a Hunter, she'll pursue a target methodically and relentlessly, calling on all the governmental resources she can access to track her quarry down and capture him unharmed.

Appearance: Kristine Griswold is a woman in her early 40s, though she appears to be about 30. She has short blonde hair and blue eyes, and stands 5'10" tall; her features are well-known from her many appearances on television news shows and interviews. As Victory, she wears a simple costume — mostly a metallic-looking gold, with red boots and highlights, and the sleeves ending above her wrists to leave her hands uncovered. She wears no mask or headgear. A soft yellow-gold glow surrounds her body at all times, and her pupilless eyes glow a more intense gold.

The Department Of Justice

Because of superheroes' prominent role as crimefighters, the Department of Justice is more closely associated with superhumans in the public mind than most governmental agencies. The DoJ not only employs more superhumans than any other division of the federal government, it's responsible for granting official law enforcement sanction to independent heroes.

SANCTIONING

Superheroes not directly employed by the federal government may apply to the Department of Justice for *sanction*, which grants them law enforcement powers roughly equivalent to those possessed by agents of the FBI. A grant of sanction may be temporary or permanent; permanent sanction is subject to periodic review at the government's discretion.

The United States is glad to work with responsible, upstanding superheroes, but it won't grant sanction to just anyone. It reviews each candidate thoroughly to ensure he will not abuse the privilege and is suitable for it. Only candidates who comply with the American Superhuman and Paranormal Registration Act will be considered, and the candidate must submit himself for psychological testing as well. Superteams requesting sanction must have a charter and other indications of stability. The applicant's record of conduct — his ability to work well with the authorities, his respect for the government, the nature and extent of his crimefighting activities, and his past successes as an adventurer

SANCTION PACKAGE DEAL

This package represents the Skills and abilities Champions Universe superheroes with United States government sanction should have. Substitute other "Police Powers" Fringe Benefits as appropriate for states, cities, and the like. Various Disadvantages (including the Social Limitation *Subject To Orders*) might also be appropriate for sanctioned heroes.

Cost Skills and Perks

2	KS: Federal Criminal Law 11-
2	KS: Federal Criminal Procedure 11-
6	One or more Contacts in the federal justice system, of the player's choice
3	Fringe Benefit: National Police Powers
Total cost: 13 points	

— all factor into the decision.

Superheroes granted sanction buy the *National Police Powers* Perk (if the sanction is only temporary, characters don't have to pay points for it). The government often exacts concessions from heroes in exchange for a grant of sanction. The agreement of superteams to include a government liaison among their employees, the sharing of technological secrets, or a solemn oath to turn over captured devices or data to the government are all among the concessions often obtained.

PRIMUS

In 1986, following Mechanon's almost-successful attempt to take over the United States, Congress authorized the DoJ to create a new federal law enforcement organization solely to pursue supercriminals. This was also an effort to deflect critics of the government's policy, at that time, of barring UNTIL from United States territory. The DoJ responded by creating the Paranormal Research and Investigation Mission of the United States — or PRIMUS, for short.

PRIMUS was initially conceived of as an agency like UNTIL, in that it would employ normal human operatives equipped with advanced technology designed for combatting superhuman and paranormal menaces. However, Dr. Lucius Alexander, one of the scientists assigned to work with the agency, alerted its leaders to a discovery he had recently made — a super-serum he called *Cyberline*. When given to certain subjects on a regular (daily) basis, Cyberline granted them superhuman or near-superhuman strength and reflexes. Aside from some "mildly addictive" properties, Cyberline seemed to have no negative side effects.

Top Justice officials quickly restructured PRIMUS to make use of the Cyberline concept. The leader of the organization would now be the subject most responsive to Cyberline, code-named the *Golden Avenger*. His primary field operatives would be other Cyberline-compatible agents, called *Silver Avengers* (many of whom would lead regional offices). The remainder of the organization's employees — the vast majority of its agents — would be ordinary humans equipped with the

THE SECRET SERVICE AND SUPERHUMANS

Of the various federal agencies associated with law enforcement and related duties, the Secret Service has traditionally been, and remains, the most inimical to superhumans of any sort. It almost always refuses to hire, or work with, *any* superhumans, and arrests those who try to help without permission as threats to the safety of the President.

Secret Service agents wear clothes tailored from the same high-tech fibers used in PRIMUS agents' uniforms, and carry advanced firearms equipped with ammunition able to affect most superhumans (RKA 2½d6, Armor Piercing). Every Secret Service agent receives special psychological training that gives him 20 points' worth of Mental Defense, as a precaution against psionic supervillains. Their trademark dark sunglasses provide Sight Group Flash Defense (5 points) and contain sophisticated communications technology (High-Range Radio Perception).

PRIMUS TECHNOLOGY

Here are a few examples of the equipment routinely employed by PRIMUS agents:

PRIMUS Plasma Rifle:

This silver-grey weapon uses plasma technology to project a powerful beam of energy. Many squads of PRIMUS agents train to focus multiple beams on a single target in the hope of taking him out of a fight quickly.

Energy Blast 8d6, 4 clips of 32 Charges each (+½) (60 Active Points); OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-½). Total cost: 24 points.

PRIMUS Flashbang Grenade:

This weapon is designed to incapacitate and weaken an opponent without causing him (or any innocent bystanders) significant injury. PRIMUS agents use code-words to alert their squadmates that they're about to use one.

Sight and Hearing Group Flash Attack 8d6 (45 Active Points); OAF (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼), 6 Charges (-¾). Total cost: 15 points.

PRIMUS Wiregun:

Known as a "Haywire" to field agents, this rifle shoots a coil of memory-metal wire that wraps around a target and incapacitates him.

Entangle 5d6, 7 DEF (60 Active Points); OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-½), Limited Range (10"); -¼, 6 Charges (-¾). Total cost: 17 points.

PRIMUS Uniform: The standard PRIMUS field uniform, in navy blue with gold highlights, is woven of high-tech fibers that protect the wearer from harm, but are so light they do not

latest technology.

For the past 16 years, PRIMUS has proven to be an invaluable asset of the U.S. government. Even after UNTIL was allowed to operate in American territory in 1993, PRIMUS retained the primary responsibility for combating superhuman crime in the United States. The organization has regional offices in several cities (including Boston, New York City, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Miami, Vibora Bay, New Orleans, Chicago, Millennium City, Seattle, Denver, San Francisco, and Los Angeles), and smaller offices in others. It maintains a force of approximately 12,000 field agents, and has been instrumental in ending numerous superhuman threats to the people and security of the United States.

As of 2002, the Golden Avenger is Daniel James Johnson (known to his friends as "DJ"), a former F-14 pilot who succeeded Robert Kaufman in the position in 1997. He's well-known in Washington for his no-nonsense attitude, take-charge personality, and encyclopedic knowledge of superhumans.

PRIMUS agents often work with superheroes, though their reactions to costumed crimefighters are mixed. On the one hand, many agents owe their lives to superheroes, and have a healthy respect for their abilities, bravery, and heroism. This attitude is pronounced in field offices where the Silver Avenger(s) favor heroes, such as Millennium City, New York, and San Francisco. On the other hand, many agents regard superheroes, at least in part, as "renegades" and "unprofessional" — people who hinder PRIMUS's mission as much as help it in many cases. Several Silver Avengers, particularly those heading the Miami and Seattle offices, share this opinion.

THE FBI

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's broad jurisdiction over 200 different federal crimes throughout United States territory often brings it into contact with superheroes (and conflict with supervillains). Though it sometimes squabbles with PRIMUS over these matters (the Bureau still hasn't gotten over having primary responsibility for supercrime taken away from it in 1986), it usually makes positive contributions to efforts to stop supervillains. Its forensics labs, the best in the world, frequently analyze evidence from super-crime sites.

The FBI's current director, former CIA agent and US Attorney Hamilton Parks, is a good friend



of Andrew Rochester's and shares the DOSPA Secretary's opinion of superhumans. Since being appointed by President Clinton in 1996, Parks has expanded the Bureau's roster of superheroes. It now employs eight: Tarantula and Firebrand, stationed in New York City; Kodiak and Teknique, stationed in Millennium City; Stalwart, who works with the Hostage Rescue Teams; and three — Bellatrix, Insight, and Proton — who shuttle around the country as needed. Insight, with his psionic powers, frequently performs telepathic scans of applicants for sanction or certain types of suspects.

THE DEA

The Drug Enforcement Administration tends to make less use of superheroes than the FBI. Given its emphasis on undercover work and elaborate intelligence-gathering missions, it has fewer jobs appropriate to flashy, larger-than-life crimefighters. However, its Miami office has sometimes worked with an aquatic superheroine named Jetstream to interdict drug trafficking from the Caribbean, and in cooperation with the Border Patrol recently hired a flying hero called Cloudcutter to help patrol the United States-Mexico border.

STRONGHOLD

By the mid-1970s, the federal and state governments realized their numerous attempts to find ways to restrain superhuman criminals had largely failed. Supervillains escaped jails and prisons with some regularity, making a mockery of the justice



system. Amid a public outcry for action, the Justice Department announced Project Stronghold.

Stronghold was envisioned as an enormous maximum security prison designed specifically to hold only superhuman criminals. The brainchild of the brilliant but eccentric Dr. Charles Wildman, Stronghold would incorporate the latest technology and ensure that a captured supervillain stayed captured. After contentious Congressional hearings, funding for Stronghold was approved. Construction was completed in 1978, and the “super-prison” has remained a vital part of the national strategy to combat supercrime to this day. Although it has suffered a few breakouts and other problems, it normally does exactly what it was intended to — keeps supervillains incarcerated for the duration of their sentences.

Stronghold is managed by the federal Bureau of Prisons. By special arrangement with the states, Stronghold takes superhuman prisoners accused or convicted solely of state crimes as well. The Bureau, with the assistance of PRIMUS, even provides a retrieval service to pick up villains for transport to Stronghold.

Built on (and into) a desolate mesa in the New Mexican desert, Stronghold is completely isolated and self-sufficient. There are no towns for dozens of miles, and no water between them and the prison. The prison has its own power generation facility and hospital; food is brought to the prison on a monthly basis.

Every part of Stronghold is heavily secured, and the sensitive areas (control center, communications center, and so on) particularly so. The cells are built not only for durability, but to incorporate various modular systems that can stymie superpowers (see accompanying sidebar). Hot Sleep chambers (see *Champions*, page 121) are available for superhumans like Firewing and Dark Seraph who are so powerful that not even a standard Stronghold cell can hold them. As a result of this attention to detail,

escapes from Stronghold are a rare (though by no means unknown) event.

As of 2002, the warden of Stronghold is Dr. Arthur Wildman, son of the man who originally conceived of the project. A firm but fair man, Dr. Wildman keeps a careful eye on his “charges” and ensures not only that they don’t escape, but that they aren’t abused. He does his best to rehabilitate them, though it’s usually a losing battle.

NASA

The National Aeronautic and Space Administration has many responsibilities that relate to superhumans and paranormal phenomena. It monitors near and far space (in conjunction with UNTIL’s space station, GATEWAY) looking for signs of alien visitors or invaders, and maintains what may be the world’s most extensive database on what humanity knows about sentient life on other planets. (As part of this database, it constantly gathers information about known aliens on Earth, including Firewing, Herculan, Ironclad, Nebula, and Vibron.) It often solicits the help of superhumans with its various research projects, or to get vehicles and other equipment into space quickly and safely. (Its United States Space Station, scheduled for full operational capability in 2005, would not have been possible without the help of many superheroes.) In the event America ever establishes formal contact with alien species, NASA and the State Department would jointly coordinate diplomatic relations with the non-humans.

OTHER GOVERNMENTS

The United States is not the only government to develop policies and procedures regarding superhumans.

AUSTRALIA

Thanks to the relatively low level of superhuman activity Down Under, the Australian government has never established an official superteam or initiated a superhuman registration policy. It does work closely with several independent heroes, including the powerful mystic Walkabout, who keeps a careful eye on the mysterious dimension known as the Dreamtime and the many dangerous things that dwell therein.

CANADA

Canada’s policies and practices regarding superhumans closely mirror those of the United States, since it experiences a lot of “spillover” supercrime from its neighbor to the south. In 1978, it established an official superteam known as the Northern Guard, but the team’s record has been spotty. It has broken up on several occasions, only to re-form later with some (or all) new members. The last Northern Guard existed from 1993-98; Canada has been without an official superteam since then. Canadian superhumans are required to register under a law almost identical to ASPRA.

Continued from last page

hinder movement.

Armor (8 PD/8 ED) (24 Active Points); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (-½). Total cost: 12 points.

PRIMUS Helmet: The PRIMUS uniform includes a helmet that comes equipped with communications gear.

Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group) (10 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 7 points.

STRONGHOLD CELL CONFIGURATIONS

Here are just a few of the possible configurations of Stronghold cells. Each is powered by the facility’s generators.

Anti-Intangibility Cell: Affects Desolidified (+½) for DEF 20 (30 Active Points); Partial Coverage (-2), Costs Endurance (-½). Total cost: 9 points.

Anti-Psionic Cell: Mental Defense (30 points) (30 Active Points); Partial Coverage (-2), Costs Endurance (-½). Total cost: 9 points.

Anti-Teleport Cell: Cannot Be Escaped With Teleportation (x2; +½) for DEF 20 (30 Active Points); Partial Coverage (-2), Costs Endurance (-½). Total cost: 9 points.

Reinforced Cell: +10 DEF (30 Active Points); Partial Coverage (-2). Total cost: 10 points.

Weakness Cell: Suppress STR 6d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) (37 Active Points); Only Within Defined Area (-2), Can’t Reduce STR Below 10 (-0). Total cost: 12 points.

MEMBERS OF THE TIGER SQUAD

Here's a partial list of members of the Tiger Squad (the names given are English translations). Ones with an asterisk by their name are pro-democracy, though they generally prefer to work within the system to effect positive change.

- Gossamer Storm
- Earthquake Fist
- Luan
- Quicksilver
- Summer Cloud*
- Winter Dragon
- GraniteMan
- Technocrat*
- Shining Dawn*
- Red Bullet



CHINA

The Chinese government has a harsh policy toward superhumans. Beijing has declared that all Chinese superhumans are either servants of the state, or outlaws. When reports reach the authorities about a new superhuman, they track him down and take him to a special training compound in central China whose exact location is a carefully-guarded state secret. Many Chinese supers spent their entire childhoods there.

Once properly trained (and indoctrinated), a Chinese superhuman becomes a member of the Tiger Squad, the PRC's official superteam. With over 50 members, it is by far the largest superteam in the world, though a significant percentage of its members have primarily martial arts-oriented powers. The government splits the Squad up into "field teams" of four to seven supers and assigns them to a particular city or region of the country.

Superhumans who somehow evade the government, or who escape from it later, are automatically branded criminals, and may be executed if captured. China's problem with "renegade superhumans" has increased since Hong Kong was returned to it in 1997. Very few of Hong Kong's defiantly independent superhumans have gone to work for the government, preferring outlawry to servitude.

Most of China's renegade superhumans, and more than a few members of the Tiger Squad, sympathize with the nation's pro-democracy movements. Some actively fight against the oppressive government, smashing military facilities and harassing government officials. It remains uncertain whether they're doing more to help, or hurt, the cause.

FRANCE

Since 1986, the French government has required the registration of superhumans under somewhat harsher restrictions than the United States, and thus has succeeded in driving many

of its superhumans underground or to other countries in Western Europe. It has an official superteam with three members: Tricolor, who can duplicate into three persons embodying the French national motto; Volt, who has electrical powers; and the Musketeer, a swashbuckling costumed acrobat. The team's official designation is "the Sixteenth Bureau," but its members prefer to call themselves "the Vanguard."

GERMANY

Germany's exploitation of superhumans in World War II led to a general distaste for the subject that remained through the early 1980s. The German media rarely said more about superhuman activity than it absolutely had to, and the government's official policy about superhumans was to ignore them as much as it could. This began to change in the '80s, as old memories faded and the people began to see the benefits of having superheroes around. Since 1991 the government has required the registration of superhumans under a policy similar to that of Great Britain, and has often granted temporary (but never permanent) sanction to superheroes in appropriate situations.

GREAT BRITAIN

Great Britain's history of superheroics, like that of the United States, dates back to World War II, when several British heroes made enormous contributions to the Allied war effort (the most notable of these being the Skymaster's assistance with the D-Day invasion). In 1953, the government established a secret department known as Bureau S, whose job was to study Britain's superhuman resources (and threats), and make use of them for government purposes when it was considered safe and appropriate to do so. By the 1960s, Britain had several "unofficially official" superhumans working for it, and in 1966 Bureau S became the Ministry of Superhuman Affairs, a publicly-acknowledged branch of government responsible for protecting British citizens from superhuman threats.

In 1971, the MSA sponsored the formation of the New Knights of the Round Table, an official superteam for Great Britain. The Knights, as the group's widely known, has fluctuated wildly in membership in the past thirty years, sometimes having as few as three members, and twice having eight. A terrible scandal in 1982 involving three of the members cast a shadow over the entire group, but it redeemed itself in the public eye in 1988 by staving off an attack by the fear-spirit Samhain

to terrorize the entire island. Since then the New Knights have remained popular, and often work with UNTIL or other superteams to save not only Her Majesty's kingdom, but the world itself, from danger.

Great Britain has had a superhero registration law since 1978, but its terms differ significantly from those of the American law. Registration is strongly encouraged, but voluntary, and does not require the revelation of the super's true identity if some other means of making positive identification is provided (such as a fingerprint or retina scan). However, a vocal minority of British citizens favor stricter registration laws more carefully enforced.

INDIA

Located between two hostile neighbors, one possessing the largest force of superhumans on Earth and the other having nuclear weapons capable of reaching New Delhi, India has worked hard to build up a superhuman force of its own, called the Superhero Division (officially a part of the Indian Army's Central Command, headquartered in Lucknow). As of 2002, the Division has 14 members, including two — the six-armed sorcerer Rashindar, and Ushas, who claims to be an avatar of the Hindu goddess of the same name — who are among the most powerful in the world. They usually have their work cut out for them fighting India's lively crop of supervillains (including the Black Tiger, the knife-wielding Katar, the weather-controlling Monsoon, the Lord of Rats, and the demonic Survaresh), but have sometimes been sent north to the disputed area of Kashmir to oppose the armed forces of Pakistan.

Besides the Superhero Division, India has a thriving population of superhumans. The law requires them to register, as in the United States, but the Indian government has so many other problems to deal with it doesn't really bother to enforce the law except when superhumans draw too much attention to themselves by destroying large amounts of public property and the like. For the most part, the supers of India seem to abide by an unwritten rule to avoid that sort of thing so the government leaves them alone.

ISRAEL

Surrounded by enemies who outnumber it, Israel has a history of relying on advanced, powerful weaponry as a safety net. This includes superhumans, of whom Israel has approximately a dozen (eight of them so-called "trained superhumans") working for it. These twelve do not form an official "team," but simply go where assigned by their military commanders. All are quite popular among the Israeli people, and equally despised by the Palestinians; Israeli supers have clashed with their Palestinian counterparts (who are fewer in number) on several occasions.

Israeli law requires the registration of all superhumans, and is stringently enforced.

JAPAN

Japan has no official superteam (though it frequently considers creating one) and no registration law. It often works closely with superheroes who have proven themselves trustworthy, readily granting them sanction for long periods. The Japanese, generally speaking, are enraptured by superheroes (not just their own, but other nations' as well), and the Japanese government's attitude reflects this high degree of popular support.

RUSSIA

During the 1960s and '70s, the Soviet Union maintained a large, powerful, and highly-publicized superteam called the People's Legion. The Legion clashed with American superheroes on several occasions, but also worked with them to prevent disasters and save lives. In the 1980s and '90s, as the Union fell apart, the People's Legion lost funding and slowly crumbled away as well. Despite harsh Russian laws outlawing superhuman activity not sanctioned by the state, and requiring all superhumans to register with the authorities and report all their activities, several former Legionnaires, along with a new generation of younger, more rebellious supers, began fighting crime on their own.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and rise of the Commonwealth of Independent States, these supers — including the famed armored hero *Stalnoy Volk* (Steel Wolf) and the young and popular mystic *Gyeroy Vedun* (roughly, "Hero Wizard") — have struggled on, attempting to fight crime in a land that has become a kleptocracy. Several efforts have been made to re-form the Legion (perhaps under a different name), but none has yet succeeded. Even the mighty heroes of Russia, it seems, are not what they once were.



SUPERHUMANS AND THE LAW

Registration laws aren't the only laws created because of, or influenced by, the existence of superhumans. Since 1938, United States law has adapted to reflect the realities of a world with superheroes (and villains); many other countries with a significant superhuman presence have passed similar laws. Some of the more prominent superhuman-oriented laws (and ones GMs could make use of in scenarios) include:

Constitutional Law

The most important constitutional law issue for most superhumans is the Eighth Amendment's guarantee against "cruel and unusual" punishment. What constitutes "cruel and unusual" in a situation where a superhuman's powers make it impossible for the state to hold him using ordinary means of incarceration? The Supreme Court ruled, in *James "Smasher" Aronson v. United States*, 390 U.S. 1420 (1968), that "certain methods of incarceration which would be unconstitutional if used on normal human criminals will be constitutional if used to restrain superhuman criminals. The methods which may be used on a particular superhuman criminal must be as narrowly tailored as possible to restrain that individual, so that his rights will not

be infringed." For example, the Court held in *Grond v. Atkins*, 109 S.Ct. 3386 (1989), that "hot sleep" (see *Champions*, page 121) was a constitutional form of restraint if it's reasonably likely there's no other way to keep the prisoner incarcerated for the duration of his sentence. On the other hand, various state court rulings have held that "trained superhuman" criminals, like Utility and Green Dragon, have to be treated more or less like normal maximum-security prisoners unless there's "clear and convincing" evidence such methods are insufficient to hold them.

Several superhuman criminals have claimed, under the Constitution's general right of privacy, a "right to maintain a secret identity." The Supreme Court specifically ruled that no such right exists in *Jessica "Blackmane" Howard v. New Jersey*, 395 U.S. 1603 (1969).

A number of Supreme Court rulings have stated that the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantees of due process and equal protection do not apply to sentient aliens, extradimensional entities, artificial intelligences, and the undead, because they are not "persons" under the law. On the other hand, they *do* apply to mutants, mutates, clones, and genetic constructs based on human stock. Congress has, however, passed laws granting at least limited rights to all "independent, free-willed, sentient entities" in American territory.

Criminal Law

Most crimes committed by superhumans are covered by ordinary criminal laws — robbery and murder are still robbery and murder, no matter who commits them or how. But many jurisdictions have passed various criminal laws specifically targeting types or uses of superpowers (and the courts have, generally, upheld these laws as non-discriminatory).

For example, in most states, the use of a superpower against another person automatically constitutes the crime of aggravated assault, regardless of whether the power itself cannot cause physical injury or lasting harm (e.g., Ego Attack). These laws, roughly speaking, equate superpowers with weapons for legal purposes. Similarly, the use (or threatened use) of superpowers often constitutes "reckless endangerment" under various state laws.

A sanctioned superhero who uses his powers to capture and restrain a criminal may find himself exposed to charges of "excessive force." The test for whether force is excessive is one of objective reasonableness: a particular degree of force is allowable if it would be used by a reasonable police officer on the scene in light of the need for split-second decisionmaking in a potentially lethal situation. This is a lenient test which disregards the officer's (superhero's) underlying intent or motivation. *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989). (Of course, a non-sanctioned superhero will likely find himself sued for assault and battery instead.)

All states have laws to prevent people concealing their identity in public. Officials often ignore or overlook these laws for superheroes (sanctioned or unsanctioned), but can bring them to bear if



needed, and often add them to the counts against a captured supervillain.

Some jurisdictions (primarily cities) have enacted laws or ordinances outlawing specific superpowers — either in general, or in specific circumstances. Examples include Mental Powers in general, Density Increase when in a building above the ground floor, Desolidification, and Damage Shields. Superhumans with these powers must either refrain from using them or risk arrest for doing so.

DEFENSES TO CRIMES

In their efforts to stay out of jail, supervillains often raise creative defenses to the crimes they're charged with. Chief among these is the insanity defense, which usually means one or more of the following: the defendant did not know the wrongfulness of his actions; the defendant was unable to understand the nature and quality of his actions; or the defendant lacked the capacity to conform his conduct to the law, even though he knew that what he was doing was wrong. Many cases have dealt with this defense as it applies to supercrime, and the following precedents are generally recognized as binding in most jurisdictions:

- wearing a silly-looking costume and committing bizarre crimes does not, *per se*, prove the defendant is insane
- a sincere belief in the occult or magic does not, *per se*, prove the defendant is insane
- sincere delusions (such as Foxbat's belief that he's living in a comic book) can constitute a valid insanity defense

Superheroes charged with crimes often raise the defense of “defense” (of self, others, or personal property). The main consideration here is the level of force used. To defend one's self or another, deadly force can be used if the hero reasonably believes he (or the potential victim) is imminently threatened with death or great bodily harm. Deadly force can be used to defend a home in some instances, but almost never any other property. In all other situations, the hero should restrict himself to non-deadly force.

Similarly, superheroes often use the defense of “crime prevention.” Generally, a person can use force to the extent the force seems reasonably necessary to prevent the commission of a felony. Just as with the “defense” defenses, the courts have shown themselves willing to go to great lengths to extend this defense to respected superheroes acting in a reasonable manner.

Criminal Procedure

“Criminal procedure” refers to the rules and regulations governing police conduct, and the conduct of the trials of people accused of committing crimes. Sanctioned superheroes must follow normal police procedures, such as arresting villains only upon “probable cause” and reading criminals their rights. *Starblaze v. Washington*, 446 U.S. 1535

(1980). A “superhero exception,” used by a few states, gives sanctioned heroes the power to ignore many criminal procedure rules when extreme circumstances are present.

On the other hand, non-sanctioned heroes do not have to follow any police procedures at all. The Supreme Court held in *Burdeau v. McDowell*, 256 U.S. 465 (1921), that the Fourth Amendment's search and seizure rules do not apply to private citizens (unless they are working as agents of the police). The Court confirmed that the *Burdeau* rule applies to superhuman crimefighters in the case of *Parkson v. California*, 479 U.S. 1363 (1986), which established the so-called “vigilante doctrine”: just because someone wears a mask and costume to conceal his identity and engages in crimefighting practices which would be unconstitutional if the police used them does not prevent the state from using evidence these costumed “vigilantes” obtain. In other words, a non-sanctioned costumed crimefighter can break into a criminal's house, beat him up, tear his house apart looking for evidence, and then turn the criminal and the evidence over to the police — and the state can use that information to prosecute the criminal. Of course, the authorities can arrest a non-sanctioned hero for doing this (breaking and entering and assault are crimes), and the victim can sue him.

SEARCHES AND SEIZURES

The Fourth Amendment to the Constitution forbids “unreasonable searches and seizures” and requires the authorities to have “probable cause” to obtain a search warrant. Sanctioned superheroes are subject to these restrictions.

“Probable cause” means that a certain item is evidence of a crime, or was used to commit a crime; and that the item is at the place which is to be searched. To have probable cause, an officer must have a “substantial basis” for concluding that the search will find an incriminating object. *Illinois v. Gates*, 462 U.S. 213 (1983). An officer or sanctioned hero may establish “PC” in many ways, including confidential informants, witnesses, physical evidence, and personal observation (but a policeman's or superhero's sworn statement, by itself, is not sufficient to show probable cause). A warrant must also give a “particular description of the place to be searched” and provide a “particular description of the item to be seized” — states cannot issue “general warrants” allowing broad, unfettered searches. However, search warrants are *not* required for searches incident to a lawful arrest, items in “plain view” of the officer/hero, some searches of vehicles, when the subject consents, in “stop-and-frisk” situations, and when the police/heroes are in “hot pursuit” of a suspect. In these situations, exigent circumstances and diminished expectations of privacy override standard Fourth Amendment protections.

The law allows some searches with normal sense-enhancing devices, like binoculars or aerial photography. It does not allow searches with exceptional Enhanced Senses, like N-Ray Vision or Ultra-violet Perception, unless those senses are innate to the superhero using them. Similarly, searches using

DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY

Diplomatic immunity, which is extended to some representatives of foreign governments, makes them totally immune to prosecution for crimes they commit in the United States (or any other host state). Under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations:

- the premises and buildings of a diplomatic mission are inviolate, and may not be entered or searched;
- the papers and correspondence of the mission are immune from search;
- the diplomatic bag (a clearly marked pouch used to carry diplomatic documents) and diplomatic couriers may not be detained or searched; and
- diplomats (ambassadors, ministers, counselors, and so forth) and all members of their families have full criminal immunity — they may not be convicted of any crime. The same applies to administrative and technical staff (such as clerks and typists) and their families. Service staff (such as drivers) have criminal immunity only for official acts.

If a foreign government appointed a superhero as its representative to the United States or the United Nations, that superhero would have diplomatic immunity. For example, Dr. Destroyer might petition the United Nations for membership for his “new country” of *Destruga Secundus*. If his petition were granted (*highly* unlikely, but possible), he could appoint Gigaton as his ambassador to the U.N.; Gigaton would have full criminal immunity for crimes he committed while in the United States as ambassador.



Mind Scan or Telepathy aren't allowed without a warrant.

MIRANDA WARNINGS

Under the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution, police officers and sanctioned superheroes have to provide “*Miranda* warnings” to suspects who are in police custody and under interrogation — that they have the right to remain silent, and anything they say can and will be used against them; and that they have a right to an attorney (provided by the state if necessary). The definitions of “police custody” and “interrogation” depend on circumstances, and often require much less than the stereotypical handcuffed-to-a-chair-and-had-a-confession-beaten-out-of-him situation.

THE EXCLUSIONARY RULE

Evidence obtained in violation of a suspect's Fourth or Fifth Amendment rights, and other evidence derived from it, cannot be used against him in court, pursuant to the *exclusionary rule* established by *Mapp v. Ohio*, 367 U.S. 643 (1961). This may lead to a supervillain getting a case dismissed “on a technicality.” However, there are some exceptions to the rule, including the good faith of the officer/hero, and having an independent, untainted, source for the evidence.

Evidence

The United States has allowed superheroes to testify in court while concealing their identities since the 1961 case of *Maxwell v. Michigan*, 367 U.S. 992 (1961). The hero must either be sanctioned, or in some other fashion satisfy the court as to his identity — courts won't allow just anyone to show up in a

mask and offer testimony. On the other hand, supervillains can, if they wish, invoke this rule to testify while concealing their identities.

Courts have, with some reluctance, allowed superhumans to introduce evidence gained through telepathy. However, the hero *must* be sanctioned and acting pursuant to a search warrant, and must establish (through certified testing procedures) that he genuinely has telepathic powers.

Other Legal Issues

In the Champions Universe, it is possible for superhumans to sue or be sued in their costumed identities. To file a lawsuit, a superhuman must be sanctioned, have a Public Identity, or otherwise be “verifiable.” Suing a superhuman is another matter; it's often difficult or impossible to track a super down, serve process on him, force him to come into court to answer the claims against him, and so forth... but it has been done successfully in the past.

Similarly, superhumans may establish bank accounts, sign contracts, and conduct business in their costumed identities if they wish — and if the other parties they're dealing with consent. This raises some difficult legal issues, and has caused some major deals to fall apart in the past, but generally works well based on the good faith of all parties involved.

All major insurance companies in the Champions Universe offer “superhuman insurance” that protects policyholders against damage or injury from any superhuman or paranormal cause. Businesses in major urban areas frequented by superhumans (such as Millennium City or New York City) practically consider “super-insurance” mandatory; it's just too risky to try to get by without it.

SUPERHUMANS AND THE MEDIA



From the moment they first appeared, superhumans have been the darlings of the media. Journalists of all types, from drunken hacks well past their prime to the most serious and educated commentators, have followed their exploits, filmed them for an eager public, and reported on every aspect of their lives. In some cases, this excessive coverage has affected superhuman conduct; superhumans are still human, and some of them (particularly melodramatic supervillains) love that kind of attention. But superhumans have done just as much to influence the media as the media has influenced them, if not more; some analysts trace the twenty-first century's public's short viewing attention spans, eagerness for action new stories, and desire for up-to-the-second news coverage directly or indirectly to the presence of superhumanity.

BROADCAST MEDIA

Superhumans have had an extreme influence on radio and especially television. Although superhumans appeared in the world before the advent of modern mass television broadcasting, they helped encourage and promote that form of news/entertainment in many ways. Not only do the activities of superhumans — colorfully garbed, dramatically posed, nobly- or villainously-acting — make for fantastic television, but the technological breakthroughs enabled by some superhumans made television widely available, sooner than it would have been in a world without them.

Coverage of superhuman events (mainly superhero-supervillain battles, the bigger and more destructive the better) was restricted to ordinary network and cable news until 1986, when media mogul Thomas Cassidy founded SNN, the Super News Network. SNN's stated aim was to provide news, information, and programming about superhumans and nothing but superhumans 24 hours a day. No matter how dangerous the superbattle, or how distant the battlefield, SNN promised to

cover it for breathless audiences back home! Most media analysts scoffed at this pledge and predicted the network would fold within two years, but as usual, Cassidy surprised the pundits and made SNN a major success. Local cable companies signed on in droves, and SNN had no difficulty finding subjects to cover. In addition to footage of breaking news, by 1991 it had branched out into filming and producing its own documentaries and shows on superhuman-related subjects. Its series include *Behind The Mask* (in-depth reports on and interviews with superhumans who have publicly-known identities) and *SuperHistory* (a scholarly examination of superhumans' influence on world history and events since 1938). Another show, *Gadgets*, is a favorite of techno-geeks everywhere.

So successful has SNN become that in 1998 Cassidy created a second network, SNN Sidekick, to provide even more coverage of superhuman-related issues. Sidekick fills at least half of its programming time with older documentaries and programs ("classics," in the network's parlance), but has also established some new shows to try to attract new viewers. Its superhuman talk show, *HeroTalk*, hosted by journalist Carol Rydell and comedian Michael McClarren, has become a major hit and usually has at least one or two superheroes as guests each week.

PRINT MEDIA

Newspapers and magazines have counted on superheroes and villains to increase circulation and attract readers for sixty years, and that shows no signs of changing anytime soon. The papers regularly provide front-page coverage for superhuman-related events, and the number of glossy magazines devoted to superheroes (and even villains, sometimes!) has grown beyond count. More than a few superheroes (or superteams) have professionally-produced fan magazines devoted solely to them and their activities. Sapphire, for example, is the subject of at least three exclusive magazines (one produced by her own marketing department).

Of all the magazines devoted to supers, by far the most successful, and best-known, is *SuperWorld Magazine*. Begun as a newsletter in 1972 by a teenage superhero fan named David Farquar, its witty writing and superb photographs quickly attracted enough circulation for Farquar to turn it into a professional magazine. These days the typical issue is 128 pages long, loaded with full-color pictures (many obtained by SuperWorld's daredevil photographers and available nowhere else), and contain-

MIRANDA CHEN

8	STR	10	DEX
8	CON	8	BODY
12	INT	10	EGO
15	PRE	14	COM
2	PD	2	ED
2	SPD	4	REC
20	END	20	STUN

Abilities: CK: Millennium City 11-, KS: The Superhuman World 11-, PS: Broadcast Reporter 13-, PS: Writing 11-, 20 points' worth of Contacts in the media

Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Greedy And Opportunistic

Notes: Miranda Chen is a reporter who works for WRJK in Millennium City, covering the "superhuman beat." She's mainly in it for the money and the opportunities for advancement; she hates having to risk her life getting too close to super-battles and the like. If she had the chance to make a "big break" for herself by revealing a hero's Secret Identity or the like, she'd probably take it.

JIMMY DUGAN

8 STR 10 DEX
 10 CON 10 BODY
 13 INT 10 EGO
 20 PRE 10 COM
 3 PD 3 ED
 2 SPD 4 REC
 20 END 25 STUN

Abilities: CK: Chicago 8-, CK: Millennium City 11-, CK: New York City 11-, CK: San Francisco 8-, KS: The Superhuman World 13-, PS: Interviewing 13-, PS: Print Reporter 14-, PS: Writing 13-, 30 points' worth of Contacts in the media, Life Support (Diminished Eating: Can Survive On Cigarettes, Coffee, And Whiskey for a week)

Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Will Risk Life And Limb To Get A Good Story

Notes: In 1973, Jimmy Dugan was a young journalism graduate looking for something better than an obituary beat. By dumb luck he happened to meet David Farquar in a bar in Philadelphia, and the two hit it off. Farquar ended up hiring Dugan as SuperWorld Magazine's first full-time reporter. Dugan's worked for the magazine ever since, making a great living and having the time of his life. He'll risk his neck for any good story, has suffered numerous injuries (and near-death incidents) on the job, and has a well-deserved reputation as a mostly harmless pest with a penchant for ridiculous questions ("Defender! How did it feel just now when Firewing blasted you from the sky?").

ing a variety of in-depth and "fluff" pieces about superhumans. Its *Headquarters Interview*, featuring detailed questions asked of supers in their home environs, is immensely popular; even most supervillains regard it as a mark of distinction to be asked to participate in an HI interview. (On the other hand, SuperWorld's efforts to "HI" Dr. Destroyer during the 1980s resulted only in the deaths of three veteran reporters.) Farquar Publishing also periodically produces *Uncaped*, a *Playboy*-style magazine featuring female superhumans.

Tabloid papers such as *The National Inquisition* cover superhumans extensively, though usually from a rather lurid or extravagant perspective. For example, the list of superheroines described as "about to give birth to Grond's love child!" is too long to print here. Tabloid stories frequently link superheroes with other media or political stars romantically — though in the tabloids' defense, occasionally those stories are true. Most superhumans just laugh the tabloids off, but a few (mostly villains) have gotten upset enough about them to trash newspapers' offices and assault (and even kill) reporters and publishers.

ENTERTAINMENT

Superhumans are often entertaining all by themselves, but that hasn't stopped Hollywood and the publishing industry from trying to exploit them for even more entertainment potential.

MOVIES AND TELEVISION

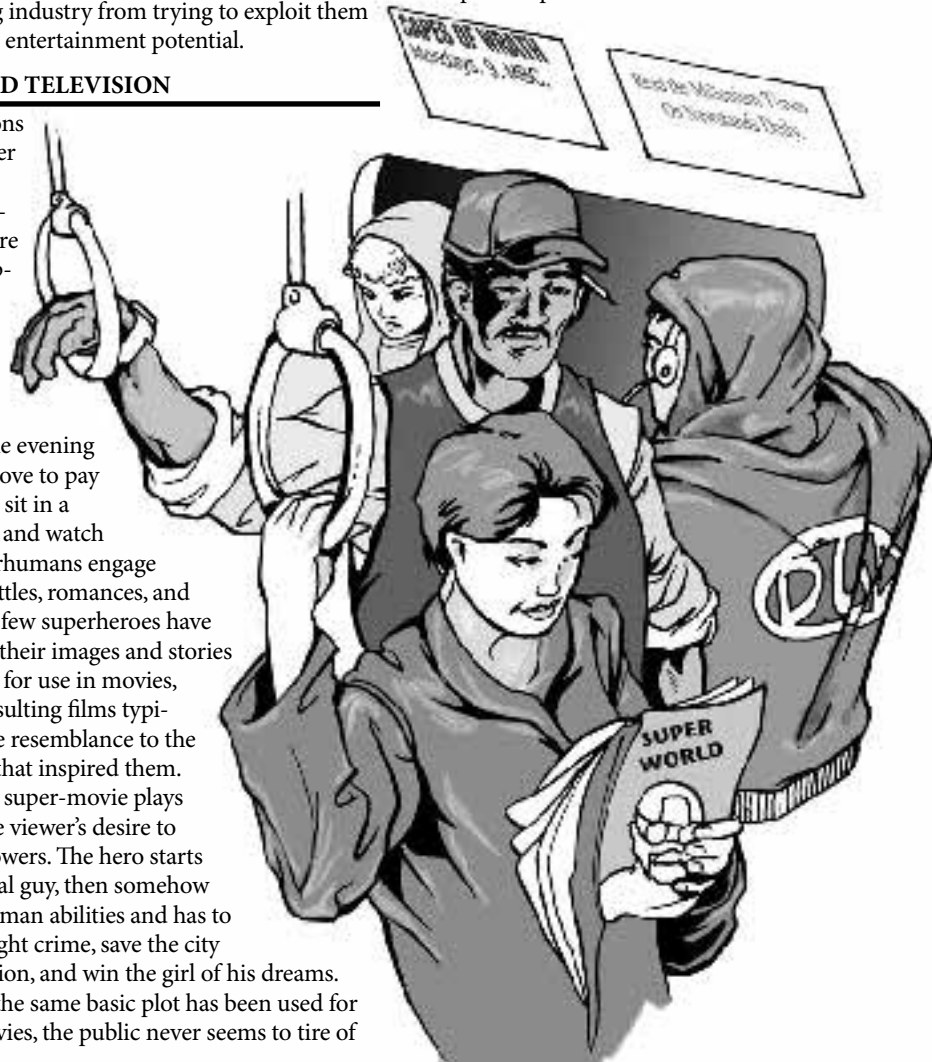
For reasons no one has ever managed to explain, superhero movies are extremely popular. Despite the fact that real-life super-battles are regularly featured on the evening news, people love to pay eight bucks to sit in a movie theater and watch fictional superhumans engage in fictional battles, romances, and adventures. A few superheroes have even licensed their images and stories to Hollywood for use in movies, though the resulting films typically bear little resemblance to the actual events that inspired them.

A typical super-movie plays on the average viewer's desire to have super-powers. The hero starts out as a normal guy, then somehow gains superhuman abilities and has to use them to fight crime, save the city from destruction, and win the girl of his dreams. Even though the same basic plot has been used for dozens of movies, the public never seems to tire of it.

Superheroes appear on television shows, too. Several sitcoms, including *The Spectacular Squadron*, *Lightning Man* And *Falcon Girl*, *Capes And Cows*, and *SludgeMan* poke gentle fun at costumed crimefighters and their adversaries; occasionally real superheroes make a brief guest appearance (and donate their acting fees to charity). One soap opera, *To Save The World*, features the adventures and travails of a fictional superhero team called Justice Force Omega; tens of thousands of "TSTW" fans tune in every day to find out things like whether Templar will keep the Pharoah from destroying New York and discover that his teammate Charisma is carrying his baby. A few dramas, including the multiple Emmy Award-winning *Walking Gods*, take a more serious look at the heroes that protect Earth.

COMIC BOOKS

Comic books are a popular entertainment medium in the Champions Universe, though superhero books compete with many others, such as mystery and romance, for shelf space and consumer dollars. About half the superhero comics use fictional heroes, while the others feature real-life heroes who have licensed their images and adventures to the publisher. In some parts of the Superhuman World, whose book outsells who else's book is a major point of pride — and sometimes the cause of jealousy-inspired super-battles.





ART AND MUSIC

Superheroes have had relatively little impact on art and music (moreso on the latter), though the technological innovations they have invented or inspired have improved artists' abilities to create their work in many cases. Several museums have featured exhibits of art by or about superhumans; a display of Ironclad's etch-sculptings was a major hit for the Millennium City Museum of Modern Art in early 2002, for example. A few superhumans, such as Sapphire, are famous for their artistic accomplishments.

SPORTS

Professional sports haven't been changed much by the advent of superhumanity; all major professional sports organizations have rules in place preventing superhumans from participating on league teams, for obvious reasons. Most professional athletes are Skilled or Competent-level humans; a character with even Legendary-level Characteristics and Skills is likely to dominate any sport he participates in, and a true superhuman could be an entire team by himself! Though several high-profile criminals and crimefighters have backgrounds as professional or amateur athletes (such as former pro-football star Reggie Morgan, who became the Scarlet Shield in the 1970s), no professional athlete has publicly attempted to continue his career after acquiring superpowers, or begin

a career with innate superhuman abilities. This has not, of course, stopped rumors from spreading about particularly successful or talented players.

Still, sports promoters are well aware of the fascination superhumans exert upon the public mind, and have often taken advantage of that through special events. A traveling gymnastics, acrobatics, and track-and-field show was a financial failure in 1975 despite the participation of several notable supers. The past two decades have seen several charity sporting events pitting one superhero team against another to raise money for charity, most notably the annual softball tournament played between teams of superhumans and Major League baseball players and sponsored by a major soft drink company in southern California every February. Inevitably these events make a lot of money, but almost as inevitably they seem to attract supervillain attacks. A few superhuman boxing matches have also taken place.

Some media moguls have floated the idea of establishing a superhuman-only league for some sport (usually football or wrestling). So far this concept hasn't taken off for the simple reason that there aren't enough superhumans with appropriate powers (mainly super-strength and toughness) to sustain them. A tabloid once accused Thomas Cassidy of researching ways to induce superhuman strength in test subjects so he could create a "Super-

THE ARENA

Since the 1970s, rumors have persisted about a secret network of underground pit-fighting competitions involving superhumans. Dubbed "the Arena," even though it supposedly involves multiple locations in major cities, the circuit is said to be run by certain illicit promoters for the benefit of wealthy, jaded patrons who enjoy watching superhumanly-powerful fighters smash and crush each other. Most of the fighters are relatively low-powered superhumans (though they still put any normal human boxer to shame), but occasionally a tale leaks out about someone like Herculan or Grond getting involved for a big cut of the proceeds. To date, no law enforce-

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ment officers have learned anything concrete about the Arena, and most dismiss it as an urban legend.

Sports Network,” but no evidence of these charges was ever provided and they were retracted after Cassidy filed a libel suit.

Millennium City, which lost most of its professional sports venues in 1992, retains the original Detroit teams and names in all four major sports: the Tigers (baseball), Lions (football), Pistons (basketball) and Red Wings (hockey), who won the Stanley Cup in 2002. Vibora Bay has major league teams in both football (the Hammerheads, who have an unfortunate history as “lovable losers” in the AFC East) and basketball (the Bobcats, who have endured several years of mediocrity since a strong run in the early '90s), but only a Triple-A level baseball team and no hockey franchise.

THE INTERNET

Superhumans are immensely popular in the world of cyberspace. Mailing lists, chat rooms, and websites devoted to them have multiplied beyond count in the past ten years. Most are devoted to a single super, or single superteam, but some cover the entire gamut of superhuman activity.

The largest and most popular of the superhuman websites is probably Super_Talk.Com, started in 1994 by two college students, Mark Binnaker and Sheila Swinson. Although they began it initially out of their love for the subject, their often-irreverent take on things, and seeming ability to get “scoops” before major news organizations, attracted both fans and investors. They have since parleyed their hobby into a business that employs a dozen people and pays them handsome salaries. Super_Talk.Com remains the first, and often only, stop on the World Wide Web for many fans of superheroes.

Fans whose tastes run to the darker often prefer VU.Net (www.vu.net). VU stands for “Villainy Unbound,” the name of a print magazine once produced by the website’s owners but long since discontinued in favor of Web-only publishing. As the title indicates, VU.Net focuses almost entirely on supervillains. Motivated mainly by some unquenched spirit of adolescent rebellion and anarchistic loathing for respectable society, VU.Net’s writers laud the (relatively non-violent) accomplishments of supervillains, write favorable feature articles about them, and so forth.

Some sites concentrate on a specific aspect of the Superhuman World. The best known of these is SuperRomance.Com, which tells its readers which heroes are romantically involved with each other (or with movie stars), and which super-couples are in danger of breaking up. It’s a favorite site for people who like to gossip about hero-villain illicit affairs, whether Defender likes Sapphire or Witchcraft better, and who was seen having dinner at Recherche with Firebrand last night.



SUPERHUMANS AND TECHNOLOGY



Perhaps no other field of human endeavor has been influenced by the existence of superhumans as technology. Willingly or unwillingly, the scientifically-oriented heroes and villains of the past sixty years have made contributions to mankind's technical knowledge that have improved the capabilities and standards of living of nations and people around the globe.

Some examples of twenty-first century technological advances that have resulted, directly or indirectly, from the presence or efforts of superhumans include:

- **Space stations.** Since 1996 UNTIL has had a fully-functioning space station, GATEWAY, orbiting Earth. Although its primary purpose is to remain alert for signs of alien invasion or like threats, as the name indicates it's also humanity's first true step out of the cradle and into the wide galactic world. America's own orbiting facility, the US Space Station, is scheduled to come online in 2005, and UNTIL has plans for at least three more.

- **High-tech fibers and materials** discovered by superhumans, and scientists working with their data, beginning in the 1960s have led to stronger and more comfortable bulletproof vests, lightweight armored panels for military vehicles, more crash-proof civilian cars, and many similar advances.

- **Communications** has advanced significantly. Throughout the United States and Europe, and in many other developed or wealthy countries as well, virtually everyone has access to computers, cellular phones, and similar devices that are easily carried, lightweight, fast, high-memory, extremely user friendly, and have extraordinarily long battery lives. Even in Third World countries, ownership of cell phones and computers may exceed 50% of the population, thanks to advanced manufacturing processes and materials.

- **Internal combustion vehicles and manufacturing** are much cleaner and more environmentally friendly than the machines of old. Many other strides have been made to clean up and repair damage to the environment. The superhero Technomancer has even experimented with quasi-magical robots that transform pollutants into building materials and other useful substances.

- **Advances in medicine and genetics** have eliminated, or diminished the impact of, many diseases. Cybernetic technology first developed for powered armor and similar super-technology has been adapted to devices that allow people with spinal injuries to walk again, and people with neurological disorders to function without significant impairment.

- **Travel**, whether by air, water, or land, is quicker and safer than ever before. Flights from the East Coast of the United States to the West Coast can be comfortably completed in but two hours in some cases.

The best example of the possibilities of modern technology is Millennium City. Built from the ground up since 1992, it incorporates dozens of technological innovations that have yet to propagate out to the rest of the world due to infrastructural, logistical, and economic reasons. (See page 76 for more information.) For the most part, the technological innovations wrought by superhumanity are most evident in the United States and the First World, but more than a few have reached poorer, less developed countries as well.

The Limits Of Technology Distribution

Despite these advances, the most sophisticated super-technology — the best powered armor suits, time travel devices, teleporters, and the like — usually remains restricted to its inventor (or finder) alone, to a small group of people, or to a specific government, instead of propagating out to the public as a whole. Leaving aside the fact that some of this technology (e.g., military-grade weaponry) isn't appropriate for public purchase, there are several reasons why not all super-technology becomes widely distributed.

First, not all "supertechnology" really works, or works exactly as it seems to. Instead, it serves as a proxy or "conduit" for *true* superpowers possessed by the inventor. Thus, while the device appears to function for the person who built it, it won't work for anyone else.

Similarly, sometimes even when an inventor truly creates a piece of supertechnology, he does so through a once-in-a-lifetime set of circumstances he cannot reproduce, making the mass manufacturing of the device impossible. In the same way the ambient magic permeating the Champions Universe can give rise to the creation of superhumans, sometimes it makes possible the creation of otherwise impossible technology. Or it may be that the inventor has a superhuman "spark of genius" once, and then can't ever figure out how to do it again, even through reverse engineering.

Third, even when supertechnology can be mass produced, it is usually hideously expensive to do so. The parts and raw materials required may be unique, or nearly so, and the technical expertise can be even rarer. After all, many super-inventors are

SOURCES OF SUPER-TECHNOLOGY

Not every character who uses super-technology actually built it himself. Besides invention, Champions Universe characters could acquire super-technology in several ways:

Aliens: Sentient alien species exist who are more technologically advanced than humanity. They might give super-technology to a human for their own inscrutable purposes, or a character could salvage systems from a crashed starship.

Find it: A character might stumble across super-technology somehow. Maybe it's left over from a super-battle, or somehow "escaped" from one of ARGENT's laboratories. Naturally, the inventor/real owner probably wants it back....

Get someone else to make it: A character who knows a technologically-oriented superhero like Defender or Juryrig could persuade him to make something for the character. A villain, or a desperate hero, could hire an underworld armorer, like the infamous Wayland Talos of Millennium City, to make super-tech devices for him... though "help" like that usually comes with a price beyond mere money.

Steal it: Quite a few villains, like Ankylosaur, Blowtorch, and Devastator, got their start by stealing super-tech

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from someone (typically a large organization like the United States government, VIPER, or UNTIL). A hero, conversely, might steal from a villain or villainous agency. In either case, the victim of the theft could end up Hunting the character to recover its property.

TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

Champions Universe characters who want to build super-technology devices themselves should consider buying appropriate Science Skills, such as the ones listed below, in addition to Skills like Computer Programming, Electronics, Inventor, and Systems Operation.

Density Physics: For building devices that

true geniuses, and sometimes mad to boot; getting even a roomful of ordinary scientists and engineers to duplicate their efforts is a difficult proposition. Only fanatical and dedicated researchers can create new super-technologies in many cases.

Fourth, to some super-inventors, particularly villains, there's no desire to share their technology, even if they can. A certain amount of power and prestige comes from being "the only one" to have a particular weapon, or who can make a certain laboratory process work effectively and cheaply. Making the technology publicly available, even for huge sums of money, spoils the fun. Even if the inventor himself would prefer to distribute his creations, the person or government employing him may have other ideas.

To some extent, governments can avoid these restrictions. Powerful nations, such as the United States or Great Britain, have huge sums of money, well-stocked research facilities, and corps of brilliant scientists at their command — and if they work on something long enough, they may achieve results that would elude lesser strivers. For example, some Champions Universe governments have fielded units of soldiers equipped with low-strength powered armor (or at least high-tech defensive gear), made use of advanced spacecraft, and equipped special military and paramilitary forces with blasters and similar super-weapons. But even then, they often prefer to keep their super-technology to themselves as much as possible, due to the strategic and tactical advantages it provides.

Technological Superiority

Governments, scholars, and superhero fans spend a lot of time discussing and debating who has the most advanced technology on Earth. Given the secrecy which shrouds many superhuman activities, no analysis of the subject can ever claim to be truly accurate, but the following general parameters seem to most experts to be well-supported by the existing evidence.

General consensus maintains that of all entities on Earth, Dr. Destroyer has the most advanced technology. Mechanon may be his superior in robotics, and Teleios in the biological sciences, but the diabolical Doctor is, overall, the most technologically-advanced individual on Earth. He possesses computers, weapons, operational bases, and vehicles that are, by most experts' estimation, five to ten years (if not more) ahead of most other people and institutions.

Destroyer's rival Mechanon, probably the single most advanced robot on Earth, barely lags behind the Doctor in most respects. He can create robots so sophisticated they're almost indistinguishable from true humans, build devastatingly powerful weapons, exert fundamental changes on discrete geological areas (e.g., cause new islands to rise from the ocean floor), and accomplish similar effects.

In the fields of genetics and biology generally, the villain Teleios stands head and shoulders above the rest of the world. His seemingly effortless ability to clone humans (normal or super), interbreed life forms, and create new life forms in the laboratory

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makes him a definite threat to be reckoned with. Even Destroyer seems to accord him a grudging respect.

The villainous organizations VIPER and ARGENT both possess significant amounts of super-technology, usually developed by their teams of well-paid scientists but sometimes stolen or obtained by other means. They are roughly equal to each other, and both slightly ahead of their closest law-abiding equivalent, UNTIL.

The industrialist superhero Tetsuronin (Iron Samurai) of Japan, so called in honor of the World War II hero of the same name, is often considered the most technologically advanced crimefighter in the world. In sophistication and overall power, his armor is significantly better than that of Defender, Stalwart, Devastator, or even the Warlord (whose expertise at developing weapons systems is in some ways almost on par with Destroyer). Tetsuronin has shared many of his technological innovations with the Japanese and American governments without any thought of compensation. Defender of the Champions, Electron of the Justice Squadron (former sidekick and heir to the super-science secrets of the late hero Digitak), Cannonade, and Technon are other superheroes who are also highly regarded for their technological expertise.

Among world governments, the United States (and its institutions, such as the military and PRIMUS) enjoys a clear technological superiority.



UNCANNY METALS

The scientists and engineers of the Champions Universe have created and discovered some amazing metals and alloys with unusual properties that make them perfect for super-technology.

Questionite is an amazingly durable, yet unusually light, metal found only in certain rare deposits. Between its rarity and usefulness, it's incredibly expensive. Questionite armor and machine parts are extremely difficult to damage; blades made of questionite can cut through just about anything and never seem to lose their edge.

Neutronium is even more durable than questionite, but much, much heavier — so heavy that an average trained athlete can't easily lift a blade made of the stuff. Those who possess neutronium claim it comes from dead stars, though scientists have pointed out it's not nearly dense enough.

Kendrium, an alloy invented by Professor Darryl Kendrick, mixes high-grade titanium steel with certain chemicals and other substances (Prof. Kendrick, who's patented kendrium, won't reveal the exact mix) to create a metal that's much stronger than steel, but not much heavier.

Though it loses a few of its technical secrets to theft or industrial espionage, it retains more than enough of them to give it a significant edge in both commercial and military technology. Of all the nations on Earth, only the United States has the financial wherewithal and technological knowledge to build its own space station, plan manned trips to Mars, equip a permanent (albeit small) force of soldiers with powered armor, occasionally outfit law enforcement personnel with similar types of armor), or maintain an anti-supercrime agency as large as PRIMUS.

Astute observers have noted that no matter what the type of technology, there's usually at least one supervillain — if not more — at or near the top of the list of "who has the world's best." The generally-accepted explanation for this is that supervillains don't have to contend with budget restrictions, bureaucracies, approval boards, or safety restrictions. They can pursue their studies and their work with a fanatical obsession, untrammelled by the types of interference nations and corporations suffer from. Some superheroes, of course, have much the same freedom (if not always the same obsessions), but nevertheless typically lag behind villains due to their refusal to engage in unethical scientific practices (like human testing).

Continued from last page

alter the density of a person or object (*i.e.*, that provide Density Increase, Desolidification, or powers with similar special effects).

Dimensional Engineering: Necessary for building devices that breaches dimensional barriers, or accesses extra-dimensional energies (*e.g.*, most teleporters, time travel devices, and the like, not to mention certain kinds of weapons).

Force Field Physics: For building devices that use or generate force fields (*e.g.*, defensive devices using Force Field or Force Wall).

Gravitics: For building devices that manipulate gravity to achieve certain effects (*e.g.*, some Telekinesis and Flight devices).

Psionic Engineering: Necessary for building devices that provide psionic or psychic abilities (*e.g.*, most gadgets built with Mental Powers, excluding Mental Defense).

Size Physics: Necessary for building devices that alter the size of a person or object (*e.g.*, that provide Growth, Shrinking, or powers with similar special effects).

SUPERHUMAN AND SUBCULTURES



PROFESSOR BEN E. SCOTT

5 STR	8 DEX
8 CON	8 BODY
18 INT	12 EGO
16 PRE	8 COM
1 PD	2 ED
1 SPD	3 REC
16 END	15 STUN

Abilities: Computer Programming 13-, KS: History 11-, KS: Superhuman World 16-, KS: Superpowers 16-, KS: World Religion 13-, PS: Professor 14-, SS: Biology 11-, SS: Chemistry 11-, SS: Physics 11-, SS: Sociology 13-, Fringe Benefit: Tenure

Disadvantages: Age (60+), Physical Limitation: debilitating injuries suffered during the destruction of Detroit, Psychological Limitation: Intense Intellectual Curiosity

Notes: Once a sociologist studying religion in modern society, Ben E. Scott became fascinated and intrigued by superhumans, eventually switching his studies to focus on them instead. For the past 20 years he's been one of the world's foremost authorities on superhumans, their powers, and their role in society. Based at prestigious Duke University, Professor Scott is frequently consulted by governments, corporations, news organizations, the police, and others with an interest in superhuman affairs.

In addition to their broad influence on government, technology, and the like, superhumans have also had a marked effect on many subcultures and discrete segments of society. "The touch of the superhuman," to use the term coined by Professor Ben E. Scott, often affects many different aspects of peoples' lives.

THE SUPERHUMAN WORLD

Superhumans, in fact, form their own subculture, generally referred to (both by them and by commentators) as "the Superhuman World." In much the same way that politicians or movie stars tend to move in their own circles and interact primarily with others of the same profession, superhumans tend to interact with each other a lot — more than their relatively limited numbers would seem to allow for, statistically. Somehow, psychologically and socially if not physically, their superhumanity sets them apart from normal humanity. They inevitably encounter one another (sometimes with violent repercussions), become involved romantically with one another, socialize together, and simply get drawn together due to common pursuits, beliefs, goals, and opinions.

The Knowledge Skill *The Superhuman World* represents knowledge of this subculture and the people in it. Many (though by no means all) superhumans have it (at least on an 8- roll), representing their experiences with others of their kind. Hardcore superhero (or villain) fans often have it as well, due to their intense interest in their hobby. A Champions Universe character can make a KS: The Superhuman World roll to know basic information about another superhuman's powers, activities, predilections, *modus operandi*, and perhaps even weaknesses. (See page 63 of *Champions* for more information on this Skill.)

THE BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL WORLD

When superhumans first appeared, business took little note of them — there was, after all, a war to be fought. But in the post-war consumer boom, it soon occurred to advertising executives and manufacturers that perhaps there *was* a place for superhumans in the business world. The first superhuman recruited to endorse a product — famed war veteran Shenandoah, for Goldenrod Cigarettes in 1953 — was soon followed by a flood of popular heroes willing to cash in on their abilities. It

was this trend, as it increased through the 1960s and '70s, that eventually led to the passage of laws allowing superhumans to transact business in their costumed identities. (Prior to those laws, superhuman product spokesmen were typically paid in cash... and woe to the businessman who tried to cheat one.) Today, some superheroes command six-figure salaries for long-term advertising deals, though many (including the Champions and the Sentinels) prefer not to sully themselves by cashing in on their heroism.

The biggest superhuman influence on business wasn't nearly so visible to the public, though. Super-technology, and reasearch into superpowers, improved many manufacturing processes, products, and business methods, thus helping to fuel the late twentieth century American economy. Thanks to superhumans, people could get better goods quicker and cheaper than ever before.

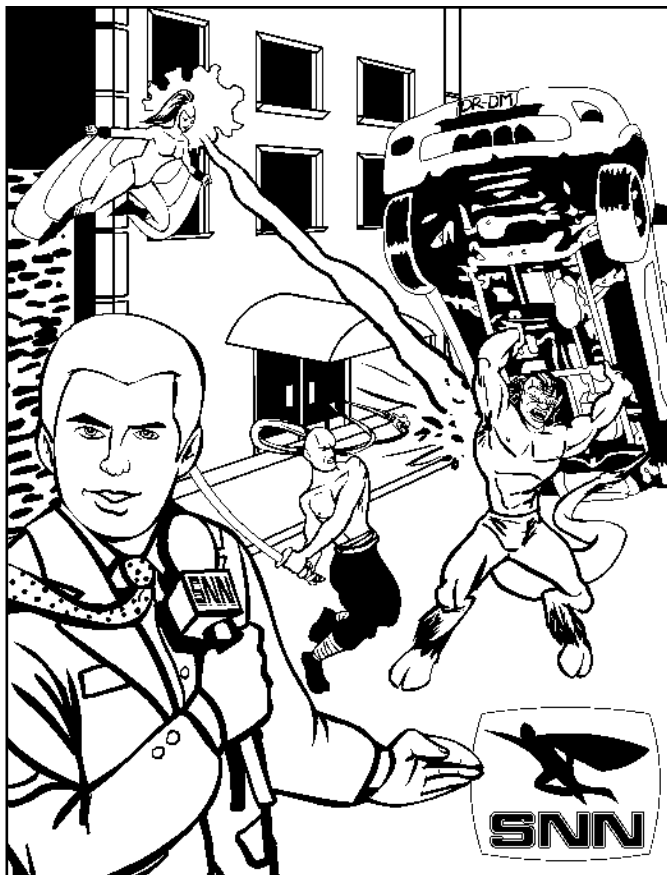
Beginning in the mid-1960s, a few businesses experimented with hiring superhumans as full-time employees. In a few instances, these "company supers" played the part of corporate do-gooder, acting more or less as normal superheroes but constantly representing, and singing the praises of, their employers — the good publicity from the hero's actions, in theory, made the corporation itself look good. In other cases the supers were hired specifically to use their powers to help corporate projects. For example, in the early 1970s, the Donatelli Services, Inc. built the "Atlas" suit of powered armor and hired a man named Victor Scanlon to wear it. As Atlas, Scanlon helped Donatelli erect buildings and dams, demolish old buildings, clear land, and perform many other tasks. Although the practice of retaining corporate supers generally fell out of favor in the 1980s due to liability concerns, some businesses, such as the Binary Corporation (which sponsors the Millennium City superhero Binary Man), still try it as a way of garnering favorable publicity.

Since the 1980s, finance-savvy superheroes have been infiltrating the business world in other respects. Rather than sell their inventions to corporations for money, technology-oriented superhumans have taken stock or company jobs as payment instead, leading to more than one corporation with a superhuman on its board of directors. Instead of going to work for a large company, some superhumans have started their own businesses, preferring to cash in on their powers rather than spend time fighting crime. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these companies is Yesterday Delivery ("When you need it there yesterday!"), operated in New York City by a speedster named Roberta Yelnofsky.

FRANKLIN STONE

The world of business and finance is filled with many rich, powerful people — men and women of discipline and ruthless ambition. But even among this group of exceptional individuals, Franklin Stone stands out. Founder, primary owner, president, and CEO of Advanced Concepts Industries (or “ACI,” as it’s universally known), Stone is one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the world — and he wants to be wealthier and more powerful still. Born to working-class parents in Brooklyn, New York, Stone used his native intelligence and drive to work his way through college and the Wharton School of Business, and then to found ACI in 1973 and captain it to the forefront of world commerce.

Despite its name, ACI does more than heavy manufacturing — in fact, it has its fingers in just about every important economic pie there is. Divisions or subsidiaries of ACI are involved in high tech, mining, oil, banking and finance, shipping, various service industries (including the Ace Burger fast food chain), construction, and lobbying. There isn’t a field of business out there that Stone isn’t willing to invest in, and even try to dominate, if he feels there’s profit to be made. He didn’t get where he is today by hesitating — or by letting little things like business ethics or the law interfere with a deal when he could find a safe way around them.



work for their countries have simply gone to work for themselves. Shapeshifting mercenaries like Masquerade or Menagerie command top dollar for their ability to infiltrate competitors’ facilities, steal valuable data or equipment, and escape undetected. Rumors in the Superhuman World claim both the Americans and the Chinese still use superhumans for traditional intelligence-gathering purposes, but there’s no solid proof of this.

THE ESPIONAGE WORLD

Although the earliest superheroes had relatively little involvement with espionage, by the mid-1950s and ’60s both the West and the Soviet bloc had recruited superhumans to help them fight the Cold War. American and British heroes such as Reflection, Bearcat, Shadowwalker, and Ricochet were involved in covert operations opposed by Soviet superhumans like Red Eagle, Checkmate, and the Swan. These conflicts — usually competitions to accomplish (or prevent the accomplishment of) some mission objective rather than true super-battles — mostly took place in the cities of Europe, though the FBI occasionally came across Russian efforts to plant super-spies in American society. (How many of those super-agents, most the products of a Soviet superhuman-soldier program called Directorate Black-12, might have escaped the notice of American authorities remains unknown.) Some died or retired, only to be replaced by other agents as dedicated to the cause as they.

As the Cold War gradually slowed, and then came to an abrupt halt with the collapse of the Soviet Union, superhuman involvement with espionage mostly shifted to the arena of industrial espionage — supers who would once have gone to

THE LAW ENFORCEMENT WORLD

Law enforcement has had to react to the existence of superhumans in two ways. The first, of course, is working with superheroes to combat crime, whether those heroes are sanctioned or unsanctioned. Approve or disapprove of superheroes as they may, police departments across the United States and the world have learned to live with, and adapt to the presence of, superheroes within their jurisdictions.

More importantly, law enforcement has had to develop procedures, tactics, and equipment to cope with superhuman criminals — since superheroes aren’t always available to deal with supervillains. Most major metropolitan police departments have created what are generally known as MARS (Metahuman Activities Response Squad) units. Equipped with powerful technology to capture or stop supervillains — sometimes including low-strength powered armor suits — and trained to fight superhuman foes, MARS cops risk their lives

MAJOR CORPORATIONS OF THE CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE

In addition to ACI and the Binary Corporation, some of the most important businesses in the Champions Universe (based on size, wealth, power, and/or innovative resources) include:

- Adair Publishing (publishing, television, mass media)
- American Business Machinery (various fields)
- Cambridge Biotechnologies (biotechnology)
- Drake-Victoria, Inc. (defense contracting)
- Duchess Industries (various fields)
- Fordham ChemTech (various fields)
- Genex Laboratories (biotechnology)
- Harmon Industries (various fields)
- Ironwood Industries (aerospace, defense contracting)
- Kenwell Corporation (light and heavy manufacturing)
- Pharos Industries (various fields)
- ProStar (high tech, software)
- Regent Energy (energy, communications)
- Skyvox (high tech, software)
- Tychon-Maxwell Inc. (various fields)
- Whitcomb Corporation (various fields)

MARS EQUIPMENT

Here are a few examples of equipment issues to typical MARS units:

MARS Capturefoam

Grenade Launcher: This weapon fires grenades containing capturefoam, a quick-hardening chemical substance strong enough to prevent most targets from moving.

Entangle 4d6, 8 DEF, Area Of Effect (6" Radius; +1) (120 Active Points); OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-½), 8 Charges (-½). Total cost: 40 points.

MARS Sniper Rifle:

Equipped with high-powered ammunition specifically designed to hurt injury-resistant superhumans, these rifles are only used when the department considers them absolutely necessary.

RKA 4d6, Increased Maximum Range (x5, or 2,250"; +¼), No Range Modifier (+½) (105 Active Points); OAF (-1), Two-Handed Weapon (-½), 8 Charges (-½). Total cost: 35 points.

MARS Stunner Pistol:

MARS cops are often issued this sidearm for use in situations where the need to prevent harm to innocents from misses and ricochets is paramount.

EB 8d6, NND (defense is Power Defense; +1) (80 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1). Total cost: 27 points.

every day to save innocent citizens from the likes of Bulldozer and the Ultimates. Though some experts have raised serious questions as to MARS units' track records (one went so far as to describe them as "the biggest drain on police resources for the least gain of any unit in the force"), MARS officers proudly point to the stacks of thank-you letters they've received from grateful citizens and the many awards for bravery and heroism lining their squadroom walls.

THE MARTIAL WORLD

Legends have credited martial artists with superhuman powers for years. For example, during the Boxer Rebellion, some martial artists claimed the ability to deflect bullets and perform similar wondrous feats. Most such claims proved to be idle bragging or fancy tale-telling, but since the advent of superpowers in the world, many martial artists have demonstrated amazing abilities that were once only the stuff of stories. Most students of the fighting arts remain perfectly normal people, of course. But through the study of ancient mystic martial disciplines, control of their *ch'i*, intense physical training, and other means, more than one martial artist has developed superpowers and used them to fight crime... or commit it. (See *Champions*, pages 73-74, for more information about superheroic martial artists and their possible powers.)

THE TOURNAMENT OF THE DRAGON

Among the most powerful and skilled martial artists, both normal and superhuman, rumors circulate about a fighting tournament like no other — *Bisai Lóng*, the Tournament of the Dragon, it is called. Supposedly the masters who hold the Tournament, the enigmatic Watchers of the Dragon, call together the greatest martial artists from around the world every sixty years to compete for the coveted title of Champion. The winner, it is said, receives not only great prestige, but the blessings of the gods themselves... and the chance to fight an ancient evil known only as the Death Dragon.

Lately the rumors concerning the Tournament have become more common, and more urgent. In the alleys of Shanghai, the streets of San Francisco's Chinatown, and the dojos of Millennium City, the best of the best whisper that it is nearly time for the Tournament to be held once more. Who will be chosen to compete? And what fate truly awaits the winner?

YENGTAO TEMPLE

Of equal importance to many martial artists are the legends of Yengtao Temple. Long ago, it is said, a great temple was founded in a hidden valley in the mountains of China. The masters there possessed wisdom and fighting skills greater than those of any other warriors, but would only teach students who were truly worthy, in body and mind, of their instruction. With their mystic arts they kept Yengtao concealed from the outside world, allowing only those with the necessary discipline and skill to find their way there.

Once he found his way to Yengtao, a humble and deserving student could study any martial skills he wished. Supposedly a student could learn any fighting style ever used anywhere in the world at Yengtao Temple, even if that style had long since ceased to exist in the world outside. The best of the students could progress further, learning special mystic martial arts powers, advanced fighting maneuvers, and even, according to some tales, Oriental wizardry. But only those who completed the courses of instruction established for them by Yengtao's masters earned the right to wear its two symbols, the Sapphire Phoenix and the Cherry Blossom.

Since the beginning of the Age of Superheroes, several costumed crimefighters, and a few villains as well, have claimed that they once studied at Yengtao. The pulp-era mystery-man who called himself the Cobra once said he possessed the knowledge of Yengtao, and the New York superheroine Fire Blossom, active in the mid-1970s, also displayed abilities that experts say could only have come from Yengtao Temple. In the modern day, the Millennium City superhero Nightwind, his arch-enemy Jade Phoenix, and the Hong Kong superhero known as Jín Lóng Quán ("Golden Dragon Fist"), all claim to have studied at the Temple.

Over the past several years, stories have filtered out of deepest China claiming that at long last, the Yengtao Temple has fallen. Few of these rumors agree on the details; some blame the Death Dragon, some the inscrutable sorcerer Dr. Yin Wu, and some internal conflict between the monks and students. Other stories advance even wilder theories, like the idea that the Temple was merely a front for aliens who have returned to their home planets. Nightwind has supposedly stated privately to the *Champions* that Jade Phoenix destroyed the Temple, but he has refused to confirm this. The truth may come out in time, but for now the fate of Yengtao remains as mysterious as its origins.

Yengtao Abilities

Here's a selection of abilities and powers that characters who have studied at Yengtao Temple, or with fighters who themselves once trained there, might possess. Many others are possible.

The Catapulting Blow of Loc Sun Pak: Fighters use this blow when they need to knock an opponent far away — to gain breathing room or a chance to regroup, for example. It has also proven quite deadly in fights on tall buildings or mountaintops.

HA +6d6, Double Knockback (+¾) (52 Active Points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½). Total cost: 35 points.

The Eagle Claw of Yoon Jung-oh: Yoon Jung-oh reputedly was one of the most skilled generals of the late Koryo Dynasty period in Korea (around the year 1200). He fought valiantly to protect Korea from the Mongol invasions of that time. One of the "weapons" he created to help in his battles was his Eagle Claw technique, with which he could render an enemy weaponless.

+40 STR (40 Active Points); Only Usable With Disarm Maneuver (-2). Total cost: 13 points.

Inohara Kiyomi's Garden of Tranquility: Also known as the Lotus Trance of Inohara Kiyomi, this ability allows the practitioner to enter a trance so deep it approaches a state of suspended animation. Some sages speculate that a few past Yengtao masters may not actually have died, but are instead using the Lotus Trance to remain hidden and "asleep" until awakened by the proper stimulus.

Simulate Death. Total cost: 3 points. (For especially long trances, the GM might also require the character to purchase appropriate forms of Life Support.)

The Seven Strikes of Serenity: This technique, one difficult both to learn and to use, involves quickly striking seven major nerve points in the body. Most practitioners cannot work up the necessary concentration and *ch'i* to do it more than about four times a day. When properly executed, the maneuver paralyzes the victim. (Advanced practitioners may buy off the *Charges* and *Costs Endurance* Limitations, but never the "Only Humans" and "Once Per Hour" Limitations.)

Entangle 5d6, 5 DEF, Takes No Damage From Attacks (+½) (75 Active Points); No Range (-½), Activation Roll 14- (-½), Only Works On Humans (-½), 4 Charges (-1), Costs Endurance (-½), Cannot Be Used On The Same Target More Than Once Per Hour (-½). Total cost: 17 points.

The Sword-Breaking Blow of Xu Peng: As its name suggests, fighters use this attack to shatter an opponent's weapon, rendering him powerless in the face of a skilled martial artist. To break a weapon, the attacker locates the weakest point on the weapon and then applies a powerful strike to that point.

HKA 2d6, Penetrating (+½) (45 Active Points); Only Works On Weapons (-1), No Knockback (-¼), Requires A Weaponsmith Roll (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1). Total cost: 12 points.

The Unfolding Lotus Blossom: This technique is a defensive kata usually performed with a weapon (or even barehanded in the case of advanced practitioners). It enables the practitioner to block *any* physical attack, from arrows to sword blades to the Catapulting Blow of Loc Sun Pak. The Unfolding Lotus Blossom protects the practitioner and anybody else in the same hex with him. Using this technique makes it impossible for the practitioner to attack in the same Phase.

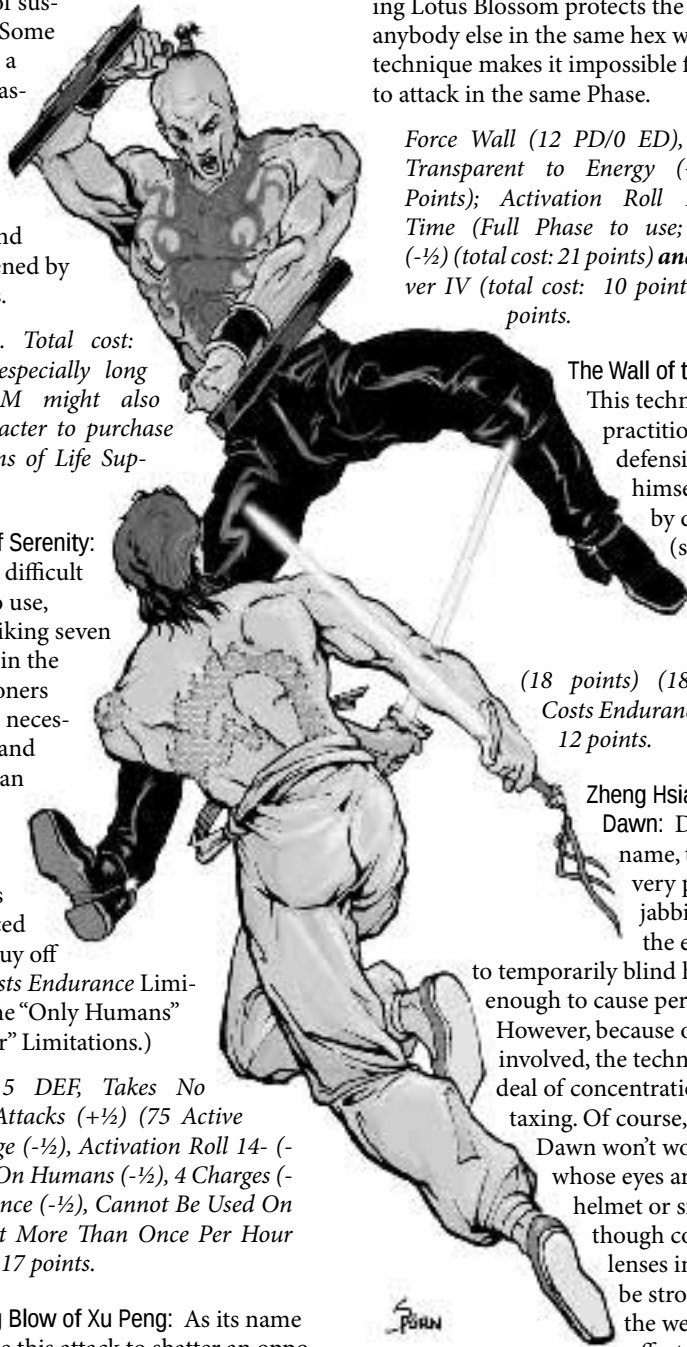
Force Wall (12 PD/0 ED), Hardened (+¼), Transparent to Energy (+½) (52 Active Points); Activation Roll 14- (-½), Extra Time (Full Phase to use; -½), No Range (-½) (total cost: 21 points) and Defense Maneuver IV (total cost: 10 points). Total cost: 31 points.

The Wall of the Heavenly Palace: This technique allows the practitioner to use his *ch'i* defensively to prevent himself from being hurt by debilitating strikes (such as the Harmorious Fist of Okano Akira).

Power Defense (18 points) (18 Active Points); Costs Endurance (-½). Total cost: 12 points.

Zheng Hsiang's Hand of the Dawn: Despite its flowery name, this technique is very prosaic — it involves jabbing the opponent in the eyes hard enough to temporarily blind him, but not hard enough to cause permanent blindness. However, because of the precise aiming involved, the technique requires a great deal of concentration, and is rather taxing. Of course, the Hand of the Dawn won't work on someone whose eyes are covered by a helmet or similar protection, though contact lenses or the lenses in a mask would not be strong enough to shield the wearer from the blow's effects. Also, the blow is useless against foes whose eyes are not placed within a handspan of each other.

Sight Group Flash 8d6, NND (defense is rigid eye protection or oddly-located eyes; +½) (60 Active Points); Activation Roll 14- (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½); No Range (-½). Total cost: 24 points.



SHUGOSHIN

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
24	DEX	42	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack 3½d6
14	COM	2	12-	
10	PD	7		Total: 13 PD (3 rPD)
8	ED	4		Total: 11 ED (3 rED)
5	SPD	16		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
7	REC	0		
40	END	2		
30	STUN	3		Total Characteristic Cost: 108

Movement: Running: 9"/18"
Leaping: 8"/16"

Cost	Powers	END
7	<i>Seishinken</i> (The Spirit Swords): HKA 1d6 (1½d6 with STR); OAF (-1)	2
5	The second <i>Seishinken</i>	2
3	<i>Ghost-Cutting</i> : Affects Desolidified (+½) for first <i>Seishinken</i> ; OAF (must wield both <i>Seishinken</i> ; -1)	1
3	<i>Ghost-Cutting</i> : Affects Desolidified (+½) for second <i>Seishinken</i> ; OAF (must wield both <i>Seishinken</i> ; -1)	1
20	<i>Supreme Cutting</i> : Find Weakness 13- with <i>Seishinken</i> HKA	0
14	<i>Seishinken Kata</i> : HKA 1d6 (1d6+1 with STR), Damage Shield (+½), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); OAF (<i>Seishinken</i> ; -1), Requires A Successful Attack Roll (-½), Power Stops Working Instantly If Character Is Stunned Or Knocked Out (-¼), Not When Grabbed (-¼)	2
16	<i>Seishinhikari</i> (Spirit Light): EB 8d6; OAF (must wield both <i>Seishinken</i> ; -1), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	8
	<i>Martial Arts: Shorinji Kempo</i>	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes	
4	<i>Atemi Strike</i> -1 +1 3½d6 NND (1)	
4	Block +2 +2 Block, Abort	
4	Disarm -1 +1 Disarm, 40 STR	
4	Dodge +0 +5 Dodge all attacks, Abort	
5	Kick -2 +1 10d6 Strike	
4	Punch +0 +2 8d6 Strike	
3	Throw +0 +1 6d6 + v/5; Target Falls	
12	+3 Damage Classes (already added in)	
2	Use Art with Blades, Staff	
15	<i>Supreme Defense</i> : Missile Deflection (all Ranged attacks), Range (adjacent hexes; +½); OAF (must wield both <i>Seishinken</i> ; -1)	0
6	<i>Swift Runner</i> : Running +3" (9" total)	1
5	<i>Strong Leaper</i> : Leaping +5" (8" forward, 4" upward)	1
5	<i>Acrobatic Leaper</i> : Leaping +7" (15" forward, 8" upward); Requires An Acrobatics Roll (-½)	1

6	<i>Sharp Senses</i> : +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0
7	<i>Wire-Fu Wall-Scaling</i> : Clinging (normal STR); Requires An Acrobatics Roll (-½)	0
10	<i>Blessing Of Fate</i> : Luck 2d6	0

Talents

6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
15	Combat Sense 12-
1	Environmental Movement: Icewalking (no penalties on slippery surfaces)
3	Environmental Movement: Supreme Balance (no penalties on narrow surfaces)
3	Resistance (3 points)
3	Simulate Death

Skills

9	+3 with Shorinji Kempo
6	+3 OCV with <i>Seishinken</i> HKA
3	Acrobatics 14-
7	Analyze Style 14-
3	Breakfall 14-
3	Climbing 14-
3	Contortionist 14-
1	CK: Los Angeles 8-
1	CK: Osaka 8-
2	CK: San Francisco 11-
2	CK: Tokyo 11-
2	KS: History 11-
2	KS: Kung Fu/Shorinji Kempo 11-
2	KS: The Martial World 11-
2	KS: The Yakuza 11-
3	Language: English (completely fluent; Japanese is native)
3	Shadowing 12-
3	Stealth 14-
3	Streetwise 13-
10	Two-Weapon Fighting (HTH)
7	WF: Common Martial Arts Weapons, Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Off Hand

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 272

Total Cost: 380

200+ Disadvantages

15	DNPC: Suzy Ishamura (girlfriend) 11- (Normal)
10	Distinctive Features: Style (Not Concealable, Noticed And Recognizable, Detectable By Large Group)
5	Distinctive Features: dragon tattoo (Easily Concealed, Noticed And Recognizable)
20	Hunted: Yakuza 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
20	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
20	Psychological Limitation: Must Protect Innocents (Common, Total)
15	Psychological Limitation: Code Of Vengeance; Must Avenge All Insults To Self, Family, Friends, And Those Under His Protection (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Hatred Of Racists And Racism (Common, Strong)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Kenji)

"Ken" Hayashida, college student) (Frequently, Major)
45 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 380

Background/History: Kenji "Ken" Hayashida was born to a Japanese mother and an American father. His father, a serviceman, soon left Japan and returned to the states, leaving Kenji's mother to raise a son all by herself. Shunned by the community because of her involvement with a *gaijin* (foreigner), she had a hard time making ends meet.

Kenji fared no better among his classmates. As a halfbreed, he was the focus of endless tormenting and bullying. That stopped when he got his growth, but the social ostracism and scorn continued unabated. Unable to find companionship anywhere else, he drifted in with gangs of *bura-kumin*, Japan's traditional caste of "untouchable" foreigners, and fell into a life of crime.

His talents in this capacity did not go unnoticed. The local yakuza boss realized Kenji could become a skilled fighter and leader, so he recruited Kenji to join the yakuza. After a period of training and servitude to the bosses, he began working with real criminal operations, generally acting as "muscle." He was a gangster for several years, during which he killed at least six men and brutalized dozens more.

One day the word came down from the *oyabun* that Kenji and his group of underlings were to kill an old man who was breaking up some of the family's protection rings. Kenji led his men to the old man's house and waited. When he came home they jumped him. Much to their amazement, he fought back! Even more amazing, he beat them senseless! Kenji's streetfighting smarts were nothing compared to the old man's technique. While his men fled in terror or crawled away to lick their wounds, Kenji lay at the old man's feet, breathless, expecting to be killed.

The old man just looked at him. Kenji finally raised his head to return the gaze, and was shocked by the look of pain on his face. Through the old man's eyes, Kenji could somehow sense the pain he had caused so many people, pain that grew out of his own anguish at being an outcast in Japanese society. And the eyes asked him a question, too — "Is this how you want to live your

life?" they seemed to say. "Is there nothing better in you than the qualities you have displayed so far?"

No, Kenji thought, *I can be better. Much better.* Tentatively, almost frightenedly, Kenji reached out to the old man, asking for a hand up. The old man grasped his hand and pulled Kenji to his feet. Without a word he took Kenji inside and fed him a good meal. Then he packed a few things and he and Kenji drove to an isolated house in the mountains of Japan.

So began many years of hard training. The old man, whom Kenji referred to only as *Sensei* (teacher), put him through an intensive course in Shorinji Kempo. Kenji learned everything from the philosophy behind the art to some of its deadliest fighting moves. Sensei hinted at some of the mystic powers that awaited a true master, but he taught Kenji nothing of such things.

Eventually the day came when Sensei called Kenji to him. "You have learned as much as you can be taught at present," he told the young man. "For you to grow in knowledge, your soul must grow as well, and it is stunted from the many evil deeds you have done in your life. Go into the garden and meditate for two days on a way to remove this taint from your soul."

Two days later Kenji returned to his master with an idea. He would go forth into the world and live there until he had managed to save two lives for every person that he had hurt or killed during his time with the yakuza. By Kenji's recollection this would mean saving 158 lives.

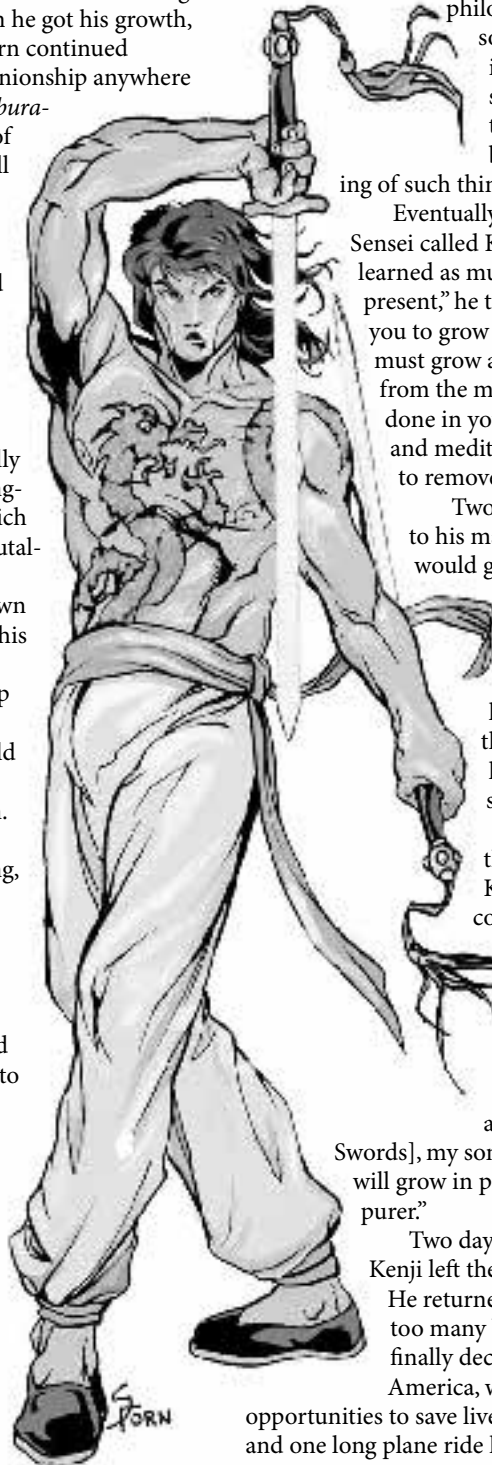
Sensei, finding merit in this proposal, acquiesced to Kenji's request to leave the confines of the mountains.

As a reward for his student's faithful work, he gave him a fine pair of *jien*, or Chinese double-bladed

longswords. "These are the *Seishinken* [Spirit Swords], my son," he said to Kenji. "They will grow in power as your soul becomes purer."

Two days later, swords in hand, Kenji left the mountains and Sensei. He returned to Tokyo, but it held too many bad memories for him. He finally decided he would travel to America, where he would find more

opportunities to save lives than in Japan. A few days and one long plane ride later, he disembarked at San Francisco International Airport. Going by the



name “Ken” Hayashida, he enrolled at UCSF and began studying history.

Today Ken is a top-notch student by day, and a crimefighter by night. He patrols the streets of the city, saving lives and protecting the innocent, using the name *Shugoshin* (“guardian angel”) as his *nom de guerre*. So far he has saved 22 lives, but that still leaves 136 to go, and the streets are a dangerous place....

Personality/Tactics: Despite all the training in philosophy that he has received, Shugoshin is actually a pretty straightforward person. He sees things from a black-and-white perspective, and acts decisively to protect that which he perceives as “good” from that which he perceives as “bad.” The punishments he doles out to criminals are sometimes viciously Mosaic; for example, a robber might have his hand chopped off, while a rapist would lose certain other parts of his anatomy, if not his life. So far Shugoshin’s instincts have served him well; but eventually he will encounter morally ambiguous situations which are, perhaps, more than he has been trained to handle properly.

In many ways Shugoshin is still the hot-blooded street youth Sensei rescued from a life of crime. Although he strongly prefers not to kill, he often employs violent means to solve the problems he encounters on the street, and is not at all adverse to injuring evildoers severely. He is proud and reacts badly to being insulted personally, or to having anyone under his protection insulted. Racist behavior, particularly ethnic slurs, infuriates him.

Quote: “Let her go now while you still have hands to do so.”

Powers/Tactics: Shugoshin is a highly trained martial artist, knowledgeable in the art of Shorinji Kempo. He has developed a few semi-mystic powers, such as the ability to resist pain, feign death, and run straight up walls, but so far his skills are mainly confined to the physical. He usually fights in a simple fashion, attacking one enemy at a time, moving on to the next one only when the first foe has been defeated. He dislikes ambushes and deception; he rarely uses such tactics and reacts violently when they are used against him. He prefers straightforward, honorable combats, and generally will not refuse a challenge to a one-on-one duel.

Shugoshin wields a pair of powerful magical swords, the *Seishinken* (“spirit swords”). These blades are enchanted so that their mystical powers expand as the user’s soul grows stronger and wiser. But for these abilities to surface, a single fighter must wield the swords in tandem. The swords will become more powerful and gain more abilities as Shugoshin advances towards completion of his quest to save lives, which in turn helps to remove the taint of evil from his soul. (In game terms, Shugoshin pays for more sword-based powers with the Experience Points he accumulates through accomplishing these good deeds.) Already Shugoshin has learned how to make the swords affect ghosts and project a beam of mystical energy; the latter power tires him out easily, but is often useful as a surprise tactic.

Campaign Use: Shugoshin works best in martial arts-oriented campaigns and adventures; his defenses are a little too low for straightforward superhero combat (unless the GM runs him cautiously and carefully, using Shugoshin’s defensive abilities frequently). He’s a great Contact in the Martial World for PCs, or someone who can “show them around” if they visit San Francisco or need to take on the yakuza.

If you need to make Shugoshin more powerful, improve his defenses (and perhaps a few of his Characteristics), and give him some more *Seishinken* powers. To make him less powerful, strip away a few of his more esoteric abilities and Skills.

Shugoshin will not become involved in hunting anyone. He already has a quest to occupy his attention.

Appearance: Shugoshin is a tall, broad-shouldered man with mixed Japanese and Western features. His long black hair is usually tied back in a ponytail. Weaving around his body is a beautiful dragon tattoo that he had done while he was in the yakuza. He rarely wears traditional Shorinji Kempo garb, preferring instead a uniform similar to those worn by karate practitioners. He usually leaves the *uwagi*, or jacket, open, so his dragon tattoo can be seen. He prefers a tan *gi* with red belt, slippers, and bracers. He carries the *Seishinken* in sheaths on his back, though he gets rid of the sheaths before combat if he has the opportunity.

THE MILITARY/ MERCENARY/ TERRORIST WORLD

The presence of superhumans has not, sadly, done much to end war, terrorism, or other forms of violent conflict. In fact, some experts claim that since superhumans first appeared on Earth, the world has become *more* violent — more prone to warfare, mercenary activity, assassination, and the like — and that superhumans are to blame. Aside from the fact that super-technology is employed by most militaries to some degree, no real proof exists in support of this particular theory, but nevertheless some people still subscribe to it.

Although most militaries still use standard-tech weapons (gunpowder-based bullets and rifles, tanks and howitzers firing explosive shells, manned fighter jets, and so on), the larger and more advanced of the world’s armies and navies have incorporated some super-technology-derived weapons and systems into their arsenals. For example, the United States has small squads of light powered armor-wearing soldiers, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) capable of flying at Mach 10, and many other such weapons. None of them provide the U.S. with an overwhelming advantage in combat, but taken together they definitely extend and expand America’s already-potent military capabilities.

In some cases, super-technology developments even trickle down to smaller militaries. For exam-

ple, the U.S. Department of Defense has expressed concern about countries like Iraq or Awad building and using relatively cheap magnetic “railgun” weapons to shoot down American satellites and planes. Sometimes it seems that for every advance one nation makes, another finds a way to counter it using different super-technology... though the sources from which some lesser nations obtain their super-technology remain a subject of speculation.

Even mercenaries and mercenary companies get into the act sometimes. A few, seeking competitive advantage both on the battlefield and in the marketplace, have invested in (or otherwise obtained) powered armor suits, energy rifles, super-tech weapons, and advanced robotic vehicles. Supervillains like Lazer, Mechasassin, and the Steel Commando all got their start as mercenaries (at least in part), and still participate in that part of the global underworld if the money's right.

Combatants who want powerful weapons, up to and including some forms of super-technology, often turn to the same source for it — the supervillain who calls himself the Warlord. An arms broker and warmonger without peer, the Warlord foments conflict across the globe as a way of keeping himself in business. He even participates in some battles himself, seemingly for the pleasure of fighting. Thanks to his sophisticated and well-armed suit of powered armor, those usually aren't very fair fights, but he still enjoys them.

THE MYSTIC WORLD

Since 1938, magic has been more powerful and manipulable than at any time in the past several centuries. But that's not to say it's commonplace, or widely acknowledged. In fact, just the opposite is true: the vast majority of humanity scoffs at magic, considering it nothing more than superstitious nonsense. Even though mystic supervillains of tremendous power, such as Takofanes the Undying Lord, periodically threaten Earth, somehow their abilities end up conveniently forgotten or explained away as something besides sorcery. Such, perhaps, is the nature of magic.

The Mystic World usually takes pains to conceal its existence and scope from the rest of the world according to the same unspoken laws. Those who can cast spells and work sorcery deem it fitting that their powers should be hidden from the common ruck of humanity, and conduct themselves appropriately in most circumstances. Thus, even today, describing the Mystic World remains a difficult task, fraught with much guesswork.

As with super-technology, those of darkest heart and evil bent — supervillains, soul-bereft

sorcerers, and others of their ilk — hold the greatest power. Following his initial appearance in 1987, none have ever doubted that the undead wizard who calls himself Takofanes

the Undying Lord remains unrivalled on this world, and perhaps this entire plane, in magical might. Able to transform vast swaths of land to resemble other realms, raise armies of corpses to obey his every whim, and strike powerful superheroes dead with but a gesture, the Archlich has no mystical peer. Only his own pride, and the unflagging efforts of both superheroes and heroic mystics such as the members of the Trismegistus Council, have kept the world safe from him. Of scarce less power is the reclusive Chinese sorcerer Dr. Yin Wu, but he rarely seems to concern himself with matters of the world outside his ancient castle.

Several families of malign intent display magical prowess, and when their members work in concert instead of fighting amongst themselves, often pose a significant threat to nations and worlds. The Sylvestris of Italy, and their rivals the Vandaleurs of France, are chief among the mystic lineages; fortunately, one other, the de Morphants of France, died out centuries ago. The Warwick family of England, a line of noble and heroic men who once opposed these fiends, likewise seems to have passed away forever.

Similar to the mystic families, but with members related by common interests rather than blood,





is the Circle of the Scarlet Moon, a group of spellcasters joined together for the purpose of acquiring power both magical and temporal. The group takes pains to conceal its exact number and powers from the rest of the world, but is known to have at least a dozen powerful sorcerers and witches among its ranks, and to propitiate demons and dark gods. For at least two centuries it has fought a mystic war, both cold and hot, against the Trismegistus Council, a cabal of white wizards formed specifically to oppose and destroy it. The Council numbers among its allies the superheroine Witchcraft of the Champions. (See page 104 for more information.)

At least one mystically-oriented group, DEMON, has chosen to conduct itself after the fashion of villainous agencies such as ARGENT and VIPER. Its minions often fight superheroes in the group's quest to obtain magical lore and power, and its chief lieutenants, the Morbanes, rival superhumans in sheer power. DEMON's true aims, and the true depths of its resources, remain unknown, much to the concern of many DOSPA officials and superheroes.

No discussion of the Mystic World would be complete with mentioning the supervillain Dark Seraph and his followers, the Crowns of Krim. Once Sir Dennis of South Mallon, an English baronet, Dark Seraph sold his soul to Hell for the magic of the Iron Crown, greatest of the artifacts of the demon-god Krim. Now a being powerful enough to rival the likes of Firewing, Dark Seraph is even more dangerous because he has called the possessors of the other Crowns of Krim to serve him. Only the mightiest of superteams can stand against them.

Last but not least, all magical threats don't come solely from this plane of reality. Magic allows its users to cross into other planes of existence, and many of them hold powerful mystics of their own, or beings somehow inimical to Earth and/or mankind. A few of these threats are discussed on page 96.

THE RELIGIOUS WORLD

Superhumans and the world of religion have often interacted in strange ways. Initially, some churches and religious leaders condemned superhumans as the spawn of Satan or other unholy forces; a few still believe that today. Others, while not so inimical to superhumans *per se*, questioned their hubris and habits — and of course virtually all religions express nothing but opposition and pity for supervillains like Dark Seraph, who derive their abilities from infernal powers.

Over time, most religions have come to accept superhumans, taking care to note the good done by superheroes and deploring the cruelty and evil of supervillains. As one theologian famously noted, "Man is made in the image of God. Perhaps superhumans are but God's image viewed from a different perspective — or more clearly."

Superhumans such as Ushas, who claim to be gods, the descendants of gods, or to derive their power from gods, pose particular problems for established religions such as Islam and Christianity. Some religious officials denounce them as blasphemers. Others have remained quiet and reserved judgment.

In a few cases, new religions have sprung up *around* superhumans. For example, during the 1970s, a small church formed in New York City to worship the superheroine Archangel, who claimed God Himself granted her the power to battle evil. The Church of the Archangel, never approved of or sanctioned by any other Christian organization, grew in size and strength until 1987, when the object of its adoration was murdered by Takofanes the Undying Lord. The church disbanded thereafter, though some former members claim they still worship Archangel and that she visits them in spirit form from time to time.



CHAPTER FOUR: WORLDS UPON WORLDS: CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE MULTIVERSE

Most of the discussion and information in this book focuses on the United States — the country that has the most superhuman activity (by far). But there's more to the Champions Universe than just America. America's an important part of the picture, of course, but other countries have their own superhu-

mans and strange phenomena, too. And the Champions Universe reaches even further, out into the Milky Way Galaxy far from Earth, and into strange alternate dimensions. This chapter reviews them all, with a special emphasis on places like Millennium City and Vibora Bay, where superhuman activity is unusually common or important for some reason.

SUPERHUMANS AROUND THE WORLD



As of the year 2002, here's what the Superhuman World is like across the planet. You should also refer to the discussion about government policies and official superteams beginning on page 35; GMs can consult the GM's Vault for further information on all these subjects.

NORTH AMERICA

North America, primarily the United States, is unquestionably the center of the Superhuman World. In addition to its large crop of native superhumans, supers originating elsewhere often gravitate here, whether for companionship, a better standard of living, more opportunities to commit profitable crimes, or other reasons.

The United States

Due to its extent, a thorough survey of superhuman activity in the United States is beyond the scope of this book; what's covered here are a few of the more active areas. Some areas of particular importance (Millennium City, Vibora Bay, and Haynesville) are covered in their own sections beginning on page 76.

Every major metropolitan area in the United States, and many other places as well, has its share of superhumans. Whether they form superteams (or gangs), or fight (commit) crimes on their own, they're an unavoidable part of American life. The average citizen may never meet one in person, but he reads about them in the news, and sees the after-effects of their battles and activities, every week.

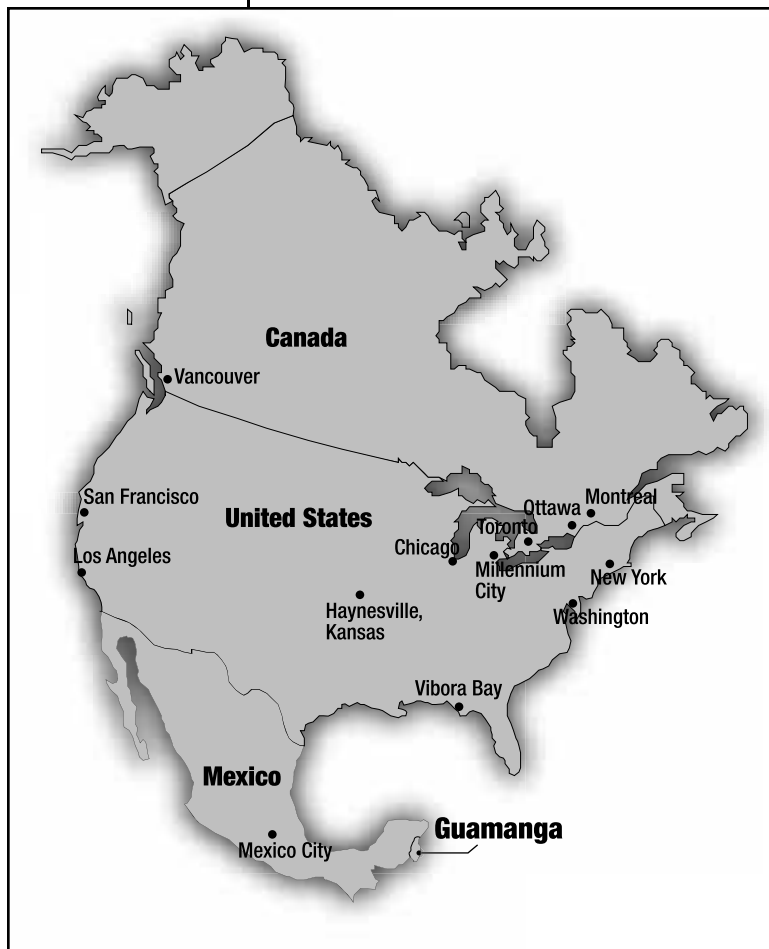
Besides Millennium City, the most active American superhuman communities are in New York City, Chicago, and San Francisco.

NEW YORK CITY

New York City boasts the largest number of established superteams — four — of any city in the world. The oldest and most renowned is the Justice Squadron, which got its start in World War II and has remained together (though with numerous changes of membership) ever since. Responsible for, among other things, helping to stop Dr. Destroyer's first attempt to conquer the world in 1975, and foiling an extra-dimensional invasion by the Chaos-Beast and his horde of reality-warping demonic beings in 1988, the Justice Squadron has earned numerous accolades from the grateful people of Earth. As of 2002, its roster includes the Brawler (the team's leader), Electron, Flashover, Blink, Tomahawk, and the Drifter.

Also of note are the Sentinels, an equally prestigious team founded in the 1960s. Simultaneously friends with and rivals of the Justice Squadron, the Sentinels have had more (and more frequent) membership turnovers than the JS has, but have nevertheless remained extremely effective in the battle against crime and evil. As of 2002, its roster includes Black Rose (the team's leader), the second Amazing Man, Diamond, Diadem, Bravo, and Marus.

Lately, though, the team that's been attracting the most media attention is a new group of young guns — some teen heroes who call themselves Nova (they've never explained the significance of the name). Led by Decibelle, a charismatic young woman with sonic powers (some tabloids claim she's related to or associated with the supervillainess Howler), Nova has been active fighting



several drug smuggling syndicates and ARGENT, among others. One of the team's members, Arcane, is wanted by the police for murder, so Nova has no sanction and is constantly on the run from the authorities.

Unfortunately, New York's supercriminals are every bit as active as its heroes. According to official estimates, VIPER has at least three Nests in the greater New York area (more are suspected), and obtains as much as one-fifth of its annual revenue from crimes committed within the five boroughs. Destructive superbattles are so common that superhuman insurance premiums are at a national high there.

CHICAGO

Chicago has only one superteam, the Peacekeepers, but a generous helping of independent heroes — for some reason, most of the Windy City's superheroes seem to prefer solo action over teaming up. Headquartered on the top floors of the famed Ketrick Building in downtown Chicago, the Peacekeepers have protected their city from superhuman menaces for nearly twenty years. The group has a long-running feud with VIPER, and has destroyed several major Nests. It recently lost its leader, the Huntsman, in battle against VIPER, and has redoubled its efforts to eradicate the evil organization. Dwarfstar has assumed temporary leadership of the group while it decides whether to recruit one or more new members to fill the gap in the roster.

SAN FRANCISCO

The Bay Area has a significant number of superhumans, many, not surprisingly given the proximity to Silicon Valley, with technology-related powers. The area's best-known superteam, the Freedom Patrol, has fallen on hard times in recent years, with the loss or retirement of several members, and a near-disastrous defeat at the hands of ARGENT in 1999. A much newer team, the Bay Guardians, has gradually eclipsed the Patrol and is receiving a lot of popular acclaim. Led by a powerful (if eccentric) supermage named Eldritch, the Bay Guardians have smashed a VIPER plot to take control of several key businesses, stopped a madman from detonating a seismic bomb over one of the region's earthquake faults, and cut down the crime rate in several parts of the city.

Eldritch has recently begun to sense that several mystically-powerful supervillains, including some DEMON Morbanes and perhaps Dark Seraph, are converging on the Bay Area for some reason. He and the Bay Guardians are preparing for what may be a cataclysmic battle, in part by consulting with other mystics who may have insight on the problem.

VILLAINOUS AGENCIES

VIPER is more active in the United States than any other nation. In recent years it has been involved with drug smuggling, attempts to steal enough aeronautical technology to build a VIPER spaceplane, financial fraud, and numerous raids on banks, museums, and similar high-profit targets, among other schemes.

ARGENT and the Institute for Human Advancement, both of which originated in the United States, remain strongest there. ARGENT has increased its profile in Millennium City significantly, and some authorities speculate that it may secretly be behind some of the corporate donors who funded the "City of the Future." The IHA, flush with cash following a bequest from a wealthy supporter, has stepped up its lobbying efforts to have the government regulate mutants and similar superhumans.

Canada

Although not as super-heavy as its neighbor to the south, Canada has plenty of superhumans to call its own. Since the collapse of the last Northern Guard team in 1998, it's had to rely on local superteams and solo heroes given national sanction when large-scale emergencies arise. The StarForce of Toronto, COMET of Ottawa, and solos like the powerful Haida shaman Ravenspeaker of Vancouver, the cosmically-powered superheroine Celestar, and an armored hero called Forceknight have all volunteered their efforts to keep Canada safe and secure.

And they have many threats to contend against. An ancient Inuit ice-demon called Tilingkoot has several times tried to bury Canada (and, eventually, the world) under the snows of an eternal winter, and other mystic threats arise from time to time. VIPER has a significant presence in several cities, including Vancouver and Montreal. A powerful light-manipulating mutant called Borealis has several times tried to overthrow the Canadian government and establish himself as the nation's ruler, all as a prelude to his plans for the Canadian conquest of Earth. He and Celestar have fought several major battles, with the famed superheroine triumphing each time by the narrowest of margins.

Mexico

Mexico has less superhuman activity than Canada, but still more than most similar nations because of its proximity to the United States. Bloodstone and Temblor of the Crowns of Krim both appear in Mexico frequently, and probably have some connection to Mexico in their original or secret identities. DEMON has likewise launched several schemes here, most involving efforts to acquire Aztec or Mayan artifacts supposedly possessing mystic powers.

Mexico's ruling party, the PRI, once sponsored a small superhero team called *Los Defensores de México* (the Mexican Defenders), but the team fell apart in 1997 when it was revealed that most of the members were receiving significant bribes from the Mexican drug cartels to overlook drug smuggling activity. Nearly all of the members quietly retired; one, El Aguila ("The Eagle"), committed suicide in disgrace; and two, Acantilado ("Rocky") and Macahuil ("Obsidian Sword"), continue to fight crime (mainly around Mexico City).

THE CALIFORNIA PATROL

Not all the superhero teams in California are based in big cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles. A loose confederation of heroes calling itself the California Patrol often bands together to fight crime in other parts of the state (mostly in the southern half) and deal with other menaces the city-based superheroes don't know about or have time for. Founded in 1991, the Patrol lacks official sanction, but its members don't really seem to care. As of 2002, its members include Sequoia, Firewall, the Silicon Kid, MeteorMan, and Downshift.

GUAMANGA

A tiny nation between Honduras and Lago de Isabél, Guamanga is afflicted with poverty and despair. A mere five percent of the population owns ninety percent of the land, consigning the peasantry to a life of subsistence tenant farming. Many have turned to the drug trade, or the theft and sale of Mayan relics from archaeological sites, to survive.

In 1994, ARGENT attempted to engineer a coup in Guamanga to oust the die-hard Communist president, Martín Orama-Tijernas. Fortunately, the Justice Squadron stopped the plot, doing significant harm to ARGENT's interests in the region. Long-forgotten super-weapons and other relics of the conflict occasionally appear, causing more trouble in this already troubled nation.

SOUTH AMERICA, CENTRAL AMERICA, AND THE CARIBBEAN

These regions of the world see relatively little superhuman activity, due to their distance from the centers of the Superhuman World and their relative poverty. For many years the most powerful superhumans in the region were a supervillain group, Terror Inc., which maintained a well-defended headquarters on an island off the coast of Peru. But in 1998, the group self-destructed when two of its members, Scorpia and Feuermacher, murdered its leader, Professor Muerte, and defected to Eurostar (taking much of the group's technological and data resources with them). Terror, Inc.'s agents abandoned the island (whose facilities were later destroyed in bombing raids conducted by the U.S. Air Force) to join existing criminal groups or form gangs of their own; the group's one remaining member, a super-strong brute named Giganto, retreated into the isolation of the Amazon jungle and has not been seen since.

The most famous South American superhero is a wealthy young philanthropist, Miguel Esconsada de Villareal, better known to the world at large as El Dorado. Although most active in the cities of Brazil, he's also fought crime in just about every other part of the continent, using his martial arts prowess and gadgets to thwart the schemes of many villains and villainous agencies. More importantly, he's spent an

enormous amount of money and effort on public works projects to benefit the poor and downtrodden.

CHÍQUADOR

This tiny nation, wedged in between French Guiana and Brazil, has been causing problems in eastern South America since 1979, when General Lorenzo João Garrastazu e Silva overthrew the government and declared himself President For Life. In power since that time, he has commenced a military buildup that worries the other nations in the region. As yet he has made no moves to use his army and air force, but he must have something in mind for them, given the money and attention he spends on them. A lot of observers, including many in the United States, keep a nervous eye on events in Macapa (the nation's capital).

COSTA AZÚL

An archipelago consisting of three principal islands and several smaller ones located south of Jamaica and Haiti, Costa Azúl has a well-deserved reputation as a haven for drug smuggling, money laundering, and other criminal activities. Its leader, Colonel Enrique Pineda, tries to maintain a facade of normalcy to attract tourists, but he's well-known as one of the most corrupt officials in the Western Hemisphere. More than once the United States has contemplated taking military action against him, as it did in the past against Manuel Noriega of Panama.



EUROPE

Outside of North America, Europe (especially Great Britain) has the most active and visible superhuman community in the world. With the European economy going strong, supercrime is on the rise, as the likes of VIPER take advantage of the situation.

The most prominent and dangerous supervillain group in Europe as a whole is Eurostar, which even operates in America on occasion. Led by Danar Nicole, a diplomat turned terrorist, Eurostar seems to commit crimes as much for the sheer love of destruction and panic as anything else. Aside from the conquest of Europe, the group's agenda is known only to itself; its usual crimes — bank robberies, terrorism and assassination for hire, industrial sabotage and espionage — may simply be preludes to some greater scheme.

Although most European supers (particularly villains) are primarily associated with a specific country (such as Siegfried, a German "brick"), they tend to commit crimes and participate in plots throughout Europe. Given the common currency, and the ease with which they can cross borders, there's usually little reason to restrict themselves to one nation. British supers tend to be an exception to this rule, though.

The British Isles

Superhumans are both more common and more active in the British Isles than in most parts of the world. Thanks to the many sites of mystic import throughout the region (Stonehenge and other stone circles, places associated with King Arthur, and the like), and its dimensional proximity to that part of the Land of Legends known as Faerie (see page 96), the British have more than their share of magical heroes and villains.

British Supers

Besides the New Knights of the Round Table (page 46), the Scepter'd Isle is graced with numerous superheroes who defend it against threats from within and without. Most operate solo, occasionally teaming up, or temporarily allying themselves with the New Knights, when confronting an enemy too powerful to take on alone.

Albion, a mysterious humanoid being seemingly made out of some sort of solidified white energy, claims to be the living embodiment of the nobility and heroic nature of the British people. First appearing during the Battle of Britain in World War II, he has shown up periodically since then whenever terrible danger confronts the British Isles. All efforts to contact him at other times, or to identify who he is, have failed.

Almost as powerful as Albion, but much less mysterious, is Hyperion, an immensely powerful hero with the ability to generate effects based on what he calls "the burning light of truth." A 2002 conflict between Hyperion and the alien supergladiator Firewing destroyed a large swath of London, which Hyperion himself has since helped to repair. Extremely popular with his countrymen, and as wealthy as a lord, Hyperion frequently appears on television and at charity events.

London's best-known and most beloved super-team is the London Watch, which is active not only throughout the islands but in mainland Europe as well. Its members include Blazon (who wears a suit of mystically-powered armor and rides a flying horse), Yeoman (a warrior with high-tech archery equipment and weapons), Repulse (a telekinetic), and Swift Swallow (a flying speedster). The group has clashed with Eurostar repeatedly, and hopes to bring those criminals to justice someday.

Several mystic superhumans — Shade, a kind-hearted vampire; Drune, who claims to be an elven-prince from Faerie exiled to this world for the sin of falling in love with a mortal woman; Rhiannon, a sorceress who takes her name from a Welsh mythological character; and Taliesin, who can generate magical effects with his harp-music — periodically band together to fight mystic threats, such as a recent attempt by several Fomorians (mis-shapen,

even demonic, evil giants from Faerie) to ravage Cornwall. They have no name for themselves, though overenthusiastic reporters have dubbed them "the Nightwatch." They all guard their privacy and secretly identities carefully, though Rhiannon has responded to some inquiries from her Internet fan club.



Well-known British supervillains include: Crusher, who wears a powerful suit of powered armor; Thrash, a mutant energy projector of punk-anarchist bent; the Cat, a thief and martial artist; and Clockwork, an eccentric and malevolent gadgeteer.

Irish And Scottish Supers

Scotland has been the home of a number of supervillains, most of them, for some reason, women. Besides Cateran, who actually spends almost no time in Scotland, there's Black Annis (a haglike witch), Lamprey (an aquatic supervillainess), and Stormcloud (a weather controller able to project powerful bolts of lightning from her hands), among others. Scotland's best-known male villain is Claymore, a sword-wielding super-strong thug with a taste for violence and a love of bloodshed. Scotland has a few superheroes, too, like Evergreen (a plant controller) and Dreamscape (a psionic and dream-manipulator).

Ireland's superhumans are almost all mystical in nature. Superheroes like Cuchullain (supposedly a "reincarnation" of the legendary spear-wielding hero) and Dweomer (a powerful spellcaster) battle against supervillains like the Redcap (a clawed, extremely resilient magical mutate) and the aforementioned Fomorians, as well as foreign villains who show up to exploit Ireland's mystic sites.

OTHER EUROPEAN SUPERHEROES

Some of the other superheroes active in Europe include:

Beowulf, a Danish strongman who's adopted a medieval motif for his costume and speech (no relation to the American superhero of the 1960s of the same name)

Chainmail, a Portuguese brawler who also uses chains as weapons.

Fázfa Tél (Winter Willow), a Hungarian superheroine with cold-based powers.

Fortuna, a luck-manipulating Italian superheroine.

Previsione, a hero with precognitive powers.

Striker, a Polish speedster.

Zamara, a Gypsy clairvoyant and mystic.

France

Other than its official "Sixteenth Bureau" superteam, France is home to a number of superheroes. Tricolor's daughter, going by the codename Seine, can duplicate herself into two heroines calling themselves Left Bank and Right Bank, and acts as a protector of Paris, mostly fighting street-level crime and VIPER. The Chevalier, a flying energy projector, fights crime all over France, as do the winged gadgeteer Autour (Goshawk) and the powered armor brick Bastille.

On the other hand, France has also seen plenty of supervillain schemes and attacks within its borders. VIPER is quite active there, and DEMON is said to have spent time investigating the mystic potential of prehistoric cave-painting sites. The IHA has strongly lobbied the French government to pass anti-superhuman legislation on several occasions. The supervillainess Gravitar is often active in France, as are Venin Vert (Green Venom, a mutant with powers of chemical control), Obélisque (Obelisk, a brick whose strength is said to sometimes rival Grond's), and Bouc (Scapegoat, a mentalist), among others.

Germany

As noted on page 46, the Germans have traditionally been a little reluctant to talk about their relations with superhumans. Today they remain comparatively rare in German society, though that seems to be changing as the public becomes more accepting of them. The best-known German superheroes include Mondfeuer (Moonfire, an elemen-

talist mystic), der Bogenschütze (the Archer, who uses a high-tech bow and trick arrows), and Zeitgeist (Spirit of the Times, a low-powered chronomanipulator). Der Westgote (the Visigoth, a ruthlessly clever brick), Panzer (a well-armed powered armor character with plans to restore Nazi rule to Germany), Der Schwarze Tod (the Black Death, a disease inflictor), and Neutron (who can vastly increase his own density and strength) are some of the villains native to Germany; Westgote has been courted by Eurostar as a possible new member.

Russia

In addition to the heroes mentioned on page 47, the Motherland is also home to Vulnapyezdka (Waverider, an aquatic hero, a former Soviet submariner mutated by exposure to the engines of nuclear submarines), Taiga (a shapeshifter who can take the forms of various Russian animals and plants), and Zemletpyasenee (Quake, an earth and stone manipulator). On the other hand, several superhumans created by, or once employed by, the KGB and other arms of the Soviet government have often become supercriminals (either for themselves, or in the employ of Russian organized crime gangs); some of these felons include Slun (The Bishop, a low-grade mentalist), Molnya (Lightning, an electricity manipulator), Technyk (The Technician, a cyberkinetic), and Beek (the Ox, a brick).

LARISAGRAD

Located deep in the Ural Mountains, Larisagrad was once a top-secret Soviet city whose inhabitants worked mostly on Directorate Black-12 (the



Cold War era superhuman-soldier program) and related research. Merely attempting to enter the city without proper authorization was a capital offense. Since the collapse of the Soviet regime, all government work in Larisagrad has ended. To support themselves, the scientists there work as contractors and consultants for whomever will hire them... including more than a few supervillains, according to UNTIL reports. Larisagrad officials vehemently deny these charges.

AFRICA

Africa has fewer superhumans, and less superhuman activity, than any other inhabited continent. What superhumans it does have tend to cluster at the opposite ends of the continent, in South Africa and Egypt.

Egypt, naturally enough, has spawned more than a few superhumans connected with its ancient civilization, and the gods it once worshipped — villains like Anubis (who actually operates mostly in America) and the Living Sphinx (a half-human, half-beast killing machine of devilish cunning), heroes like Maat (supposedly imbued with the powers of the goddess of justice) and Pharos (an energy projector-brick). But that's not the extent of its contact with the Superhuman World; New Karnak, the VIPER's Nest in Cairo, is a sophisticated, high-tech criminal operation with no real connection to Egyptian history or mysticism, for example.

South Africa's superheroes are often relatively young and inexperienced; the older supers from the days of apartheid (including the Boer, the country's greatest hero), unable to adjust to the new ways, retired after the old regime fell. Today's heroes, such as Blaze and the Gazelle, mostly fight organized crime and dangerous militant rebel groups, but occasionally battle supervillains like Ironhorn.

Few reports have reached the rest of the world about superhumans in the interior of Africa, though undoubtedly some do exist. Rumors have filtered out about one called Pridemaster, who can summon and control lions and uses them to wage bloody war on poachers, and another, Ogun, a Nigerian with power over all things metal. Several African nations, including Kenya, Lurranga, and Nigeria, are heavily involved in the drug trade and other forms of transnational crime, and sometimes thus attract the attention of foreign supers.

LUGENDU

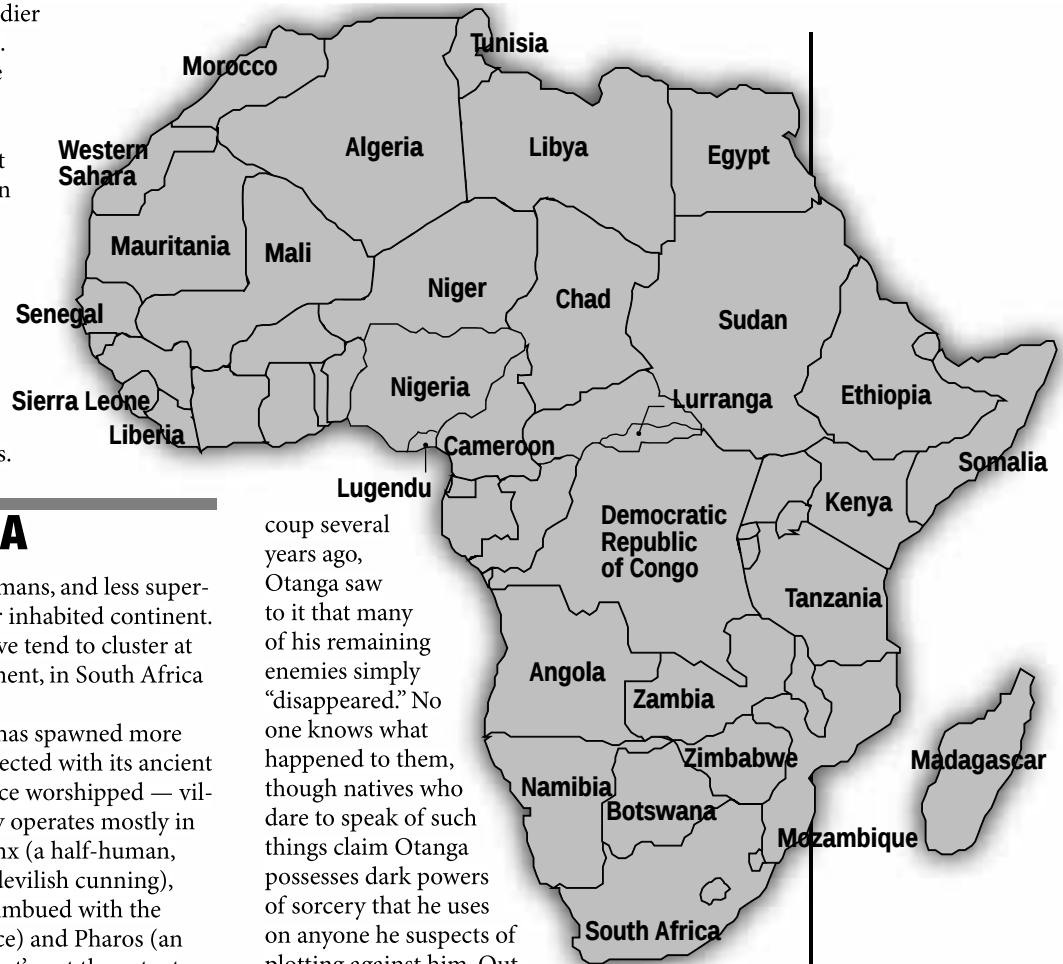
On the West Coast of Africa, wedged in between Nigeria and Cameroon, lies the small country of Lugendu, an oppressive place ruled by a man named Joseph Otanga from a luxurious palace in the capital of Nahambane. After appointing himself President-For-Life following a bloody

coup several years ago, Otanga saw to it that many of his remaining enemies simply "disappeared." No one knows what happened to them, though natives who dare to speak of such things claim Otanga possesses dark powers of sorcery that he uses on anyone he suspects of plotting against him. Outsiders scoff at these stories as mere superstition, noting how easy it would be for a man in power to make his enemies "disappear" through mundane means like bullets and shallow jungle graves.

WESTERN ASIA

The Middle and Near East has become an increasingly politically volatile area over the past decade, with Israeli-Palestinian tensions, Iraqi and Iranian ambitions, Islamic fundamentalism, drug smuggling and organized crime in the tiny nation of Taqiristan, concerns over oil reserves, and many other factors creating tension there and abroad. Although superhumans are relatively uncommon in this part of the world, they have on occasion contributed to the difficulties there. Israel's corps of official superhumans has participated in several "peace-keeping" activities, raising concern among the Arab states (particularly when battles between them, and Palestinian supers like the Liberator, cause extensive destruction in areas inhabited by already-impoorished peoples).

Saddam Hussein, leader of Iraq, recently revealed the presence of a superhumanly strong personal bodyguard he referred to as "Shield Of The People." Western intelligence analysts have taken this as proof that rumors of a joint program between Iraq and its close ally Awad (a small nation on the Saudi peninsula, between Yemen and Oman)



THE SUPERHEROES OF INDIA

In addition to its official Superhero Division team of heroes (see page 47), India is graced with several independent superpowered heroes, including:

Anvil, who can transform his body to iron for short periods of time

Himalaya, whose growth powers make him superhumanly strong

The Mongoose, master of a long-lost fighting art

Pantheon, a duplicating heroine

Spark, a fire-controlling dwarf



to create superhuman soldiers have succeeded, at least in part.

Other superhumans known to be active in this region include the Dagger (a superhumanly fast killer who claims to possess the knowledge and skills of the ancient sect of the Hashishim), Desert Cat (a Saudi trained superhero), The Children Of Atatürk (a team of four Turkish superheroes), Sandstorm (a powerful sand- and earth-manipulating villain), the Fist of Allah (the official superhero of Iran), and the Ifrit (a fire-wielding supervillain who thinks he's a creature from Arabian legend).

EASTERN ASIA

Thanks to the economic and technological boom of the late 1980s and early '90s, superhumans have become much more common in this part of the world than they once were. Martial arts- and technology-oriented power sets are the most common, but by no means the only types of powers found there. For example, Silverwing, a Singaporean superhero, is a mutant energy projector, and the Filipino supervillain Atoll received power over both earth and water due to an industrial accident.

CHINA

As discussed on page 46, China controls the Tiger Squad, the world's largest team of super-

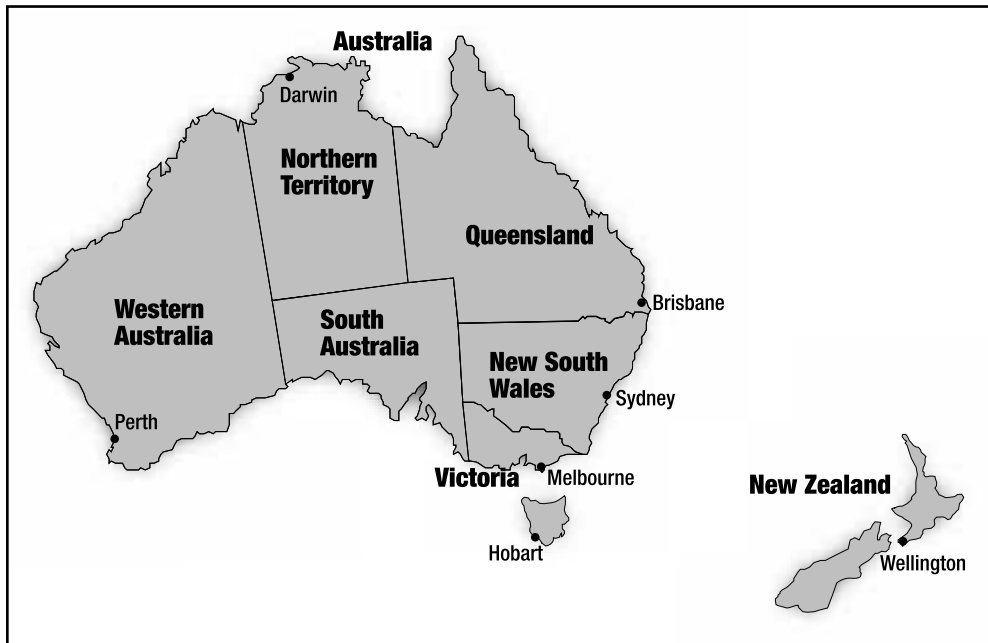
heroes, and uses harsh, strictly-enforced laws to prevent any other supers (whether of heroic or villainous bent) from operating independently within its borders. A number of superheroes in cities, including Bái Hóu ("White Monkey") of Shanghai, and Dishēng Lóng ("Whispering Dragon," a teleporter) and Jíxiáng Kòu ("Lucky Bandit," a low-level brick and speedster) of Hong Kong, openly defy the government's laws, fighting crime and helping people in their own way (and often supporting pro-democracy movements). Though labelled "villains" by Beijing, they are not, but China has its share of those, too — like Lam Kuei ("Blue-Faced Demon"), who commits many assassinations and other crimes with his mystic martial arts powers; the pain-manipulating mentalist Ying, who's helped propel the upstart Red Dawn Triad to a position of prominence in China's underworld; the powerful sorcerer Dr. Yin Wu; and the mysterious Taoist demon-wizard who calls himself Li Chun the Destroyer.

JAPAN

Japan possessed few superhumans prior to the mid-1960s. Compared to the United States, Germany, and Great Britain, Japan had only a handful of superhumans on its side during the war, including Himeki (a cousin of Emperor Hirohito who was supposedly gifted with solar powers by the sun-goddess Amaterasu) and Tsunami (protector of the Japanese seas and destroyer of many American ships). No one has ever provided an acceptable explanation for this lack, or why so many of Japan's superhumans had mystic powers.

Most experts do agree, however, that the flowering of Japanese superhumanity that began in the early- to mid-1960s was a result largely of the effects of the radiation released by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. At that time, mutant superhumans were more common in Japan than in most parts of the world, and they remain so today. Combined with Japanese scientific and technical knowledge, which led to a





plethora of powered armor superheroes and gadgeteers beginning in the early 1980s, Japan has one of the most vibrant and colorful superhuman communities in the world. Many Japanese fans practically worship their superhuman idols, who often become wealthy through image licensing for toys and movie deals. Japan's most popular heroes include the powered armor-wearing Tetsuronin, the mystic martial artist Akumashibaru, media darling Charm Girl (actually an extremely strong flying "brick"), and the teen gadgeteer Shōnen no Kufū (Gadget Boy).

But where superheroes abound, so do supervillains. Japan's superheroes often have their hands full dealing with Kagamishoki, the mirror-demon; the wind-wielding samurai Kazonin; Kazan ("Volcano"), a powerful villain with lava- and earthquake-related abilities; the reality-manipulating "criminal from the sixth dimension" Teikei ("Trapezoid"); and the powered armor martial artist Tetsuryu ("Iron Dragon").

AUSTRALIA AND OCEANIA

Supercrime is relatively uncommon in Australia, and so superheroes are as well. Walkabout was already mentioned on page 45; others of note include Harrier (a flying superhuman with extensive martial arts and weapon training) and Brigade (defender of the city of Sydney). Most of their opponents are superhuman thieves and robbers, and menaces spawned from the Dreamtime. One notable exception is Taipan, a fast and deadly superhuman assassin known to have killed at least a dozen superheroes around the world. He's currently imprisoned in a maximum-security facility in the Outback devoted solely to his incarceration; he himself occupies a "hot sleep" chamber donated by the United States.

There are virtually no superhumans in Oceania. Heroes and villains rarely even visit, much less live in, that isolated part of the world.

ELSEWHERE

ANTARCTICA

The only continent not permanently inhabited by man, Antarctica sees even less superhuman activity than Oceania. From time to time a world-threatening master villain has built a base there, but so far as is known, none currently live on the perpetually-frozen continent. However, some officials in the United States intelligence community claim their data suggests that Dr. Destroyer has built a facility down there.

OUTER SPACE

Nearly half a century after the space program began, mankind has finally established a truly permanent foothold in space. Completed in 1996, UNTIL's space station GATEWAY, parked in geosynchronous orbit over the Pacific Ocean, is a nearly self-sustaining facility with a crew of 200 led by Commander Pierre Theroux of Canada. It consists of four modules (Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta) arranged in a columnar fashion that makes the station somewhat resemble a child's spinning top. Personnel typically reach the station via UNTIL's space shuttle, the *Gimlé*, but an experimental teleportation system, ADIS, is in the works.

GATEWAY's main mission is to remain alert for signs of alien visitors (especially invaders), but on a daily basis its personnel primarily perform scientific research. Since the station and their work is funded by the United Nations, all data gathered becomes public domain property, freely usable by any scientist who wants it. GATEWAY staff members have already made significant discoveries in the fields of medicine, manufacturing, and of course astronomy.

KOREAN SUPERHUMANS

Though not as active or populous as China's or Japan's, Korea's superhuman community contains a few superhumans of note. Its heroes, such as Hwarang (master of Korean martial arts), Soaring Eagle (a mutant with flight powers), and Bold Mountain (a brick), have been of service to the Korean people many times. Korean villains include the Strangler (a North Korean agent and Hwarang's arch-nemesis), the Eel (a malleable-bodied thief and killer), and Trigram (an *I Ching*-manipulating wizard).

MILLENNIUM CITY



'We hope for better things; it shall arise again from the ashes.'

—Father Gabriel Richard, pastor of Sainte Anne's Church, after Detroit burned to the ground in 1805.

History

Founded in 1701 by the French as a fort and fur-trading outpost, Detroit was captured by the British in 1760 and passed to the control of the United States following the Revolutionary War. Although mostly destroyed by fire in 1805, it was quickly rebuilt and became a major commercial center. Its position on the Great Lakes made it a prominent port and trading center, and later home to industry and manufacturing. The presence of Henry Ford and other early automotive pioneers made it "the automobile capital of the world," its name synonymous with cars and vehicle manufacturing.

Detroit's first costumed hero, Mr. X, made his debut in 1939 as part of the wave of costumed adventurers who sprang up around the country in that year. Unlike most adventurers of the day, he had no superhuman powers and eschewed a flashy costume; instead, he wore a plain suit and tie, with a respectable hat and only a domino mask to hide his identity. A brilliant detective and formidable brawler, Mr. X was the alternate identity of crime reporter Peter Dix, and he regularly battled mobsters and thugs throughout the war. He even helped the Defenders of Justice on one notable case in 1943 when a supervillain called the White Knight used subsonic broadcasting devices to foment race riots in neighborhoods where blacks had recently moved in to work in munitions and equipment factories.

After Mr. X's retirement in the mid-1950s, Detroit had no superhuman champions until 1966, when football star Reggie Morgan became the Scarlet Shield. Throughout the civil rights struggle (including the devastating 1967 riots that caused \$150 million in damage), Scarlet Shield tried valiantly to keep peace while battling racism, with limited effect. Morgan died in 1974 when he was shot by assassins working for organized crime. But by that time, several other minor heroes had made Detroit their home, though they never coalesced into a superteam.

Detroit's next prominent hero was Shadowboxer. Joey Greene was a moderately talented boxer who had crossed the mob and gotten shot in 1981—his body was dumped at a construction site that was also the location of some illegally-dumped toxic waste. Greene eventually awoke with the ability to generate fields of black energy around his hands and lower

arms that could expand to fill a small area, blinding his opponents, and enabled him to deal out devastating punches that could flatten a brick wall. Shadowboxer became a highly effective vigilante, crippling the mob in Detroit as well as thwarting several attempts by VIPER to establish a Nest in the area.

THE COMING OF THE DESTROYER

In July of 1992, however, a menace came to Detroit far beyond the abilities of any one hero to handle. Doctor Destroyer, whose plans to take over the world had only been defeated by the narrowest of margins in the past, had just suffered his most severe setback with the loss of his island base to his enemies. Determining once and for all to eliminate the American heroes who had constantly interfered with his plans, Destroyer likewise decided the Earth would be much easier to control without the United States getting in his way. Retreating to a secret laboratory he had built beneath an abandoned factory in Detroit, Destroyer designed a gigantic tractor beam, with which he planned to draw a series of small asteroids into a collision course with Earth—or, more precisely, North America. He intended to duplicate the effect of the asteroid that had caused the extinction of the dinosaurs, but on a much smaller scale controlled by him, with the resulting ecological devastation and dust clouds rendering America helpless and likely straining the ability of the rest of the world to defend itself.

Putting his fiendish plan in motion, Destroyer hired several mercenary supervillain teams across the country to distract and harass the heroes he felt might oppose him. Then he activated his beam, seizing control of a cluster of asteroids and sending them hurtling through space directly toward the Earth. On July 23rd, several heroes became aware of this threat, and joined forces to stop it, dividing into two teams. Those with powers useful in space were sent to stop the asteroids, and an earthbound team was sent to find and defeat Destroyer himself.

The spacefaring team was at first unable to stop the asteroids despite multiple efforts, until the hero Vanguard sacrificed himself to deliver explosive charges into the center of the cluster, pulverizing it into harmless dust. Unfortunately, Destroyer simply selected another group of asteroids with his beam and made a second attempt to carry out his evil plan—leaving the team of heroes back in Detroit as the only hope for victory. While some heroes dedicated themselves to a perhaps-futile effort of evacuation, others located Destroyer's well-guarded base. There, they found themselves in combat with several of Destroyer's robotic Destroids and a horde of villains and mindless monsters he had recruited or built to

hold them off, including Grond and Glacier. The assembled heroes of Earth, with more arriving constantly to join in the battle, fought their way through the awful horde, demolishing much of the city in their wake. Several brave heroes lost their lives in this battle, the largest superhuman confrontation in recorded history. But they gave their allies in space the time to find Destroyer's tractor-beam generator, take control of it, and use it to re-direct the asteroids away from Earth.

After hours of combat, a few valiant heroes won their way past Destroyer's minions — only to find Destroyer himself waiting for them. With his own weapons, Destroyer slaughtered five of them, casually turning aside counter-attacks with his powerful armor. However, as the battle wore on, and more and more heroes arrived, it began to look as if the day would at last be won.

But Destroyer could not be defeated so easily. Battered and bleeding, his armor cracked in a dozen places, he refused to give up. "Not to the likes of you," he said when the Sentinels demanded his surrender. "If Destroyer must fall, he will fall to his own hand, not to his enemies." With a mocking bow, he triggered his last, and greatest, weapon: an orbital bombardment cannon. A beam wider than a city block struck the ground where he stood, obliterating him and nearly two dozen superheroes instantly. Before the heroes in space could find it and stop it, the cannon swept its deadly ray across much of the city. The resulting devastation levelled most of the city — and what was left was quickly engulfed by fires, flooding, or both. All that was ever found of Destroyer was his shattered helmet.

Official records of the death toll resulting from the city-wide battle and Destroyer's suicidal strike eventually listed nearly 60,000 fatalities. Few buildings, especially in the city's center, remained standing and intact; numerous neighborhoods were virtually wiped off the face of the Earth. Almost fifty superheroes — including such renowned paragons of justice as Goblin, Icestar, Vigil, Tiger, and Shadowboxer — lost their lives as they struggled to stop Destroyer. Today, a memorial to their bravery stands in the center of Millennium City's Memorial Park.

THE AFTERMATH, AND THE REBUILDING

In the days following the disaster, the world mourned the massive losses. President George Bush, standing in the middle of the field of rubble that was once the Renaissance Center, delivered a passionate speech that challenged both superhumans and corporations alike to rebuild Detroit before the end of the millennium. He promised a series of tax breaks for companies willing to move to this new city once it was built, and to donate their expertise and technology toward making Detroit the leading city of the twenty-first century.

American business and America's superhumans rose to the call. Over the next seven years, Detroit was rebuilt from the ashes. Corporations such as Cambridge Biotechnologies, American Business Machinery, Harmon Industries, Duchess Industries, and countless others committed vast resources to the project. And several superheroes

volunteered time and energy to the cleanup project; for example, for a month Diamond, MeteorMan, and Golem worked alongside cranes and bulldozers helping move massive girders, while Element Man transmuted rubble into harmless gas and Diadem telepathically coordinated their efforts.

But the planners had more than funding and superhuman help, they had vision. Responding to President Bush's impassioned speech, they decided not just to re-create Detroit, or to copy any other city in the world. They chose instead to take advantage of the opportunity to design an all-new



city — one incorporating the latest technological advances and sociological and architectural theories. New buildings were erected with space-age materials. Roads were built with transmitters designed to control the computerized automobiles that would operate within the city limits — and to minimize the need for cars, a massive and effective maglev monorail was built around and through the entire city.

As the city was slowly rebuilt, residents returned. One by one, businesses began work, new universities opened their doors to students, and citizens started their lives over in all-new homes. By late 1999, the efforts of all the countless thou-

MILLENNIUM CITY VITAL STATISTICS (2002)

Population: 3.88 million (SMSA), 1.2 million (urban center)

Race: 44% White, 41% Black, 10% Asian, 5% Other

Religion: 44% Protestant, 40% Catholic, 9% Jewish, 7% Other

Major Industries: Heavy industry, light manufacturing, technology, pharmaceuticals, steel

Nickname: The City of the Future

City Government: Mayor, nine-seat City Council

Mayor: Calvin Biselle

sands of builders, planners, and contributors were rewarded when the city, renamed Millennium City, was officially declared finished and re-opened. (Though in truth, much construction remained to be done, and still does.) A special ceremony in the new Memorial Park dedicated it to the memory of all those who had fallen to protect the city. Dozens of large corporations moved their headquarters to the revived downtown, and their ubiquitous presence enabled them to elect a City Council friendly to their needs.

New superheroes were drawn as well. Defender relocated to Millennium City in early 2001 and recruited several heroes to form the Champions, the region's first superteam. Doctor Silverback moved there along with his sponsor, Cambridge Biotech, in 1997. And in recent months, new heroes like the mercenary media sensation Cavalier and the skilled martial artist Nightwind, have also come to town.

Of course, there have been new superhuman menaces to deal with as well. A high-tech thief known as the Signal Ghost has plagued several of the city's corporations. The supernaturally lucky mercenary named Hazard has taunted the MCPD on several occasions, as has the criminal mentalist Brainchild. The cyborg mastermind Interface has battled the Champions twice. From Detroit's infamous history of organized crime has come a brand-new, high tech team calling themselves the New Purple Gang. And of course, old threats like Mechanon and VIPER look on the "City of the Future" as a ripe fruit just waiting to be plucked... or crushed.

Layout

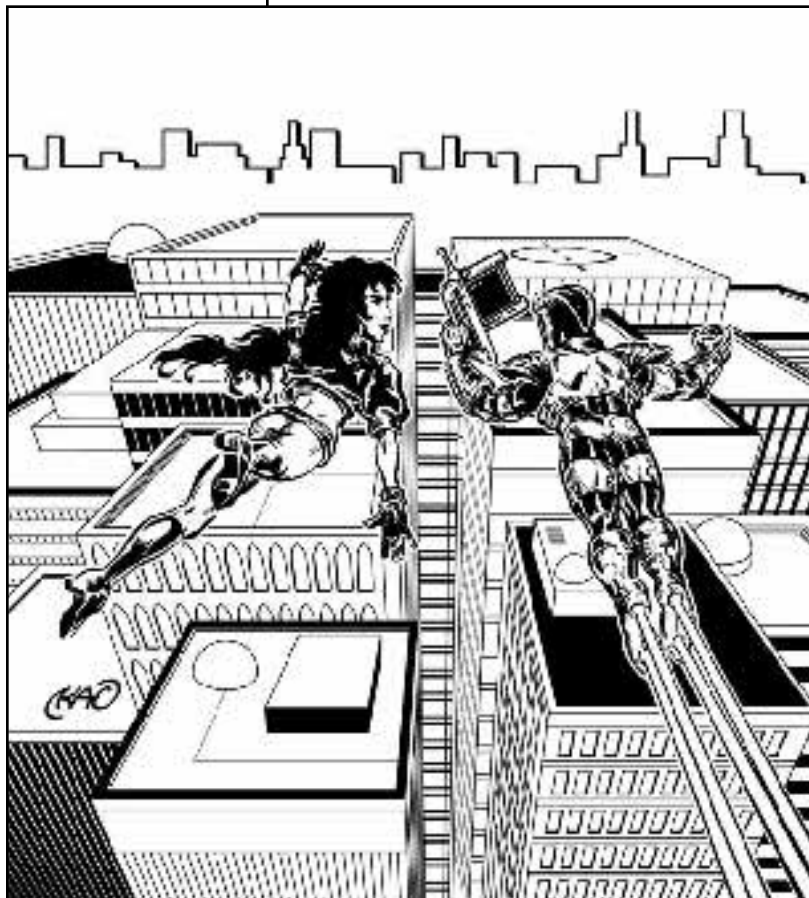
Millennium City, formerly known as Detroit, is one of the most prominent centers of superhuman activity in the Champions Universe. With a population of approximately 1.2 million, Millennium City proper takes up slightly less space than its former self. Because of the unique nature of its transportation system, the boundaries of the city are fairly easy to discern: they extend from Livernois Street on the west and southwest down to the Detroit River, over to Hayes Avenue on the eastern side up to the Millennium Highway (formerly known as the "8-Mile Road") in the north. That border leaves some of what was formerly Detroit outside, primarily to the west; some has been subsumed into the city of Dearborn, while the section to the northwest is now a suburb called North Detroit.

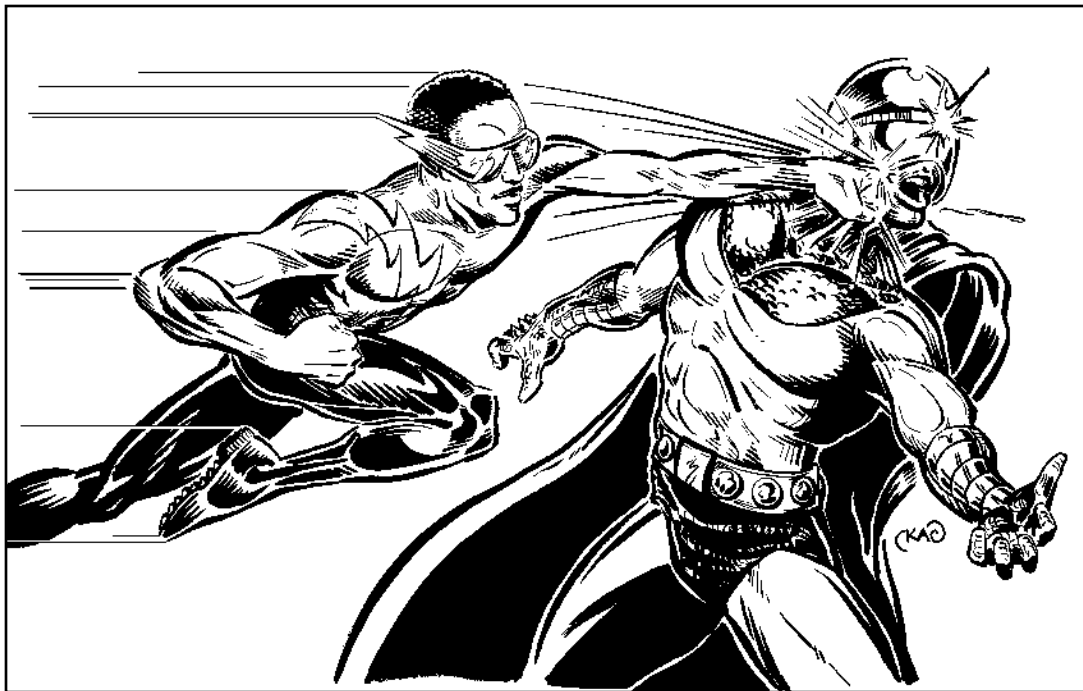
With large amounts of space to work with, the architects of Millennium City saw little need to build *up*; even in the center of downtown the largest buildings are only 30-40 stories tall. Instead, they built out, and filled each level — the most notable and ubiquitous features of the city are the multilevel walkways, ramps, arches, and bridges connecting each building. Every block in downtown Millennium City has several levels of walkways above the street, most enclosed but usually at least one with openings on the side (also allowing the wind to pass through) and some totally open to the elements (and closed to foot traffic during bad weather). The largest buildings are the seven that make up the rebuilt Renaissance Center, averaging 45 stories each and housing the headquarters of some of the world's biggest and most advanced corporations.

The Detroit River, which passes to the south and divides Millennium City from its Canadian sister city Windsor, connects Lake St. Claire to Lake Erie. This cold and swift river moves an enormous amount of freight, although most of the shipping business in the area actually runs through Windsor. Commuters can cross this river either by quick ferry service, by under-river tunnel, or by one of two aerial gondola lines, which are very crowded during rush hour.

LEAVE THE DRIVING TO US

Upon entering Millennium City, the first and most notable landmark one encounters are the Gates. Millennium City is a "closed system"; there are only four entry points to the city by road, and each has a gate where sensors check each entering car to confirm that it is equipped with a "control chip." These chips allow the computerized roadways running through Millennium City to interface with the car. (If a driver's car does not have a chip, extensive and well-guarded parking garages are available at every Gate, along with stations for the People Mover monorail. It is also possible to rent a chipped car at stations just inside the Gates.) Chipped cars can receive direct signals from transmitters along the roadside, which send information regarding traffic conditions and other hazards. Furthermore, only chipped cars are allowed on "The Loop," the





freeway running along the perimeter of the city, where control of the cars is relinquished by the driver to a massive computer, which keeps traffic zipping along at a standard 70 mph with each car at a uniform distance and shifting lanes to exit at the destination the driver entered in advance. The Gates themselves are also stops on the new high-speed rail system installed in the mid-1990s covering almost all of southern Michigan.

The city itself is designed to be friendly to pedestrians. There are extended walkways connecting buildings, each lighting up at night when motion sensors detect movement nearby. The walkways, streets, and sidewalks contain powerful heating elements that keep snow, ice, or even standing water from accumulating. Many buildings have rooftop parks or gardens, taking advantage of the space available at higher levels to create a more comfortable urban environment. It is quite possible to cross Millennium City in several directions without ever descending to street level, and some citizens take pride in doing so as little as possible.

As a visitor walks through Millennium City, he notices the flashy video billboards, some of which utilize three-dimensional "hologram" technology. Large displays are mounted on the sides of tall buildings, but there are smaller ones on walls at ground level as well. On most street corners one can also find "Info Kiosks," small stands where vendors sell newspapers and snacks while large screens broadcast news and advertisements. Each of these kiosks also features private phone/Internet access booths, separated by screens which turn opaque when a user enters.

Visitors who stay for extended periods learn about some of the other unique features of Millennium City. The libraries and schools have state-of-the-art computer systems and store the vast majority of their data electronically. Every building within the city limits is wired for ultra-high-speed Internet access. The city's governmental systems use

the latest equipment; for example, the voter rolls are online, and voting itself is fully automated and can be done from the privacy of home, vastly increasing turnout.

Obviously, a city as wired as Millennium City draws an enormous amount of power, and the electricity supply is an ongoing concern. The city is covered with solar panels, which take much of the roof space of taller buildings. Northeast of the city along the shores of Lake St. Claire are numerous "windmill farms," each with thousands of small turbines spinning in the breeze. The primary sources of electricity remain the two nuclear plants in Monroe, thirty miles south (known as "Fermi 2" and "Fermi 3") and a dozen fossil-fuel plants. Several scientists in Millennium City, including Dr. Silverback and his colleague Dr. Abnel Ali, are committed to solving the city's energy supply problems.

Government

Millennium City is the largest city in Michigan and the county seat of Wayne County. The mayor, elected in 1996 and reelected in 2000, is Calvin Biselle, a Democrat. Biselle is a black man, 46 years old, divorced with two children. He receives strong support from the local unions, the casinos, and the young, "hip" workers who've moved to Millennium City in the last few years to take high-paying programming and engineering jobs. Biselle is notorious for his public "misstatements" — he regularly mangles the English language and makes numerous factual errors in speeches and other public appearances that his staff immediately corrects in hurried "clarifications." However, Biselle strongly supports the arts (both classical and contemporary — he numbers among his personal friends several rap artists, actors, and writers, and dated actress Leah Ross for several years), is socially progressive, and projects a youthful, energetic image. He is up for

HUDSON CITY

On the southern coast of New Jersey sits the large and bustling metropolis of Hudson City. A center of finance, industry, culture, and art, it's also widely recognized as one of the most crime-ridden and corrupt cities in the United States. Crime (both organized and disorganized) is rampant, public corruption flourishes, and innocent citizens take their lives in their hands if they go into certain neighborhoods after dark... or even in broad daylight.

Although Hudson City is home to several costumed vigilantes, including the feared Harbinger of Justice, as well as a number of criminals who seem to possess weird "powers" that may or may not constitute superpowers (albeit very low-level ones), no powerful superhumans live there, or even visit the place. By some unspoken agreement, the criminals and crimefighters of Hudson City (as well as the nearby smaller city of Fell's Point) keep to themselves, and superhumans stay far away.

For more information on Hudson City and its inhabitants, please refer to Hero Games's *Dark Champions* line of modern-day action-adventure and vigilante crimefighting games.

reelection again in 2004 (the last time term-limit laws allow him to run), and is favored to win again as the Republicans in Millennium City seem resigned to waiting until he is forced from office.

While the Mayor controls the executive functions of city government, the City Council handles the legislative and fiscal considerations. The nine-seat Council is largely made up of moderate conservatives selected and supported by the corporations that built and run Millennium City. One notable exception is Councilman Brianna Cook, a Chippewa Indian who represents the 5th District (which includes two of Millennium City's three Indian-run casinos).

The City's Police Commissioner is Ruth Arnold, formerly head of Old Detroit's Organized Crime Task Force and a thirty-year veteran. Well-regarded for her ability to tie mob heads up in administrative red tape, Arnold has inherited a force deeply divided between young "techies" armed with the latest cutting-edge science and equipment and an aging force of Old Detroit's veteran cops holding on for their pensions. Millennium City has a police force of 10,000, approximately 70% of whom are officers.

Millennium City's internal government frequently finds itself competing with Wayne County's government, including the County Executive Leonard Berman and County Prosecutor Daniel Watson. Compared with the city, the rest of Wayne County frequently considers itself underfunded, especially the cities of Dearborn, Livonia, and North Detroit.

KINETIK

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200kg; 3d6 [1]
26	DEX	48	14-	OCV: 9/DCV: 9
23	CON	26	14-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
12	PRE	2	11-	PRE Attack: 2d6
10	COM	0	11-	
9	PD	6		Total: 15 PD (6 rPD)
8	ED	3		Total: 14 ED (6 rED)
7	SPD	34		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
8	REC	0		
50	END	2		
30	STUN	0		
				Total Characteristic Cost: 142

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 20"/320"

Cost	Powers	END
44	<i>Super-Running:</i> Multipower, 55-point reserve; all Only In Contact With A Surface (-¼)	
4u	1) <i>Hyper-Running:</i> Flight 20", x16 Noncombat	5
4u	2) <i>Overdrive Running:</i> Flight 20", MegaScale (1"=1 km; +¼)	5
15	<i>Speedster Tricks:</i> Elemental Control, 30-point powers	
15	1) <i>Fast Work:</i> Change Environment 8"	

	radius, Varying Effect (+½)	3	
12	2) <i>Protective Aura:</i> Force Field (8 PD/12 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only When Moving (-¼)	0	
15	3) <i>Vibro-grip:</i> HKA 1d6 (1d6+1 with STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Penetrating (+½)	0	
9	4) <i>Supersonic Finger-Snap:</i> EB 3d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: High Pressure] or armored head-covering; +1); No Range (-½), Gestures (must hold hand near target's ear; -¼)	3	
10	5) <i>Dizzying Spin:</i> Drain DEX 3d6; Requires A DEX Roll (-½)	3	
12	<i>Protective Suit:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½)	0	
<i>Martial Arts: Speedster Martial Arts</i>			
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes		
5	Flying Dodge — +4 Dodge, Abort, FMove		
5	Flying Grab -2 -1 Grab 2 Limbs, 35 STR, FMove		
5	Passing Disarm -1 -1 Disarm, 35 STR, FMove		
5	Passing Strike +1 0 5d6 + v/5, FMove		
5	Passing Throw 0 0 5d6 + v/5, Target Falls, FMove		
5	Rapid Punch +1 -2 9d6 Strike		
8	+2 Damage Classes (already added in)		

Talents	
3	Lightning Calculator
4	Speed Reading (x10)

Skills	
3	Breakfall 14-
2	CK: Millennium City 11-
2	KS: General Knowledge & Trivia 11-
2	PS: Crossword Puzzles 11-
2	PS: Scientist 11-
3	Sleight Of Hand 14-
3	Scientist
2	1) SS: Biochemistry 13-
2	2) SS: Microbiology 13-
2	3) SS: Physics 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 208
Total Cost: 350

200+ Disadvantages	
30	DNPC: Joyce, Ronnie, and Phillip (three younger siblings) 11- (Incompetents; Unaware of character's Social Limitation: Secret Identity)
5	Hunted: The New Purple Gang 8- (Less Pow, Capture/Kill)
20	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
20	Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
15	Psychological Limitation: Overconfidence (Very Common, Moderate)
15	Psychological Limitation: Very Aware Of His Public Perception As A Black Superhero

- (Common, Strong)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Brendan Grant) (Frequently, Major)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Chemical Attacks (Common)
- 10 Vulnerability: 1½ x BODY from Chemical Attacks (Common)

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Background/History: Brendan Grant was always the high achiever in his family. Born in Detroit in 1974, he graduated from high school at the top of his class and had been accepted to attend the University of Michigan to study chemistry when the city was destroyed in the summer of 1992. Brendan lost both his parents in the terrible conflagration, and had to forego college to go to work and support his younger siblings. He took a job as a junior lab assistant at Dew Chemicals, one of the first corporations to move back in after the destruction, and worked for several years for the brilliant chemist Luther Beckett.

Working closely with Beckett gave Brendan an education in cutting-edge biotechnology that rivaled anything he could have learned at university, and Beckett began to rely on his enthusiastic and hardworking young assistant, gradually promoting him to the position of top aide. Then, one fateful night in 1999, Grant was alone in the labs working late and a fire broke out in a neighboring lab. Lost in his research, Grant didn't hear the alarm system go off until too late, and was overcome by the strange and powerful gasses released in the blaze.

When Grant awoke in the hospital several days later, he quickly discovered that the chemicals he'd been exposed to in the fire had worked a mutagenic change on his body — he now thought, reacted, and moved at superhuman speed. He could run faster than the speed of sound, and his body generated an "aura" that protected him from the harmful effects of friction. Remembering how his parents had died and the heroic actions of the superheroes who had defeated Dr. Destroyer, Grant adopted the identity of "Kinetik" so he could help defend the citizens of Millennium City.

Grant has spent a lot of time over the last three years fighting off the attempts of organized crime and groups like VIPER to re-establish themselves within Millennium City, and has been fairly successful. The Champions have offered him membership twice in recent months, and though he considers it an honor he prefers working by himself and helping people on a smaller scale than the Champions tend to work on. He is always available to help

out if they need him, though, and has struck up a friendship with Sapphire in particular.

Personality/Motivation: Kinetik, despite his name and powers, is a fairly laid-back and relaxed guy. He enjoys helping people and using his powers to stop crime immensely, but he doesn't get too hung up with angst over whether he could be doing more or why he, of all people, was gifted with superpowers. He's a well-adjusted individual who takes it all in stride. However, his repeated successes against a variety of foes (including VIPER, and a local gang of toughs called the New Purple Gang) have made him a little more overconfident than is good for him. Sooner or later a powerful villain is likely to take him down a notch or two.

As one of the most popular black superheroes in Millennium City, Kinetik is regarded as a role model in the black community, a fact of

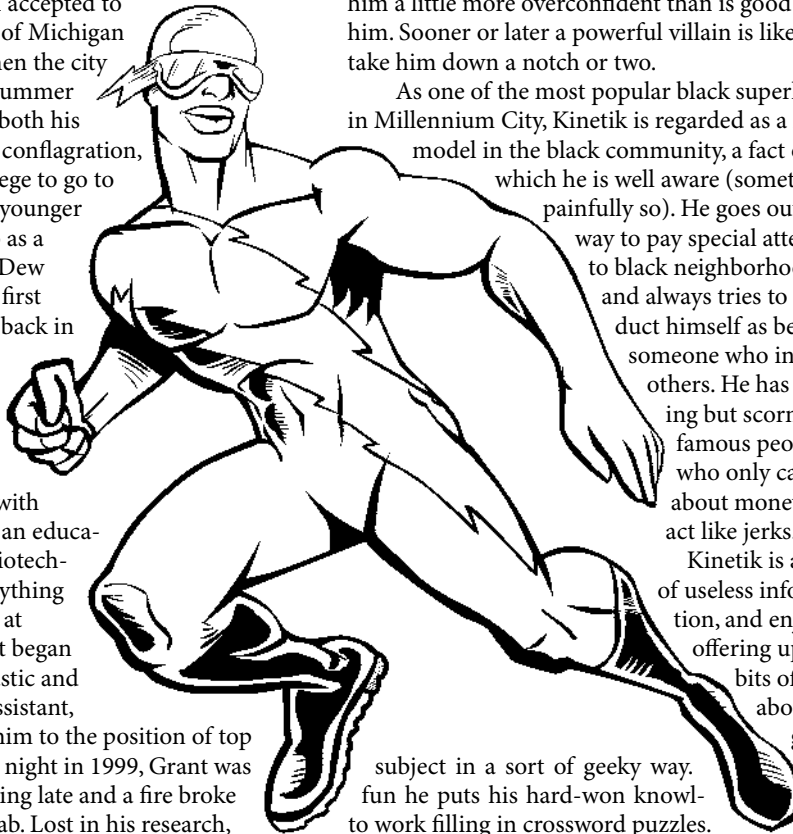
which he is well aware (sometimes painfully so). He goes out of his way to pay special attention to black neighborhoods, and always tries to conduct himself as befits someone who inspires others. He has nothing but scorn for famous people who only care about money and act like jerks.

Kinetik is a font of useless information, and enjoys offering up tidbits of data about any given subject in a sort of geeky way. For fun he puts his hard-won knowledge to work filling in crossword puzzles.

Quote: "When will you dimwits learn you can't run away from me?"

Powers/Tactics: Kinetik's powers derive from exposure to the strange gasses generated by the Dew Chemicals fire, which somehow altered his body to make it capable of attaining much faster running speeds than normal humans can. At his ordinary combat speeds he runs faster than 50 miles an hour, and when he "kicks into overdrive," he can travel many times the speed of sound. His body automatically generates a protective energy field that shields him from the friction and other harmful effects of moving so quickly. (In game terms, he gets the extra defense only if he makes at least a Half Move using his Super-Running powers; the extra defense lasts until his next Phase, though he can maintain it uninterrupted by making a Half Move in that Phase.) Unfortunately, his accelerated metabolism makes him vulnerable to chemical attacks (including drugs, gasses, and poisons).

Kinetik has learned how to use his hyper-accelerated body to create many combat effects. Besides simply moving past people at high speeds



and striking them (most of his Martial Maneuvers), he can deliver dozens of punches in the blink of an eye (his Rapid Punch), snap his fingers quickly enough to create a mini-sonic boom right next to someone's head and stun him, vibrate his hand into objects or people to create painful wounds, and spin someone so quickly they become extremely dizzy and lose their balance. He can also perform many tasks, from reading to cleaning house, much more quickly than normal people can.

Compared to many superhumans, Kinetik's powers are fairly weak, and he knows it (though his high SPD gives him something of a compensating edge). He's most effective against large numbers of thugs or gangsters, and much less use against powerful supervillains (which is one of the reasons he's turned down offers of membership in the Champions so far — he's concerned he wouldn't be able to contribute properly). Therefore, when working with other heroes, he generally volunteers to clear out the henchmen while his allies take on the main bad guys. Otherwise, he attempts to draw fire or use the environment against an opponent, preferring Move Bys (and his Martial Maneuvers) because of his

relatively low defenses.

Campaign Use: Kinetik is a good back-up hero for the Champions if the group gets into trouble in your campaign. He can also serve as a focus for stories addressing issues pertaining to race and superheroing.

If Kinetik is too weak for your campaign, boost some of his Characteristics and give him more Speedster Tricks. If he's too powerful, decrease his DEX and SPD a bit, and remove some of the Speedster Tricks.

Kinetik doesn't Hunt specific villains. He's got too many things to do to focus exclusively on one enemy.

Appearance: Kinetik is a black man in his late 20s. He wears a skintight costume, scarlet on the upper half and black below, with a white "lightning-bolt" motif running from his upper right shoulder across his body and down his left leg. His head is bare, and he wears large, bulbous goggles. He is lean, not heavily-muscled, and his hair is cut short (or sometimes shaved off entirely).

VIBORA BAY



VIBORA BAY VITAL STATISTICS (2002)

Population: 2.78 million (SMSA), 810,000 (Urban Center)

Race: 49% White, 38% Black, 8% Hispanic, 5% Other

Religion: 51% Protestant, 33% Catholic, 11% High Apostolic, 3% Jewish, 2% Other

Major Industries: Agriculture; fishing; light manufacturing; oil; publishing; shipbuilding; tourism

Nickname: The Queen City

City Government: Mayor; city controller; ward-based City Council

Mayor: Richenda Barker

City Controller: Earl Jamison

Located on the Florida panhandle coast, in what was once a snake- and mosquito-infested swamp, Vibora Bay is a strange blend of old and new — a modern city that clings to its old roots and old ways. It's a place where despite the sunny, humid days, a certain darkness always seems to lurk in alleys and cellars, and there's a mysterious chill that runs up and down one's spine....

History

Vibora Bay was first settled about three hundred years ago, toward the end of the seventeenth century, by Spanish explorers. Its broad, relatively deep bay made it an ideal place for ships to come, even if it wasn't always the nicest place to live. More than a few settlers died of strange diseases in the early years, and the snakes that gave the place its name never seemed to diminish in number. Even today it's not unusual for a resident to wake up and find a snake warming himself on the patio... or in the house!

During the years of British colonization of America, and on into the Revolutionary War, Vibora Bay grew fat and prosperous selling to both rebel and Redcoat alike. Even after the city became a part of the United States, under the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, and Americans began settling there in great numbers, it retained its own distinct culture, a blend of Spanish and the strange customs

and patois of the many African slaves that lived and worked in the area. Somehow, Vibora Bay seemed to change people to fit it, rather than changing to fit its new inhabitants.

The city remained a bustling and wealthy trading center until Union blockades during the Civil War brought trade screeching to a halt. Vibora Bay weathered most of the War pretty well, but in the end it suffered horribly when Major Roderick Burnham, an underling of General William T. Sherman, treated it not much differently than Sherman treated Atlanta. The survivors were left with a city devastated by weeks of shelling and intermittent fires, but rather than complain they rolled up their sleeves and got to work, rebuilding wherever they could and building anew where they must. Surprisingly, few of their slaves, now free men and women, left the area — but just as surprisingly, there was little tension between former slaves and former masters, unlike many other regions of the defeated South.

Before long, the trading ships and railcars were entering the city in full force once again, and life resumed along more or less the same lines as it had before. For the past century and a half, Vibora Bay has coasted along, slowly growing, but never experiencing true bursts of expansion and modernization like so many other Southern cities. Something about it seems to defeat the fast modern lifestyle, slowing people and events down to a more sedate pace. Viborans point out with pride how

many of their buildings are the same ones from the Reconstruction period (or before), and how many of their customs — like the annual Easter Festival, a riot of colorful parades, excessive drinking, and lewd behavior — remain almost unchanged from the early days.

In the twenty-first century, Vibora Bay has become a city of contrasts. Although not untouched by the technological revolution of the late 1900s — the city houses some important high-tech industries — its heart lies still in the past. Life there has a certain quality all its own, unlike that of any other city in the world, and the Viborans wouldn't trade it for anything.

Layout

Vibora Bay originally grew along the waterfront, and that remains the oldest and most heavily developed part of town. Although the center of the business district has shifted somewhat to the north, the oddly archaic-looking and quaint waterfront buildings nevertheless hold many offices, services businesses, and even residences. Major industries, particularly shipbuilding, have spread east and west along the coast, while the rest of the city grows north from the central waterfront through what was once swamp and lowland (making parts of Vibora Bay distressingly prone to flooding).

Much of the city is split along east-west lines, with the eastern part (Easton) being mainly white, and the western part (Weston) mainly black. The dividing line tends to be High Street, which roughly bisects the city, but this varies from neighborhood to neighborhood. The city's best-known tourist attractions — Blackman's Square, where once the slave market was held, and the High Apostolic Church, home to the strange religion of the same name — are both in Weston, as are over half of the city's best nightclubs and entertainment spots... but so are some of its darkest alleys.

Vibora Bay is noted, and often studied, for its architecture. According to some scholars, there are more buildings in the old Spanish styles in Vibora Bay than any other city in North America, and students can also find evidence of Georgian and Victorian architecture in a sort of mish-mash that only a Viboran can truly understand. The streets, particularly near the waterfront, are often cramped and twisting, making it easy to get lost, and giving the city something of an Old World feel. More than one visitor, uncertain of his bearings, has later reported that as he wandered around trying to make heads or tails of his map, the very buildings seemed to subtly lean over and glare at him.

The Superhuman World In Vibora Bay

As should surprise no one familiar with the history, culture, and feel of the city, superhumans in Vibora Bay favor the mystic. There are a few technology-oriented superhumans, and a mutant or two, but most superhumans in the area have mystic origins or

powers. Mystics from other places — such as Dark Seraph, Witchcraft, Takofanes, and Talisman — often come to Vibora Bay for reasons of their own, and DEMON is said to maintain a large Demonhome somewhere in the still-untamed swamps on the outskirts of the city.

Vibora Bay has no superteam of its own, but several independent heroes call the Queen City home. They include Black Mask, the tenth hero (and first woman) to wear the mantle of America's first costumed adventurer; Juryrig, a gadgeteer with a wicked sense of humor; Brother Thunder and Sister Rain, a (possibly married) couple who have mastered many of the powers of voodoo; Redsnake, a martial artist who takes his name from that of an unusual local species of rattlesnake; and Dr. Ka, a sorcerer said to have once studied under the god Thoth, but who fell from the god's path to seek his own way in the mystic realms.

Perhaps the most unusual superhuman figure in Vibora Bay is a strange man who goes by the name Robert Caliburn. He wears simple clothes (jeans, t-shirt, a faded old Army jacket, fingerless gloves), and his face makes him seem like he's about 25 — but his eyes have a hundred-year stare that many people find unnerving in one so young. He smokes constantly, yet never coughs... nor has anyone ever seen him use a match to light his cigarettes. A few folk have said they've seen him accompanied by a large lizard of some kind, though most dismiss such tales as urban legends. What is known for sure is that all the mystics of the city, superheroic and mundane, accord him wide latitude and a deep respect for reasons they will not explain. What you can also count on is that if there's trouble in the Queen City, you'll probably find Caliburn right at the heart of it.

THE HIGH APOSTOLIC CHURCH

The High Apostolic religion, founded in Vibora Bay and mostly confined to that city, is a strange, supposedly Christian faith, an offshoot with both Catholic and Protestant roots practiced almost entirely by blacks. In truth its roots are older and darker, and lie far back in the native religions of Africa, which when brought to this country metamorphosed into what most folk call voodoo. Although the modern Church claims to have grown away from those practices and become a simple Christian faith, albeit one with some unusual customs, many in Vibora Bay don't accept that explanation. It is widely believed in certain circles that the High Apostolic Church, or at least some elements of it, continue to participate in voodoo rituals similar to, but definitely distinct from, the kind still practiced in Haiti (where, the Church freely admits, it does much missionary work).



HAYNESVILLE, KANSAS



HAYNESVILLE VITAL STATISTICS (2002)

Population: 15,000

Race: 73% White, 19%
Black, 8% Other

Religion: 81% Protes-
tant, 12% Catholic, 7%
Other

Major Industries: Agri-
culture, tourism

City Government: Mayor;
five-member City
Council

Mayor: Frank Munroe

The small town of Haynesville, Kansas was perhaps the most unlikely place to become the center of superhuman activity before and during World War II one could imagine. Located approximately fifty miles east of Wichita, Haynesville seems like an archetypal American small town. There is, in fact, a Main Street that passes through the center of town, though Kimmell Street, a block north, is actually the main thoroughfare that connects to Interstate 35 in the modern day. Main Street is the address of City Hall, which is down the street from the public library, the middle school, and Doc's Ice Cream Parlor. A small creek, Cottonwood Stream, runs through the eastern side of town, and along its banks children play with rope-swings and inner tubes. In many ways, visiting Haynesville is like stepping into a Norman Rockwell painting.

The population of approximately 15,000 is primarily made up of farmers, either independent or working for one of the two large industrial corn farms in nearby Burgin. However, just outside of town sits McLaughlin Air Force Base, well known as the former home of the Haynesville Project, one of the most closely-guarded secrets of World War II. Once an active and bustling military facility (known as Fort McLaughlin during the War), McLaughlin AFB is now a quiet and little-used base constantly in danger of being shut down by Congress.

History

Haynesville was founded in 1868 by a group of settlers led by Frank Haynes, who started his farm a mile north of the Cottonwood Stream. In 1870 a crafty businessman named William Short built a supply store designed to provide supplies for settlers continuing further west into the prairie. Soon, he had become so successful that a small town grew around him, and within five years Haynesville had two churches, two banks, and a weekly newspaper. For a while Short believed the town was going to get much larger, perhaps rivaling Kansas City or St. Louis, and he bought several more parcels of land around Haynesville and began negotiating with the Union Pacific Railroad to build a depot there. Instead, UP built their depot several miles away in Burgin, and Haynesville was relegated to a second-class small town. Short himself went bankrupt in the early 1880s, though Short's Supply Company still remains one of the leading stores downtown.

Without the westbound train traffic the depot would have provided, Haynesville instead concentrated on agriculture. The bands of forest on either

side of Cottonwood Stream provided for lumber mills; other small farms grew corn and wheat. The Dunston Farms Corporation became the largest in the area by the late 1890s, and it built an impressive grain elevator in Burgin. Other small family farms were mildly successful, sustaining their workers and turning modest profits.

The Depression hit Haynesville hard, and the early 1930s saw much of the younger population strike out for the cities to find some form of employment. Farm subsidies improved the financial situation somewhat, and by 1938 it seemed things were once again looking up for Haynesville.

CAPTAIN PATRIOT

One of the young folks who hadn't left Haynesville was Don Randall. At eighteen, Don was an all-American kid who played halfback for the high school football team, got good but not excellent grades, and dated one of the prettiest girls in school (the daughter of one of Haynesville's wealthiest businessmen). His parents owned a small farm on the north side of town, but Don had little interest in farming. He planned to join the Army, or maybe the Navy, and see the world. Sure, it might be a bit dangerous, but Don knew there were amazing, mysterious things out there to see and do — after all, he was a voracious reader of pulps and magazines.

Unbeknownst to Don, forces out in that world were gathering. German mystics were performing a series of mysterious rituals (see page 11), and when they were finished, a strange energy-field traveled across America, looking for an ideal subject. On the evening of May 3rd, 1938, an unusual thunderstorm struck Haynesville, with powerful winds that sent tree limbs crashing into the streets and rain falling hard enough to sting. Don had been at the library until closing — he was a fair student, but Mr. Statler's chemistry class was *tough* and it was all he could do to keep up. Walking home, he found himself caught by the sudden downpour and ran into the park for shelter until the worst of the storm blew over. But it didn't blow over, it just kept getting worse. Suddenly there was an actinic blue flash, and Don lost consciousness.

When he came to the next morning, he was in a hospital bed. He had been found by one of Haynesville's policemen out on patrol after the storm had passed over. From the scorch marks on the earth beside Don, the doctor guessed he had been struck by lightning while hiding under a tree, but had apparently suffered no ill effects. "You're a lucky kid, Don," said the doctor as he released him to his anxious parents.

That next night, Don dreamed about running. He ran through his family's fields at night, fast, faster than a horse or a car, as fast as a train. When he woke the next morning, his pajamas were dirty and covered with grain.

He spent the day at school in a fog, barely paying attention to his teachers or his friends. After school was over, he walked down town and found himself sitting in Doc's Ice Cream Shop. There, his attention was grabbed by some sort of disturbance happening at the American Bank across the street. Coincidentally, the notorious bank robber Henry Bligh and his gang, on the run after a string of robberies in Illinois and Indiana, had been hiding out in Haynesville and decided to rob one of the local banks before moving on. As Don watched, Bligh emerged from the bank, firing his pistol wildly behind him. He and his fellow gangsters piled into their getaway car, even as police sirens approached.

Don would later say that he never even thought about what he was doing. He sprang to his feet and ran outside, gaining on Bligh's getaway car, which was rapidly accelerating. As he ran alongside, he leaned over and gave the car a shove, and it spun out of control and struck a corner lamppost. Bligh's driver was knocked unconscious by the impact, but Bligh and his other two cronies were uninjured.

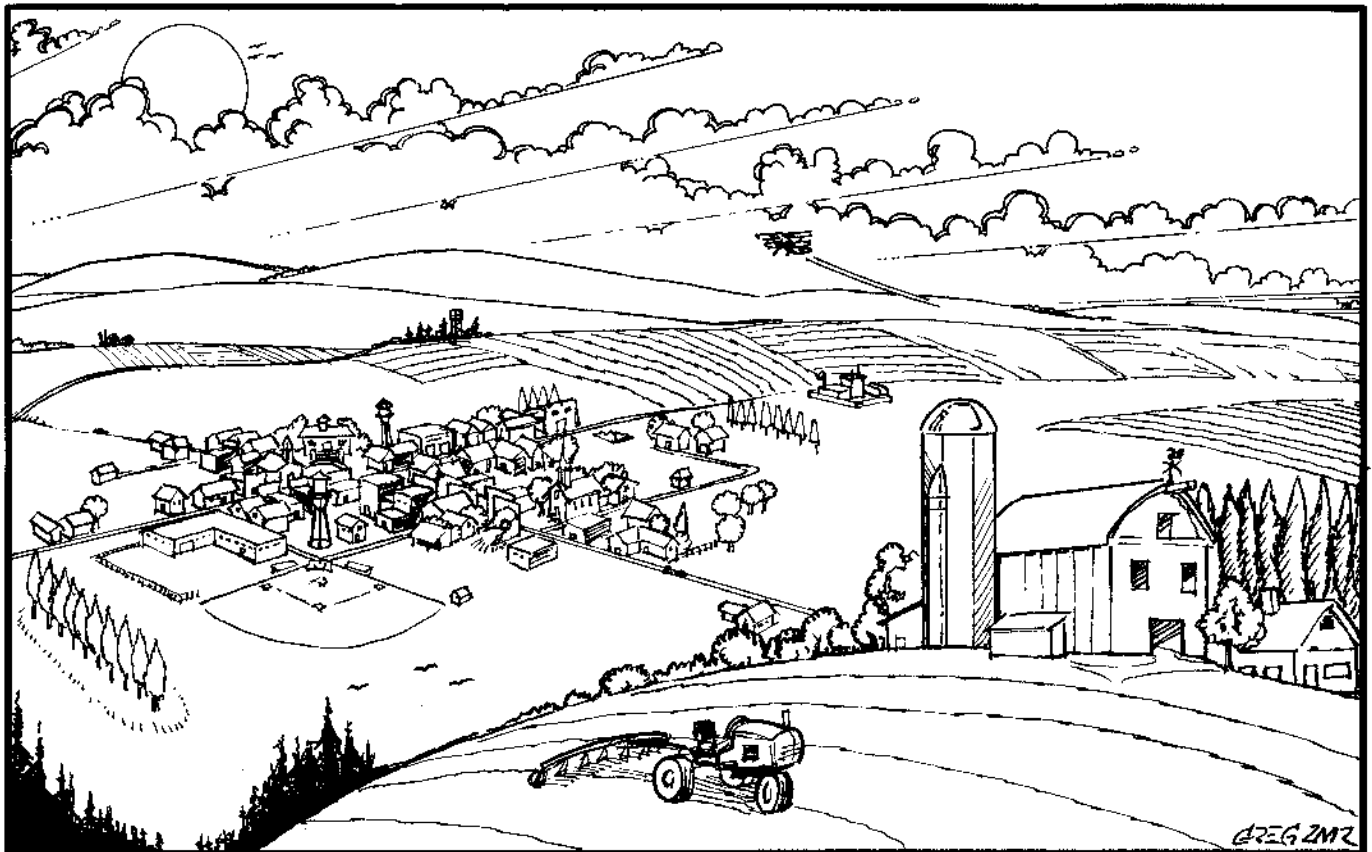
Shouting his disbelief and anger, Bligh brought his pistol over the top of the car and fired, striking Don in the shoulder. The bullet bounced away harmlessly, and Bligh could only stare in disbelief as Don leapt over the car, bringing his forearm down on Bligh's neck and rendering him instantly unconscious. Seeing this, the other two crooks immediately surrendered.

There had been over a dozen witnesses to Don Randall's incredible feats that afternoon, and before the day was over news reports began to flow out of Haynesville about the young man who pushed over a car and bounced a bullet (actually, the bullet had raised a nasty welt on Don's shoulder, but most of the news stories ignored that). Don patiently answered all of the questions, first of the local press, then the national news. A *Life* magazine photographer took a famous photo of him hoisting a car over his head that was reprinted on front pages across America. And before long, Don Randall was summoned to meet with the President.

President Roosevelt ushered Don into a private office in the White House, along with some of his top aides and military leaders. There, Roosevelt showed Don some top secret films, stolen by American spies in Europe and brought to America only a few days before. Grainy and occasionally out-of-focus, the films nevertheless clearly showed a German soldier performing feats of strength similar to Don's. "Nazi propaganda is referring to him as *Der Sturmvolgel*, Don. The Storm Bird. He's going to be fighting at the front of the German Army." Roosevelt looked keenly at Don. "We're asking you to do the same for America."

Don Randall stood up and saluted. "You can count on me, sir."

Within a month, Roosevelt and his advisers had created the costumed identity of Captain Patriot for Don. He was introduced to the American public by Roosevelt personally in a speech in the Rose Garden, with newsreel footage replaying it to millions across the country. They were just in time, as the footage of *Sturmvolgel* and his fellow super-Nazis leaked out to



the press within days of Don's official debut. At the same time, perhaps inspired by Don's heroics and publicity, other costumed heroes began to appear across America: Optimus, Dr. Twilight, the Black Owl. At first, Captain Patriot traveled around the country, appearing at county fairs and war-bond rallies performing feats of strength and giving inspirational speeches. But a series of explosions at military bases in the Southeast turned out to be the work of German-American Fifth Columnists and when Captain Patriot uncovered and defeated them, he became America's most famous hero.

In October of 1938, several heroes in the greater New York area banded together to fend off an alien invasion (believed at first to be Martians, but later revealed to be from the Sirian system; see page 95). Those heroes called themselves the Defenders of Justice, and for a time publicly eclipsed the activities of Captain Patriot. By December of that year, however, the Defenders extended an offer of membership to Captain Patriot, which he happily accepted.

At the same time, several government scientists had traveled out to Haynesville to study the lightning phenomenon as Don had described it, as well as Don himself; eventually they moved into the old armory outside of town, which was renamed Fort McLaughlin after a Haynesville WWI hero. The scientists, who came to be referred to as the "Haynesville Project," worked secretly from 1939 to 1941 studying various manifestations of super powers. Once America entered the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, the Defenders of Justice and several solo heroes of the period volunteered to join the army, and the resulting team was organized and directed by Major Brent Flanders, with the assistance of Major Leslie Groves, throughout the war.

After the end of the war, President Truman publicly acknowledged the existence of the Haynesville Project, as well as officially declaring it closed down. Fort McLaughlin was transferred over to the Air Force. Haynesville became a tourist location for World War II buffs, and a small museum devoted to Captain Patriot and the Defenders of Justice was built in 1955.

CAPTAIN PATRIOT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 [4]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
25	CON	30	14-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
11	INT	1	11-	PER Roll 14-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
18	COM	4	13-	
15	PD	7		Total: 21 PD (16 rPD)
12	ED	7		Total: 18 ED (16 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
15	REC	4		
50	END	0		
50	STUN	2		
				Total Characteristic Cost: 163

Movement: Running: 11"/22"
Leaping: 13"/26"

Cost	Powers	END
15	<i>Accurate Punch:</i> Find Weakness 12- with Punch	0
10	<i>Tough Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (10 PD/10 ED)	0
60	<i>Amazing Physique:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
12	<i>Chainmail Costume:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½)	0
10	<i>Strong Legs:</i> Running +5" (11" total)	1
5	<i>Strong Legs:</i> Leaping +5" (13" total)	1
9	<i>Heightened Senses:</i> +3 PER with all Sense Groups	0
5	<i>Night-Eyed:</i> Nightvision	0
12	<i>Sharp Eyes And Ears:</i> +4 versus Range for Sight and Hearing Groups	0
3	<i>Sharp Ears:</i> Ultrasonic Hearing	0

Perks

- 5 Contact: Major Groves 11- (founder of the Haynesville Project and builder of the Pentagon); very useful Skills and resources, access to major institutions
- 5 Contact: Harry Hopkins 8- (Secretary of Commerce 1938-40, later Defenders of Justice liaison); extremely useful Skills and resources, access to major institutions
- 6 Fringe Benefit: Army Rank (Captain)
- 6 Reputation: paragon of American virtues and heroism (throughout Earth, 14-) +2/+2d6

Talents

- 3 Lightsleep

Skills

- 6 +2 with Block, Move Through, and Strike (Punch)
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 Climbing 13-
- 3 Combat Driving 13-
- 4 KS: U.S. Military Procedures 13-
- 4 KS: Axis Superhumans 13-
- 1 Language: German (basic conversation; English is native)
- 3 Oratory 13-
- 3 Paramedics 11-
- 3 Tactics 11-
- 3 TF: Common Ground Vehicles, Parachuting (Basic)
- 2 WF: Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 204

Total Cost: 367

150+ Disadvantages

- 15 DNPC: Dorothy Dunston (girlfriend) 11- (Normal)
- 25 Hunted: Axis Military And Superbeings 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Capture/Kill)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Dedicated To Truth, Justice, And Fair Play (Very Common, Total)

- 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Don Randall) (Frequently, Major)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (US Army) (Very Frequently, Major)
- 117 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 367

Background/History: Captain Patriot's early history is described on page 84. When World War II finally came to an end in 1945, he retired. After marrying his high school sweetheart Dorothy, he went to Washington and served as a lobbyist for various military contractors and patriotic organizations, making public speeches on behalf of right-wing citizens groups and fervent anti-Communists (Cap genuinely believed the Communists were the next great threat America faced). He supported Joe McCarthy all through the late 1940s and early 1950s, refusing to believe any of the stories he heard about the excesses of the Red-hunters until too late. When McCarthy was finally censured by the Senate in 1954, Randall also lost some of his influence. Not welcome among Dulles's new breed of hawks in Washington, Randall gave up politics and became a professional celebrity. He wrote his autobiography, which was a best-seller in 1959, and several follow-up books that did less well over the next two decades. He was a regular guest on television shows talk shows throughout the '60s, frequently denouncing the peace movement as "goofy drug-abusing kids." Though he did support Martin Luther King's nonviolent protests, he also publicly opposed more extremist civil rights organizations. He became an object of humor to the young "hippies," who regularly spoofed him on TV shows and in comic books.

Having made a fair amount of money from his book sales and investments in the '50s, Randall retired to his California compound in the early 1970s. By this time his powers had faded, and though he remained in good shape he was no longer superhuman. He became reclusive, stung by the jokes made at his expense, which he viewed as betrayal by the public. He did emerge briefly in the early '80s as a supporter of Ronald Reagan, but died of a heart attack in 1982.

Personality/Motivation: Don Randall — Captain Patriot — is not a particularly complex person, much less mentally disturbed. He believes firmly in the concepts of truth, justice, and fair play (so much so that enemies sometimes tricked him during the war by exploiting his kindhearted nature), and is a passionate American patriot. Anything more ethically

complicated or morally dubious than the firm values of the American heartlands, or which questions traditional American values, automatically makes him suspicious, and possibly hostile.

Quote: "If those Ratzis think they can get away from me, they've got another think coming!" (Also: "Buy war bonds and stamps, kids. And keep 'em flying!")

Powers/Tactics: Captain Patriot doesn't bother much with tactics; he firmly believes most of his problems can be solved by leaping into the fray, Finding Weakness a couple of times if necessary, and then laying about with devastating punches. To be fair, he has a

lot of empirical evidence that this actually does work pretty well, and he's perfectly willing to try alternatives if punching isn't effective. He's largely immune to small arms fire, but a lucky grenade once hurt him badly enough

to make him more cautious when faced with larger weapons. He also tends to stick to a school-boy definition of fair play — he always announces his presence before a fight (unless he's helping soldiers with an ambush), and never stoops to "sneaky" tactics himself or tolerates them from his teammates unless there's no alternative.

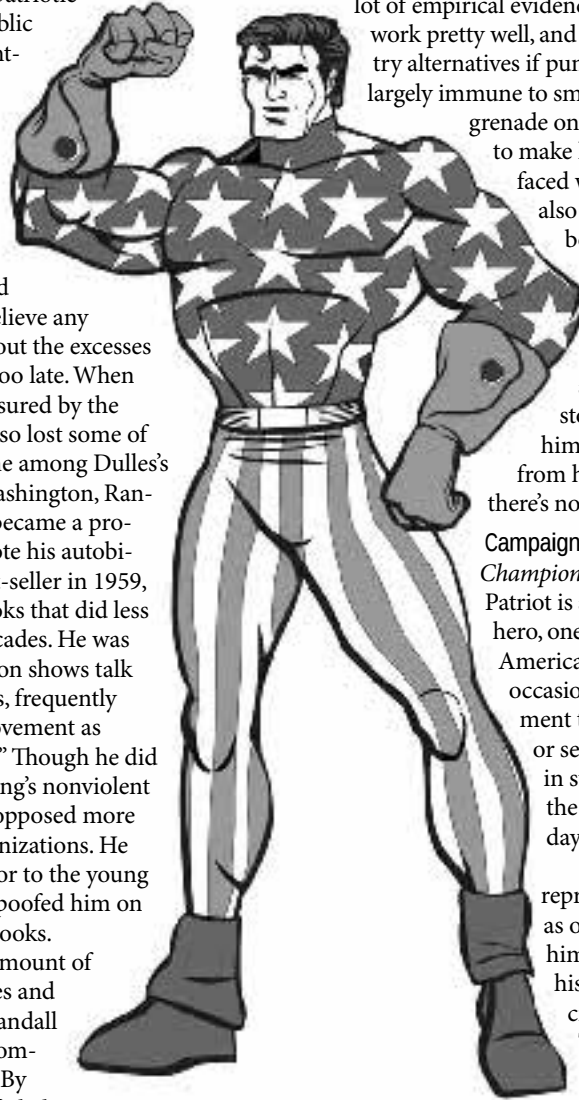
Campaign Use: In a *Golden Age Champions* campaign, Captain Patriot is a standard NPC superhero, one of the most famous in America. After the war, he could occasionally come out of retirement to help with emergencies, or serve as a secondary figure in stories centered around the social problems of the day.

This character sheet represents Captain Patriot as of the war years. To make him more powerful, increase his Characteristics (especially STR) and defenses.

To weaken him, get rid of his Find Weakness and Heightened Senses.

Cap never Hunted anyone, unless you count Nazi supervillains in general; he was too busy with the overall war effort.

Appearance: Captain Patriot stands about 6'4", with impossibly broad shoulders, a dimpled, jutting chin, and blue-black hair that forms a spit curl on his forehead. His costume is a stylized American flag-motif, with white stars on a navy-blue background across the chest and red-and-white-striped leggings. Since he's never concealed his identity, he doesn't bother with a mask, but he does wear a long blue cape for public appearances. (In actual combat situations, he abandons the cape as overly restricting.)



LOST LANDS AND ANCIENT SECRETS



ARIC ROSTON RHODES

18 STR 15 DEX
18 CON 13 BODY
18 INT 12 EGO
18 PRE 14 COM
6 PD 5 ED
3 SPD 8 REC
36 END 31 STUN

Abilities: Acting 13-, KS: Arcane & Occult Lore 14-, KS: Lost Civilizations 14-, KS: Monsters 13-, Oratory 13-, Paramedics 13-, PS: Explorer 13-, PS: Self-Promotion 13-, SS: Anthropology 13-, SS: Archaeology 13-, SS: Cryptozoology 14-, Stealth 12-, Survival (all environments but Urban) 13-, WF: Small Arms, Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Linguist and a generous selection of Languages, Traveler and a generous selection of AKs, CKs, and CuKs.

Disadvantages: Physical Limitation: Missing One Eye, Psychological Limitation: Explorer's Curiosity; Psychological Limitation: Loves The Spotlight, Social Limitation: Famous

Notes: The world-renowned "Explorer of the Unknown," a delver into the strange, the mysterious, the lost, and the weird, Aric Roston Rhodes (he always uses all three names when referring to himself) is an unusual blend of adventurer and pitchman. The star of a highly-rated cable

In the minds of most people, the world is a place defined by what they see on maps. But unbeknownst even to historians and scholars, there is more to the world than what people read about in atlases. Hidden from the rest of humanity, but known to at least some members of the Superhuman World, are several realms and peoples long thought lost, or whom normal folk consign to legend and myth.

ATLANTIS

Many millennia ago, during the Valdorian Age of which few in today's world have any knowledge at all, the realm of Atlantis was founded on a large island of great mystic power. Legends told in Atlantis to this day say that an ocean-god, whom the Atlanteans call Poseidon when speaking with surface-dwellers, brought the first inhabitants — a farming couple, Evenor and Leucippe — to the island. There they discovered *orichalcum*, a strange mineral or metal found nowhere else on Earth. Reddish-orange in color and similar to copper in consistency, orichalcum holds the "charge" of enchantments with great facility, which makes magical devices created with orichalcum powerful and easy to craft.

Evenor and Leucippe had a daughter, Cleito, who bore to Poseidon ten sons, the founders of the Ten Families of Atlantis. First and greatest of Cleito's sons was Vondarien, who ruled over all the Dominion of Atlantis for its entire existence. Immortal and powerful, Vondarien had wisdom to match his strength, and was beloved by all Atlanteans. His brothers — Gadrius, Ampheres, Euaemon, Mnesues, Autochthon, Elasippus, Mestor, Azaes, and Diaprepes — though not so mighty and wise as he, were nevertheless noble and true-hearted, the perfect men to help found so great and wondrous a kingdom.

During the so-called Atlantean Age, dated by the Theomistekles Venedictos of the Trismegistus Council as approximately 32,000 to 30,000 BC, the Dominion of Atlantis became the most powerful and sophisticated realm in the world. Its wizard-lords extended their sway over the other, lesser, nations of the world, exploring uncharted lands and fighting mighty armies with their magics. Only to the east, where they encountered the city of Arcadia, home of the immortal Emphyreans, and east and south, in Lemuria, did they meet their match.

The Atlantean Age was a veritable golden age, faint whispers of which have come down in the myths and tales of many civilizations since, recast as the accomplishments of their own ancestors. Using orichalcum, the mages of Atlantis created a magic-technology unlike any other seen before or since. They built vast palaces and towers, sailed the seas in enchanted ships, and made the island of Atlantis a paradise on Earth. But a shadow fell on this land of wonders, as the people began to turn away from their gods of old to worship the mightiest of their spellcasters, and the pure power of wizardry itself. Eventually those mages came to believe that they *were* gods, or at least as powerful as gods, and dissension arose within the once-peaceful land of Vondarien.

Chief among the troublemakers was Cormar the Mighty, who tried, and failed, to overthrow Vondarien in the 1,478th year of the immortal king's reign. Vondarien slew Cormar, but the rebel's son, Dalsith, escaped the king's armies and fled into the hinterlands of Atlantis. Reckoning of naught but revenge, there he performed a terrible ritual and sacrificed his soul to beings so horrifying, no chronicle mentions their names. The power he received transformed him, and he became Sharna-Gorak the Destroyer, Vondarien's last and greatest enemy.

THE CATAclysm

The clash between Vondarien, mightiest of mages, and Sharna-Gorak, imbued with accursed power, was so awful it shook the very world. Mountains were shattered, continents destroyed, cities razed, forests incinerated. The civilizations of men were swept away like feathers in a breeze, and the towers and palaces of Atlantis were reduced to rubble. At the very last, as Vondarien and Sharna-Gorak each destroyed the other, the island of Atlantis itself sank beneath the waves and disappeared.

But that was not the end of the fabled isle. A scant 200 of her sons and daughters, who had remained faithful throughout all to Poseidon and the other gods of their forefathers, prayed for deliverance, and deliverance was granted. Through the divine grace of the god of all the oceans, the two hundred survivors were given the power to live and breathe beneath the waves.

The early days of the new realm of Atlantis were difficult ones, for the world had been reshaped by the Cataclysm that sank their island home. Several millennia of perils and hardship followed, as the new Atlanteans struggled to survive in the face of the loss of much of their spellcraft, magic-technology, and learning. New continents arose, to be



peopled by other survivors, but being unstable sank back beneath the waves after a time. The undersea realms were not always as safe as the Atlanteans might have wished.

But the restless world shifted again, and new continents — the ones the world knows today — arose, and a similar measure of peace settled on Atlantis as well. For tens of thousands of years the Atlanteans struggled, rebuilding their new kingdom into a pale shadow of what their forebears had possessed, and slowly gaining in knowledge and power. Because of their unfortunate history, the study of other forms of magic beyond that of the Poseidonic priests was forbidden, though some of the secrets were passed on by a hidden cult of wizards. Further, it became forbidden for Atlanteans to have any contact with the surface world. Except for occasional accidental exchanges with sailors or explorers, the surface world saw no more of the people of Atlantis.

THE MODERN PERIOD

Over time, Atlantis grew as a city, to approximately 100,000 inhabitants, plus several thousand more who lived as itinerant farmers and hunters in the small barbarian tribal homes at the edge of the original continent's borders. The throne was still held by the descendants of Vondarien. In the surface year 1867 the young prince Oceanus became king, and married his distant cousin and true love Orana in 1878. Oceanus was very progressive for an Atlantean; he felt the time had come to resume peaceful contact with the surface world. He was not motivated solely by altruism; he knew humans were advancing technologically and their oceangoing vessels were becoming

more common. He felt renewed contact between the races was inevitable and that it was his responsibility to make sure it was peaceful. However, his opinions were not shared among his people. A soldier named Gangar, who believed the Atlanteans should strike to conquer the surface world while they were still able, attempted to take the throne in 1914. A civil war broke out, and Oceanus himself slew Gangar in battle.

Though it seemed the conflict was over, a secret organization, made up of Gangar's sympathizers and opposed to Oceanus, survived and even thrived in the dark alleyways of Atlantis. Oceanus and Orana had but one child, the princess Mara, in 1922 before Orana died in 1924. Oceanus began to raise and school his daughter with his own ideals, thinking he would send her as his ambassador to the courts of the human kingdoms. However, in 1938, Gangar's son, Dargon, organized the opposition and with the aid of the evil wizard Nereus slew Oceanus and claimed the throne. Enough of the army was opposed to the idea of contact with humanity that they accepted Dargon as their new leader. Dargon himself sought to legitimize his claim with an arranged marriage to Mara, but instead she fled the city. Nereus, who was supposed to have captured her but failed, instead reported her as dead.

Mara fled to the coast of New England, where she made several friends among the surface people and eventually joined the superhero team called the Defenders of Justice. Meanwhile, Dargon secretly made contact with Nazi Germany and pledged his support to its cause, intending to use it to conquer the surface world on his behalf and then to over-

Continued from last page

television show, he travels the globe finding unusual phenomena to investigate, explore, and report on. Although not superpowered, he's more than capable of taking care of himself in most situations; he's hunted monsters and encountered superhumans many times in the past (and even had some as guests on his show). His big dream in life is to go to Mars.

throw its leadership and seize the surface lands himself. The Defenders battled the forces of Atlantis on several occasions, until finally, in 1943, Princess Mara and the Defenders invaded the city and helped Atlantean rebels overthrow Dargon, who died in combat with Mara. (Nereus was also killed, by the human hero Optimus, who had become Mara's lover.) Mara was restored to the throne, ending Atlantis's membership in the Axis, and with Optimus as her Prince Consort set about rebuilding the war-torn country.

Unfortunately, the relationship between Mara and Optimus was unable to survive the stresses of the different environments (and the difficulty the Atlanteans had in accepting a "lander" as their prince), and they divorced in 1948. Queen Mara remarried in 1960, this time to Andros, one of the tribal chieftains of the outlying barbarian tribes, and they had two children together, Prince Marus and Princess Thalassa. Andros himself died accidentally in 1987, and Mara still rules to this day. Marus spends much of his time among the "landers"; he even studied at Ravenswood Academy briefly, and often serves as a member of the Sentinels. Thalassa, embittered by jealousy and a desire to take the throne for herself, has tried several times to kill her mother and brother. She is known to the surface world as the villainess Stingray.

ATLANTIS TODAY

Mara has tried to fulfill her father's dream of peaceful relations with the surface world, but the process has been slow, with much mistrust on both sides. Atlantis has sent ambassadors to many of the governments of the surface world, but despite occasional small successes the surface and underwater worlds remain too different for any extended political relationships. The United States, which has had the most contact with Atlantis, is generally mistrustful of the Atlanteans due to an unfortunate incident in 1968, when Mara temporarily lost control of her army and the Atlantean villain Steel Shark attacked the coast of Florida. Atlantis also showed little interest in the Cold War, sending representatives to the Soviet Union and China in the 1970s and thereby feeding fears of an alliance with Communism. Nevertheless, a political alliance with Atlantis remains a goal of the United States, largely due to the tremendous natural resources the Atlanteans have access to. American scientists are also intrigued by the possibilities of oricalchum, which seems to have several interesting properties apart from the magical (it is light and malleable, but exceedingly strong when alloyed with steel.) Access to the oricalchum mines outside of Atlantis proper is forbidden but coveted.

The United Nations has extended an offer of membership to Atlantis, but as of 2002 Mara has not accepted. Currently Marus acts as Atlantis's occasional representative to the U.N., and he continues to work for stricter laws against oceanic pollution all over the surface world.

STINGRAY

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	40	19-	Lift 25 tons; 10d6 [5]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
25	CON	30	14-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
16	COM	3	12-	
20	PD	10		Total: 20 PD (6 rPD)
16	ED	11		Total: 16 ED (6 rED)
5	SPD	17		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
15	REC	0		
50	END	0		
53	STUN	0		Total Characteristic Cost: 197

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Swimming:	12"/48"
	Flight:	15"/30"

Cost	Powers	END
37	<i>Minor Atlantean Spells:</i> Variable Power Pool, 30 base + 15 control cost; VPP Can Only Be Changed Between Adventures (-½), Slightly Limited Class Of Powers (magic; -¼), Gestures (-¼)	var
17	<i>Atlantean War Trident:</i> HKA 2d6 (4d6 with STR); OAF (-1) and Stretching 1", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), Always Direct (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), Only To Cause Damage (-½), No Velocity Damage (-¼)	3
50	<i>Bioelectric Charge:</i> Energy Blast 8d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	2
20	<i>Bioelectric Manipulation:</i> Absorption 6d6 (energy, to Bioelectric Charge); Limited Phenomena (electricity; -½)	0
20	<i>Inky Cloud:</i> Darkness to Sight Group 3" radius; Only Underwater (-½), 8 Charges lasting 1 Turn each (removable by strong currents; -0)	[8]
6	<i>Atlantean Body:</i> Damage Resistance (6 PD/6 ED)	0
7	<i>Enchanted Costume:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED), OIF (-½), Activation Roll 11- (-1)	0
10	<i>Nictitating Membrane:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points)	0
8	<i>Atlantean Body:</i> Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Underwater; Safe Environments: Intense Cold, High Pressure)	0
15	<i>Atlantean Travel:</i> Swimming +10" (12" total), x4 Noncombat	1
30	<i>Flight:</i> Flight 15"	3
5	<i>Atlantean Eyes:</i> Nightvision	0
15	<i>Atlantean Senses:</i> Active Sonar (Hearing Group)	0

Talents	
3	<i>Aquatic Movement:</i> Environmental Movement (no penalties while in water)

Skills

- 10 +2 with HTH Combat
- 5 +1 with Ranged Combat
- 2 Animal Handler (Aquatic Creatures) 13-
- 5 Defense Maneuver II
- 2 High Society 13-; Atlantean Society Only (-½)
- 3 Interrogation 13-
- 3 AK: Atlantis 14-
- 3 AK: Oceans Of The World 14-
- 1 AK: Lemuria 8-
- 5 KS: Arcane & Occult Lore 16-
- 2 Language: English (fluent conversation; Atlantean is native)
- 1 Language: Lemurian (basic conversation)
- 3 Mimicry 14-
- 2 Navigation (Marine) 14-
- 3 Oratory 13-
- 3 Shadowing 14-
- 3 Stealth 14-
- 1 WF: Trident

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 300**Total Cost: 497****200+ Disadvantages**

- 0 Dependence: must submerge in water at least once every 6 hours or suffer Weakness (Very Common)
- 20 Enraged: when insulted or treated with discourtesy by social inferiors (Common), go 11-, recover 11-
- 15 Hunted: Prince Marus 11- (As Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Mildly Punish)
- 10 Hunted: Amphibian 8- (As Pow, Mildly Punish)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Obsessed With Gaining The Atlantean Throne (Very Common, Total)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Loves And Hates Her Brother Marus (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Never Forgets Or Forgives A Slight (Common, Strong)
- 15 Reputation: Insane and violent disowned royalty, 14- (Extreme, only to Atlanteans)
- 10 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Thalassa, Princess of Atlantis) (Frequently, Major; not limiting in the surface world)
- 172 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 497**SAMPLE ATLANTEAN SPELLS**

Here are some examples of spells Stingray might use against the PCs:

Atlantean Comfort: Stingray uses this spell to bring surface dwellers down into her world safely.

Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Underwater; Safe Environments: Intense Cold, High Pressure), Usable Simultaneously (up to 8 people at once; +1) (16 Active Points); Gestures (-¼). Total cost: 13 points.

Dazzling Illumination: This spell creates a blinding light — an especially useful attack against Atlanteans, who spend most of their lives in a relatively dim environment.

Sight Group Flash 6d6 (30 Active Points); Gestures (-¼). Total cost: 24 points.

Harnessed Currents: With the very currents bent to her will, Stingray can swim more swiftly than ever. (She can also learn more powerful versions of this spell, to provide even more inches of Swimming, if desired.)

Swimming +8" (8 Active Points); Gestures (-¼). Total cost: 6 points.

Scenes From Afar: Stingray can use water to view and hear events going on far from her.

Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Groups) (30 Active Points); OIF (requires a small amount of water; -½), Gestures (-¼). Total cost: 17 points.

Water Within Water: With this spell, Stingray can become as difficult to see as a single current in the ocean.

Invisibility to Sight Group, No Fringe (30 Active Points); Gestures (-¼). Total cost: 24 points.

Background/History: Thalassa is the second child of Queen Mara, better known to the surface world as Sea Hawk, and Prince Andros, Mara's second husband. From an early age, Thalassa understood that her elder brother Marus would inherit the throne, and she resented him for it since she is so clearly his superior in intelligence and skill. Insatiably curious, she turned to magic as a means of getting the attention and respect she felt she deserved. Late one night, she found a secret room in the vast Crystal Palace, and discovered a trove of books that had belonged to the notorious traitor Nereus, who had helped Dargon overthrow her grandfather.

She studied these spells for weeks in secret, eventually casting powerful body-manipulation spells that gave her the powers of other sea creatures like electric eels and octopi. In the meantime, Prince Andros had died in an underwater landslide, and Mara, in her grief, had turned her attentions to obsessively preparing Marus for his eventual inheritance. Therefore, Thalassa's teaching had fallen to the family's elderly advisor and librarian, Ikthos. When Ikthos discovered Thalassa's secret magical practices, he was horrified and tried to inform the Queen. In her anger and panic, Thalassa killed him. When she realized what she had done, her fragile hold on sanity snapped. She fled the castle, blaming Marus for what had happened and promising revenge.

Since that time, she has battled against her mother and brother, as well as their friends and allies. She's worked with some of the worst villains in history as her one-woman war has grown

to encompass the surface world that Mara spent so much time in. During one of her battles against the Sentinels she was struck on the head and temporarily lost her memory. Wandering the coast of Georgia, she encountered the mutant hero Amphibian, and the two fell in love. Unfortunately, another blow to the head restored her memories and personality, and she reverted to villainy while adding Amphibian to the list of people who had wronged her, in this case by taking advantage of her “weakness.” Amphibian himself wants nothing more than to restore the personality he knew and loved.

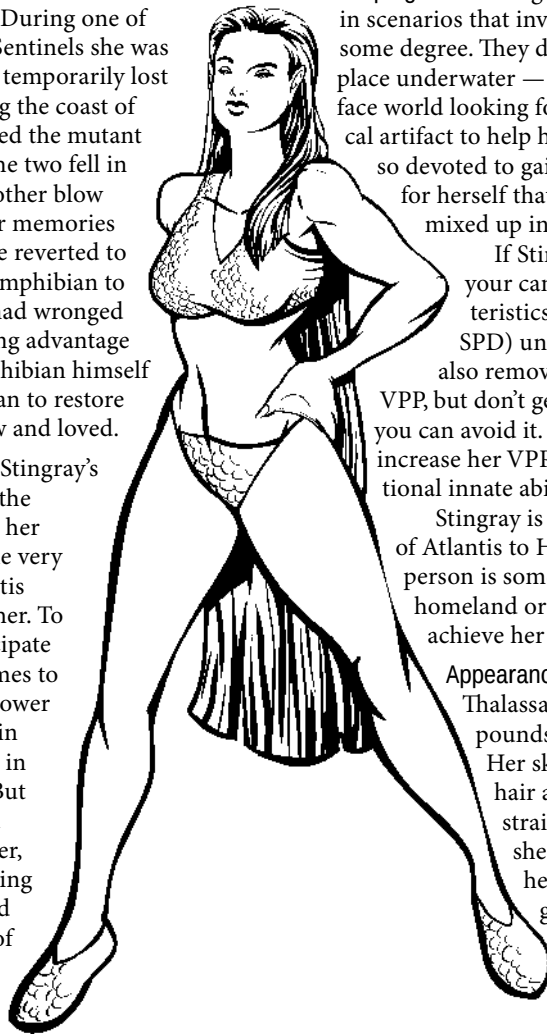
Personality/Motivation: Stingray’s primary goal is to take the throne of Atlantis from her mother and brother. The very thought of ruling Atlantis obsesses and enthralls her. To that end, she will participate in any number of schemes to increase her personal power or to work with others in exchange for assistance in destroying her family. But at the same time, for all her hatred of her brother, she still loves him, making her extremely conflicted — almost to the point of experiencing multiple personalities. A team of superheroes may be able to use her affection for Marus to its advantage when Stingray has the upper hand in battle.

Stingray — a name given to her by surface journalists based on her bioelectric powers — is clever and cruel, but also dangerously unstable. Appeals to her pride or vanity are fairly likely to work, but even an imagined slight can send her into a towering rage.

Quote: “All my life you’ve stood between me and what’s rightfully mine. No longer!!”

Powers/Tactics: Stingray is a typical Atlantean, with a humanoid body designed for survival in the depths of the ocean and swift swimming. Additionally, she has augmented her physiognomy with the forbidden magics of the traitor Nereus, imbuing herself with the ability to deliver bioelectric blasts, absorb electricity to power further blasts, withstand bright light, and project blinding clouds of octopus ink.

In combat, Stingray tends to rely on direct, straightforward attacks, using her strength and trident. She’ll only turn to magic or her energy powers if bashing heads doesn’t seem to work. Outside of combat, however, she’ll use her sneaky magics with great effectiveness to gather information.



Campaign Use: Stingray is, obviously, of most use in scenarios that involve or focus on Atlantis to some degree. They don’t necessarily have to take place underwater — she might come to the surface world looking for allies, equipment, or magical artifact to help her in her quest — but she’s so devoted to gaining the Atlantean throne for herself that she’s not likely to become mixed up in any other events.

If Stingray is too powerful for your campaign, reduce her Characteristics (especially STR, DEX, and SPD) until she’s a better fit. You could also remove or decrease the size of her VPP, but don’t get rid of her other abilities if you can avoid it. To make her more powerful, increase her VPP, or provide her with additional innate abilities.

Stingray is too busy pursuing the throne of Atlantis to hunt anyone, unless that person is someone associated with her homeland or can directly assist her to achieve her goals.

Appearance: Like most Atlanteans, Thalassa is tall and thin (5’10”, 130 pounds), with long, Roman features. Her skin is light green, and her hair a darker green (and long and straight). Her usual garb, which she has enchanted to provide her greater protection, is a gold-colored bikini-like costume (with a vest-like top, similar to modern sports bikinis worn by surface women) that has a fishscale pattern to it. She carries a large, ornate war trident, and around her neck she sometimes wears a red chain of pure oricalchum.

ARCADIA AND THE EMPYREANS

In a hidden valley deep in the Antarctic wasteland lies the golden city of Arcadia, home of the mysterious Empyreans.

The Valley of Arcadia sits at approximately 74 degrees South and 55 degrees East, more or less due south from Madagascar and 900 miles from the South Pole. A modest mountain range, some 100 miles long, shelters the valley where powerful devices placed underground by the Progenitors many thousands of years ago keep the local temperature in the high eighties Fahrenheit year-round. Fortunately for the Empyreans’ sense of privacy, the field is also undetectable by the probing sensors of satellites or instruments placed by humans elsewhere on the continent. Indeed, the devices keep the valley physically *invisible* even to the eyes of explorers until one approaches within a mile of the valley itself, which few humans have. A small river runs the length of the valley, emerging from the mountains and running to a lake at



the northernmost end. This river is also artificial, pouring forth from massive geothermally powered pumps within caverns in the mountainside. All of these devices, though originally built and placed by the Progenitors, are currently maintained by the Empyrean Master Builder Zadin. In the valley surrounding the spires and arches of Arcadia live creatures long extinct, kept safe through the Cataclysm and many other disasters, and brought here to live in the preserves of Noatar.

Arcadia itself is a large city, with a lot of wide-open space in courtyards and parks. Over fifty square miles in size, Arcadia currently has a population of approximately 350 Empyreans and a handful of other beings. However, at least eighty of these Empyreans have embraced the philosophy of Shaderon and become *Silent*, living in the enormous Temple of Silence without moving, eating, or talking, while their astral selves explore “higher” planes of existence. The Temple of Silence is a golden ziggurat over 200 feet high, which dominates the landscape as the largest (but only second-tallest) structure in the city. (The tallest is the Watchtower, maintained by Chard, the Empyrean entrusted with the security of King Hazor and the city of Arcadia. Over 250 feet high, it commands a majestic view of the valley from the single entry gate into the city.)

The hidden Antarctic valley is the second location of the city of Arcadia. The first was situated far to the north, at a point on the globe not far from where the modern-day city of Athens now sits (though of course, neither the continent of Europe or Athens existed at that time). The Cataclysm which sunk Atlantis likewise destroyed the first

lands of the Empyreans. They tried to rebuild, but the sinking of the new continents several thousand years later wrecked that effort. When new continents arose, they journeyed far to the south, to what is now called Antarctica, and founded a new realm which has thrived ever since.

From the first Arcadia, the Ancients (the original twelve Empyreans directly created by the Progenitors) ruled all of the later generations. The First King, Amlin, ruled Arcadia for thousands of years with the aid of his wife, Marya. About ten thousand years ago, a war was fought between Amlin and his rival, the monstrous Ancient called Ogurn, and both were slain. With Amlin’s death, the rest of the Ancients chose to leave Earth under the leadership of Queen Marya, leaving behind only the Historian Garon to make sure they were not forgotten. Where they went remains a mystery.

Hazor was chosen King of the remaining Empyreans, since he was universally regarded as the wisest of the second generation, and he has ruled ever since. His son, Zoltar, and grandson, Archon, have each in their time been the most powerful warrior and champion of the Empyreans. Archon himself, still a youngster at less than three thousand years old, is an occasional ally of the Sentinels. Hazor has faced a few challenges to his reign, however. The most notable recently have come from his brother Arvad, who left Arcadia to become ruler of the Lemurians some two hundred years ago. Since then, the Lemurians have fought a guerrilla war against their hated rivals, frequently manipulating the ignorant masses of humanity in the process.

THE EMPYREANS

The Empyreans are a powerful race, related to humanity but diverging from it many hundreds of thousands of years ago. They are the result of genetic experiments and manipulation performed by the Progenitors, alien scientists who visited Earth several times between 2 million and 500,000 years ago. (According to the Empyreans, other Progenitor experiments caused *Homo sapiens* to become the dominant species of man, eliminating australopithecines, *Homo erectus*, and *Homo habilis*.) The few Empyrean interbred, but because of their immortal nature they chose to have few offspring.

At different times in history the Empyreans have interacted with humanity in various ways, occasionally appearing as rulers, gods, wizards, or devils depending on the whims of the individuals involved. Many of the folktales and legends about the heroes of different cultures actually refer to the Empyreans, although certainly not all of them. Since the decline of magic on Earth, they have largely chosen either to live among humans without revealing their true natures, or to withdraw from humanity entirely (like those who follow the teachings of the great philosopher Shaderon, who tired of immortality over three thousand years ago and became Silent).

Although he looks like an ordinary (if handsome) human, a typical Empyrean has impressive physical attributes, near-complete control over his bodily processes, and vast and varying mental abilities. Since most Empyreans are centuries old, and some have even survived the passage of millennia, they know much, and can do much. After a few centuries of gathering broad experiences, an Empyrean typically specializes in a certain area of study and becomes its true, undisputed master. Examples include the Builder Zadin or Musician Jubal, who have advanced knowledge of their subjects beyond human ken. Several historical figures believed by the general public to be human were/are in fact Empyreans.

LEMURIA

The enemies of the Empyreans are the Lemurians. Former inhabitants of the now-sunken continent of Lemuria in what would later become the Indian Ocean, the Lemurians developed a strange form of magic, fueling their powerful spells with enormous ovens and furnaces maintained in underground caverns.

In the late Valdorian Age, the Lemurians were a powerful nation, strong enough to withstand the conquering armies of Atlantis. When they discovered the existence of the Empyreans they waged war on them to obtain the secret of immortality. They developed a magical weapon, the *Mandragalore*, and threatened to use it against the Empyreans. Instead, the weapon backfired on them and sank their continent in approximately the year 37,000 BC. The only survivors of the great Lemurian Empire were the Mole-Men, furnace-workers who lived and toiled underground for their more magically powerful masters, and a few Lemurian lords of pure stock.

Having adapted to life underground, the Lemurians have long since forgotten how to create new technology. Instead, they use their old, failing equipment in periodic efforts to destroy the Empyreans — and, incidentally, the rest of humanity. More recently, the Empyrean Arvad has assumed the throne of Lemuria and is attempting to mold the Lemurians into a force powerful enough to conquer the Earth.

Most Lemurians are smaller than humans (some as short as 3 feet), with pale hairless skin and large eyes adapted to darkness, but individuals can be much larger, stronger, and monstrously powerful. Some Lemurians can even pass as humans, and have lived in secret among mankind for many years. (Though not immortal like the Empyreans, Lemurians can live to be several centuries old.) One Lemurian, called Leviathan, has made a name for himself as a supervillain in America, though he is generally believed to be a human mutate of some kind.

MONSTER ISLAND

On a remote island about a hundred miles off the eastern coast of Japan lies a volcanic atoll dubbed by the Tokyo press “Monster Island.” This rocky, mountainous island, approximately six miles in diameter at its widest point, is the home of a government base designed to study xenofoms, or “monsters.” Monster Island is nothing less than a game preserve and habitat for unique or alien creatures too dangerous to hold captive or study anywhere else. Among its permanent inhabitants are the famous monsters Ganika, Vakulon, and Mega-Terak, as well as the enormous atomic mutant lizard Zorgatha.

The base, run by the Japanese government, is protected by a powerful force-field generated by equipment “liberated” from the alien Qularr (who attempted to invade Earth in 1965 using several of the monsters now living in the habitat). The facility is at the foot of the currently dormant volcano, with one level above ground protruding from a rock wall, and the remaining four levels below ground. The entire base is serviced by an undersea tunnel that passes under the force field and out onto the ocean floor, where a pressurized portal can dock a submarine for supply and staff rotation.

The Japanese government department for dealing with the paranormal, known as Bureau 17, works closely both with American officials and UNTIL to handle the giant monsters the area is known for. Indeed, Bureau 17 includes some of the world’s leading experts on xenobiology, as well as robotics and artificial intelligence. Monster escapes are rare but not unknown, and Bureau 17 maintains good relations with Japanese supers for precisely this reason. Super-scientist Takashi Toru has retired from active duty and now devotes his time to studying both the monsters and the various pieces of technology the Qularr left behind (though most of the latter remain utterly incomprehensible to humans).

WORLDS BEYOND: ALIEN LIFE



Humanity, for better or worse, is not alone in the universe. For some years now the public has been aware of the existence of sentient species living on other worlds. While mankind has not yet established significant formal relations with any of those species, everyone knows it's only a matter of time before Humans become part of the galactic community.

As of 2002, Humans are aware of at least a dozen other alien species native to the Milky Way Galaxy. One is the Sirians (originally thought to be Martians), who attacked Earth in 1938 during an attempted invasion that was turned away by the Defenders of Justice. It remains unclear why the Sirians targeted Earth for invasion in the first place. Based on snippets of information he learned during his career as a super-gladiator, Ironclad has stated the Sirians went to war with the Malvan Empire in what Earth would call the 1970s, and were defeated and largely obliterated. Today, he thinks they are a minor species in what was once Malvan territory.

In 1965, a strange alien species called the Qularr tried to invade and conquer Earth. Instead of using powerful mechanical weapons as the Sirians had, the Qularr instead brought several gigantic monsters, presumably bred by them on their homeworld or in their ships, to attack the planet from a beachhead secretly established on a small island near Japan. After the superheroes of Earth defeated the monsters (and, eventually, contained them on the island), the Qularr fled, leaving behind much of their bizarre technology.

Another known alien species is the Mandaarians, a very Human-appearing psionic species who came to Earth in 1973. The first alien species with which non-violent contact is confirmed and definite, the Mandaarians claimed to be peaceful explorers and demonstrated some advanced technology, including starships with faster-than-light drives. Other Mandaarian "exploration parties" visited Earth in 1979, 1984, 1991, and 1999, each time simply observing cultures and daily life for about a month and then leaving. Some commentators claim the Mandaarians are simply sizing Earth up for invasion, but so far there has been no indication of any hostile intent.

In 1977, a greenish-skinned humanoid species called the Gadroon, possibly attracted by the first Mandaarian visit, arrived in Earth's solar system. Their intention: conquest. The Gadroon had long ago destroyed their swampy homeworld, and sought a planet they could terraform and colonize, with a plentiful supply of natives for slaves. Numerous battles, both in cislunar space and on Earth and the Moon, followed as Human superheroes tried to drive off the invaders; numerous supervillains, including Dr. Destroyer, assisted with the war effort. After two

months of desperate battles, a group of powerful superhumans specially assembled for the purpose made it through the Gadroon defense perimeter and destroyed the enemy's flagship. With the force of their invasion thrust blunted, and their resources depleted, the Gadroon retreated, leaving Earth in peace. A second attempt at conquest, in 1984, was defeated much more quickly by Earth's heroes. Humanity has heard nothing of the Gadroon since then, and as far as is known, the remnants of the species have died off or live a nomadic existence elsewhere in the galaxy.

The supervillain Firewing claims to be an alien native to a planet he calls Malva, and genetic tests performed on him during his (rare) periods of incarceration confirm that he is not Human. According to Firewing, Malva once possessed a vast interstellar empire, but has since withdrawn to Malva itself, which is defended by incredibly powerful and sophisticated automated weapons systems. Ruled by an all-powerful autocrat called the Phazor, the Malvans entertain themselves by watching super-powered gladiator matches in which Firewing once participated. Two other aliens who once fought in the Malvan arenas themselves, Ironclad and Herculan, have confirmed Firewing's statements, and even provided samples of the Malvan language.

Herculan says he comes from a species called the Fassai, one of several belonging to a political unit called the Velarian Confederation. Located on the other side of the galactic core, about 55,000 light-years from Earth, the Velarian Confederation is apparently plagued by numerous civil wars and much political infighting. It has FTL capability.

Ironclad is a Dorvalan, or in more Human-centric terms, a Perseid. His people are native to a planet orbiting the star Phi Cassiopeia in the Perseus Arm of the galaxy, and have primitive FTL drives as of the Earth year 2002. The Perseids control a small interstellar empire.

Between them, Firewing, Herculan, and Ironclad have mentioned, and in some cases briefly described, several other alien species: the reptilian Mon'dabi; the insectoid Seëcra; the psionic Varanyi, with their enormous Star Galleon space vessels; the fearsome Xenovores; the enigmatic Thorgons; the sorcerous but nearly extinct Thane; and others. Humanity knows very little about them, but through UNTIL's space station GATEWAY, is on the lookout for any potential visitors... or invaders.

Humanity also knows that at least one other galaxy also has sentient life. Two superhumans on Earth — the supervillain Vibron, and the heroine Nebula — both come from planets in the Andromeda Galaxy, the one nearest the Milky Way.

REALMS BEYOND: OTHER DIMENSIONS



Although the average inhabitant of Earth remains completely unaware of the fact, many superhumans know that Earth's plane of existence is by no means the only reality. In fact, Earth's home dimension is but one of uncounted trillions of dimensions, ranging from ones virtually indistinguishable from Earth's to planes so bizarre and strange that they share not a single physical or mystical law with Earth.

The Four Worlds

The arrangement and geometries of the multiverse are so convoluted — so simultaneously logical and illogical, contradictory and complementary, probable and impossible — that no attempt to map or diagram them (at least by humans) is ever likely to succeed. However, a few human scholars of the subject, almost all of them powerful mystics, have developed a framework for describing the multiverse that seems to resonate with the human mind. Using the language and concepts of kabbalism, these scholars arrange the dimensions of the multiverse into four categories — the Four Worlds — each “higher” than the last.

At the lowest level is *Assiah*, the Material World. Assiatic planes include Earth, the uncounted number of alternate Earths superhumans have learned about, and other such planes. In these realms, natural laws control reality; though magic may exist, it does not run Assiatic dimensions or act as one of their true fundamental forces.

Above *Assiah* is *Yetzirah*, the Formative or Astral World. Yetziratic dimensions *do* run by magic; here, symbol, will, and thought can exert as much power as the laws of physics (if not more). A special plane, the Astral Plane, links all the Yetziratic realms, which include: the Land Of Legends (or “Faerie”), wherein faeries, spirits, monsters, and the gods of myth dwell; the Netherworld, home of demons, devils, and eternal torment; Elysium, or “Heaven”; and Babylon, the City Of Man, a never-ending metropolis of wonder and Art.

Above *Yetzirah* is *Briah*, the Creative or Mental World. A barrier called the Veil of the Temple divides the highest Astral realms from *Briah*; only the most wise and powerful mystics can pass through it to the dimensions beyond. Briatic realms are totally spiritual — they embody concepts, states of mind, and the like; they are not made of matter as humans understand the term. Powerful cosmic entities, including the four Prime Avatars of Order, Chaos, Art, and Nature, live in many of these planes.

The highest of the Four Worlds is *Atziluth*, the Archetypal World. It lies across the Abyss, a barrier even stronger and deadlier than the Veil. Its planes contain infinite power, the archetypes of all forms and concepts, and much more than that most sentients have difficulty fully conceiving of.

The Qliphothic World

According to some mystics, lying “behind” or “to the side” of the Four Worlds is a fifth, the *Qliphothic World*, a realm of ancient and horrifying dimensions whose energies have decayed into forms inimical to normal life and existence. The... *beings*... which reside in the Qliphothic dimensions are largely unknowable, and always dangerous, to humans.

Dimensional Dangers

In addition to the demons of the Netherworld, the angry gods and malevolent faeries of the Land Of Legends, and Qliphothic horrors, the multiverse holds many dangers that, from time to time, threaten Earth or her inhabitants. Of these, the greatest encountered so far is Istvatha V'han, the self-styled “Empress of a Billion Dimensions.” One of the rare dimensional conquerors who relies on science rather than sorcery to breach the barriers between planes, V'han apparently rules at least several million dimensions, giving her a vast amount of resources to call on to perform further conquests. Earth's dimension first attracted her attention in 1998, though an attempt by her army of “D-Soldiers” to bring it into her empire was thwarted by the concerted efforts of Earth's superheroes (and more than a few supervillains). V'han even claims to be able to travel through time, though if so, she seems oddly reluctant to use that ability to her tactical advantage. One thing is for certain — a defeat or two are not enough to dispel her desire to conquer Earth. She will return, sooner or later, and next time Earth's heroes may not be able to hold her off.

A similar, if slightly less powerful, threat is Skarn the Shaper, lord of a multifaceted dimension called the Congeries. Skarn, a sorcerer of immense mystic might, conquers other planes and absorbs them into the Congeries. He has not yet tried to subsume Earth into his realm, but Earth's mystics know of him, and know he will make the attempt eventually.

Unfortunately, given the infinite nature of the multiverse, the dangers it contains are infinite as well. Earth's protectors must keep careful watch, lest they be taken unawares by something they are not prepared to fend off.



CHAPTER FIVE: CURKING POWERS: KEY PLAYERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

While governments, militaries, and corporations may hold most of the political and economic power on Earth, they are not the only forces to be reckoned with in the Champions Universe. In a world where superhumans exist, the threats they pose and opportunities they offer change the landscape of power across the planet. Leaders have to take into account the possible actions

of supervillains, machinations of villainous organizations, and assistance of superheroes when setting budgets, planning military or paramilitary actions, or setting law enforcement priorities. This chapter discusses some of the major “players” in the Superhuman World, their relationships with each other, and how the player characters might interact with them.

SIGNIFICANT SUPERHUMAN THREATS



THE ISLAND OF DR. DESTROYER

In 1991, Dr. Destroyer launched one of his most ambitious schemes yet — in the form of an entire artificial island built by his servants and robots, and equipped with the latest in technology and weaponry. Constructed slowly and cautiously over several years in a secluded South Pacific atoll, the island — named Destruga — was intended initially as the basis of a bid for nationhood. Although several renegade nations, undoubtedly in Destroyer's pay, recognized the new "state" of Destruga, the rest of the world and the United Nations refused to do so.

Frustrated, Destroyer turned the island in the direction of Hawaii. Though his exact intentions were unclear, it was apparent he had some scheme in mind — and in any event it was unthinkable to allow him to retain so mobile, powerful, and high-profile a base. Together with several teams of American superheroes, the United States military was sent to eliminate Destruga once and for all.

A tremendous battle lasting three days followed. American military planners were amazed at the extent, power, and sophistication of Destroyer's arsenal; the

Although organizations like VIPER make the news more frequently than any single villain, and take up more page space in government reports and analyses, "solo" supercriminals of considerable power remain as great a threat, if not greater. While a single supervillain may lack the resources of a full-fledged organization, he has a unity of purpose and flexibility of action-and-response that no organization, even one ruled by a dictatorial leader, can ever hope to match. According to the *Department Of Defense Superhuman Survey 2002*, intelligence gathered by the United States and other governments, and information obtained from superheroes who have fought them, the following are the most dangerous known supervillains on Earth today.

Dark Seraph And The Crowns Of Krim

Dark Seraph — formerly the British baronet Sir Dennis of South Mallon — is a quasi-demonic being of great mystic power. Although able to assume human form if he wishes, Dark Seraph normally favors the "fallen angel" body from which his name comes. His soul, long since sold to the Dark Powers, is utterly corrupt; no human sympathy or kindness remains within him, and there is no evil so foul or perverse as to be beyond him. While he lacks the flexibility of a true sorcerer, he more than makes up for it with overall might; his devastatingly powerful arcane blasts and other abilities enable him to stand against the strongest superheroes.

Dark Seraph's powers derive from the Iron Crown, an ancient mystic artifact of great power said to have been forged by the demon-god Krim. The Iron Crown is but the greatest of Krim's works; he also created five other Crowns — the Blood, Golden, Shadow, Shining, and Stone Crowns — which have likewise survived to the modern day. Each of them has been discovered, and granted its darkling power to he who found it. But somehow the Iron Crown exerts a subtle hold on its lesser brethren, allowing Dark Seraph to summon the wearers of the other Crowns and forge them into a group called the Crowns of Krim. Together they have enough power to ravage the world or oppose the most experienced superhero teams. For example, in 2000, an attempt by the Crowns of Krim to steal an incunabulum from a Paris museum

resulted in the deaths of 43 UNTIL agents and the French superhero *Dragon-ciel* ("Skydragon").

Dark Seraph typically works alone or with only the Crowns; he rarely allies himself with other villains (and almost never with non-mystic villains). He has, on one or two occasions, teamed up with DEMON, but inevitably the two seem to have a falling out that causes their schemes to unravel. He and Black Paladin have hatched a few plots together; despite the fact that the Paladin is markedly less powerful, Dark Seraph seems to have a healthy degree of respect for him (insofar as he can "respect" anyone). Dark Seraph and the Crowns are implacably opposed to Takofanes, for reasons unknown; rumor even has it they secretly helped superheroes stop the Undying Lord's plots once or twice.

Doctor Destroyer

Destroyer's recent, and much-lamented, return to the world stage has significantly shifted the balance of power in the Superhuman World. In the minds of most world governments, and superhero teams, the threat Dr. Destroyer poses eclipses that of most other supervillains — and with good reason. With his extremely advanced technology, ruthless ambition to rule the world, and extensive resources, Destroyer could easily conquer a significant part, or even all, of Earth.

Destroyer's technology and ability to hide the existence and nature of his resources and schemes — as eminently displayed by the way he concealed his survival from the world for a decade — only makes him more dangerous. Although his plots always manifest in grandiose events of some sort, Destroyer is not fool enough to reveal the true extent of his power. He frequently uses stealth technology and similar means to keep his activities covert from even the United States and its superhero teams.

According to the best (albeit still questionable) intelligence estimates, Destroyer probably has major bases in Antarctica, Siberia, the Amazon jungle, the Himalayas, Oceania, and outer space; others may exist of which authorities are unaware. Staffing those bases are upwards of 50,000 personnel, ranging from soldiers to scientists to servants, either recruited by Destroyer from the dregs of the underworld, or created by him through robotics and/or cloning. Destroyer himself wears a suit

of powered armor considered the most powerful and advanced in the world. Even in 1992, a single energy bolt from one of Destroyer's blasters was enough to fell most superhumans; heaven only knows what improvements a decade of technological advances has brought to his weaponry and other systems.

Destroyer almost never allies himself with other superhumans or organizations — he is supreme, greater than all other inhabitants of Earth, and sees no need to work with lesser beings to implement his schemes. Statements he has made in the past indicate a particular loathing for Mechanon ("a banal mockery of true life and true genius"), VIPER ("children playing with toys they do not understand"), Gravitator ("a spoiled brat"), and of course Menton, who took advantage of Destroyer's supposed death to sever connections and become a world-threatening villain on his own. Destroyer seems to consider magic and those who practice it foolish when compared to much safer and easily-controlled scientific pursuits. However, despite his arrogant belief in his own eventual triumph, Destroyer does have a measure of grudging respect for superheroes and others who fight val-

iantly against him regardless of the ultimate futility of their actions.

Firewing

An alien super-gladiator who came to Earth in 2001 for the challenges its superhumans (particularly his old adversaries Ironclad and Herculan) provide, Firewing possesses as much raw power as many world-threatening supervillains. However, he represents less of a threat, since he seems to have no interest whatsoever in ruling the world. What he wants is to test himself in combat against the best Earth has to offer, be they heroes or villains. The threat thus lies in his sheer destructive potential. When he issues his challenges, and fights his battles, Firewing tends to destroy huge swaths of major urban areas. The collateral damage from his fire-based powers alone has already soared into the billions of dollars and thousands of deaths, and the direct damage isn't far behind that. No one knows where he will next appear, or when, or who he will call to battle him, but his arrival will undoubtedly cause mass panic.

Firewing has no formal relations with any organization. On a few occasions, other villains or organizations, such as VIPER, have manipulated him into doing things for them, but that tactic tends to backfire as often as it works, since he's no fool. The world is terrified of the possibility Dr. Destroyer might try this, though it's likely Firewing would look on Destroyer as a foe to defeat more than an ally whose "suggestions" he should take.

Gravitator

Mistress of gravity, able to hold the strongest heroes motionless off the ground or selectively crush parts of their bodies until they're too injured to stop her, Gravitator possesses even more personal power than Firewing. Unlike Firewing, she *does* want to rule the world, but doesn't pursue the prize with the fanatical intensity of Dr. Destroyer or Istvatha V'han. She seems to have no plan beyond achieving whatever individual goal catches her fancy at the moment, with the idea that if she causes enough problems and defeats enough superheroes,

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Destrugan forces downed dozens of Air Force fighter jets and sank nearly ten Navy vessels, including the aircraft carrier *Pamlico*. But in the end Destroyer lacked the sustainable resources to fight a war against both America's military and America's heroes. After an intense bombardment, followed by a multi-team attack by the nation's most powerful superheroes, Destruga was sent to the bottom about 200 miles from Malden Island. Although two of Destroyer's superhuman servants, Leonine and Umbra, were definitely killed in the engagement, Destroyer himself escaped — only to make his way to Detroit.



PROJECT GREENSKIN

In 1995, scientists working for the United States Army developed a series of “neuro-electrodes” which they claimed would, if implanted in Grond’s brain, allow them to control Grond’s thoughts and actions. Although initially skeptical, the Pentagon brass and DOSPA personnel were swayed by the scientists’ enthusiastic presentation, and allocated funding for “Project Greenskin.”

After building an appropriate facility on an isolated mesa outside of the village of Bentonville, New Mexico, the scientists set out to capture Grond in an Army helicopter equipped with a hot sleep chamber. After the man-monster was sighted in Minnesota, they flew there and managed to bring him down with a combination of high-strength tangleweb

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the world will eventually realize the pointlessness of opposing her and simply accede to her whims. If insulted or angered, she can become petulantly destructive, casually tossing around battleships, ripping up buildings, and wrecking cities in an effort to punish her tormentors.

Gravitar will work with other villains and organizations if it suits her intentions at any given time, but she doesn’t make a habit of it. She’s known to be openly contemptuous of both Destroyer and Mechanon; she has fought the latter to a standstill once or twice, no mean feat considering the resources he has to draw upon.

Grond

Like Firewing, Grond — the mutated victim of a horrible chain of unfortunate circumstances combined into one massive radiation accident — is dangerous mainly because of his destructiveness. When on a rampage, Grond can level entire urban districts and beat pretty much any superhero into a bloody pulp. (Only the VIPER supervillain Ripper, when augmented by his so-called Omicron technology, is consistently stronger than Grond.) But unlike Firewing, whose motivations and conduct are fairly predictable, Grond is driven by rage and other indiscernible impulses, which makes it hard to determine what he might do in any given situation.

Grond isn’t exactly the sharpest tool in the shed, making it easy for smarter villains and groups like VIPER to trick him into doing what they want. If Grond discovers what’s going on, he’ll turn on the people who are using him, but most of them manage to get away with it. As of 2002, Grond is

incarcerated in a hot sleep chamber in Stronghold following one such scheme, in which VIPER convinced him to destroy the PRIMUS headquarters in Los Angeles to distract the authorities while it committed a major technology theft across town.

Istvatha V’han

Known, and apparently not without some justification, as the Empress of a Billion Dimensions, Istvatha V’han is a native of some plane of existence unknown to mankind. Thanks to what she describes as “my innate ability to travel between dimensions and through the portals of time,” V’han conquered several dimensions, built up an army, and used that army to conquer dozens more dimensions. Dozens became thousands, and thousands eventually millions or billions. Her powers seem entirely scientific and/or technological in origin, rather than mystical, and her conquests appear mostly (though not entirely) restricted to Asiatic dimensions.

In 1998, V’han’s path of conquest at long last brought her to Earth’s dimension. After breaching the dimensional barrier in outer space between Earth and Mars, she traveled with her army of D-Soldiers to Earth, where she demanded that the planet (whose naturally high levels of superhuman and mystic energies has apparently attracted her attention) submit to her rulership or be destroyed. Uniting in the face of a common threat, Earth’s superhumans and governments fended off her attack and drove her back into other dimensions. But no one doubts she intends to return when the time is right.



The Empress represents a tremendous threat to Earth not because of her personal power (which is not inconsiderable) but because of her resources, which dwarf those of Destroyer or any nation on the planet. She commands the unswerving loyalty of thousands or millions of dimensions' worth of soldiers (and perhaps superhumans), all equipped with advanced vehicles and weapons. Her and her armies' dimension-shifting powers give them an enormous tactical advantage in any battle. Earth barely defeated her the first time; next time she may be unstoppable.

Istvatha V'han makes no alliances with the people of Earth's dimension. Her only interest is in bringing this plane of existence into her empire.

Mechanon

Unlike Destroyer, who should more properly be named Dr. Conqueror, Mechanon threatens the Earth because he does, in fact, wish to destroy it — or, more accurately, all of its organic life. The evil robot wants to “cleanse” the planet of the “organic bacteria” which infest it, and since his first appearance in 1985 has instituted one scheme after another to achieve that goal. His past plans have involved attempts to use the world's arsenals to trigger a planetary nuclear holocaust, trying to convert all plant life to inedible metallic substances via a “technovirus,” and efforts to melt the polar icecaps and drown all land-dwelling life.

Mechanon has honed his survival to a fine art. As a robotic being, he keeps multiple “backups” of himself at bases secreted across the planet. When one of his selves is totally defeated and destroyed (a rare occurrence), a backup activates, analyzes what happened, and builds improvements into itself to prevent a similar defeat in the future. According to Department of Defense analysts, thanks to this process the Mechanon who nearly took over the United States in 1985 was only about half as powerful and capable as the Mechanon who threatens the world today.

Except perhaps for Dr. Destroyer, Mechanon possesses the most advanced technology on Earth. The undisputed master of robotics, he can build mechanical men and creatures distinguishable from the real thing only by careful scientific analysis, or devastating war-robots that make no pretense of being anything but killing machines. Although he has multiple tiny bases throughout the world (mostly just to hold his “backups”), he is suspected of having major facilities on the Pacific seabed, in the Sahara, in the Caucasus, and perhaps even on the dark side of the Moon. Unlike other master villains, he doesn't have to worry about his own comfort, or the comfort of his minions, allowing him to situate a headquarters in places no one else would consider.

From time to time Mechanon has worked with other supervillains, but to him such relationships represent nothing more than the chance to get some use out of a “foolish organic” before destroying him. Mechanon's programming doesn't allow for sympathy, compassion, feelings of friendship, or

the ability to extend mercy; his sole, overwhelming drive is to eradicate all organic life in the most impressive manner possible. If he were ever to succeed, he would simply move on to another inhabited planet and start over.

Menton

In some ways, Menton frightens the leaders and people of Earth more than Destroyer, Mechanon, or even Istvatha V'han. Conquest or destruction are easily understood, easily detected, and easily opposed activities. The thought of a master villain able to take control of someone's mind from miles, even continents, away — who can make them do whatever he wants without their even realizing they're not acting of their own free will — terrifies even the most confident official. Thanks almost entirely to Menton's existence, the size and earnings of the anti-psionic defenses industry has quintupled in the past decade.

Menton wants to rule the world, but he prefers to approach the problem subtly, without the overblown schemes and rampant destruction others bring to the task. A mental nudge here, a telepathic command there, and he can direct the course of world events to suit his whims and desires. When the time is right, he plans for the governments of the world to turn the reins of authority over to him in one fell swoop.

Few supervillains are willing to work with Menton, for fear they're not really his allies but his puppets. (On the other hand, as Brainchild once observed, “He can make me his puppet *anyway* — I might as well try to work with him and at least *hope* I'm acting of my own free will.”) Doctor Destroyer and Menton hate each other, an animosity dating from the late 1980s and early '90s, when Menton was one of Destroyer's followers. Menton has occasionally assisted Eurostar, a group his sister Mentalla belongs to, but seems to regard their behavior and goals as somehow petty.

Takofanes, The Undying Lord

Considered by most authorities, including the Trismegistus Council and the majority of mystic superheroes, to be the greatest occult threat native to Earth, Takofanes the Undying Lord, known also as the Archlich and the King of the Throne of Human Ivory, is of obscure origin. Some seers claim he was once a human being who sold his soul for power; others that he is a demon from the Netherworld who has taken permanent form on this plane; others that he comes from another time; and still others that he is an avatar of Death.

Wherever he comes from and whatever he is, no one denies his power. Resembling a human skeleton, garbed in macabre, ornate clothing, wearing on his head a crown of golden dragons, borne in a litter carried by his undead servants or the sheer force of his magic, Takofanes (tuh-koff-uh-nee) commands great magical might, particularly in the arcana of Necromancy. Where he passes, corpses

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and tranquilizer darts loaded with enough knockout juice to drop a tyrannosaur dead in his tracks.

After bringing Grond to New Mexico, the scientists performed a delicate operation to install the neuro-electrodes. When Grond awakened, it appeared the procedure was a success; initial trials allowed the scientists to control the gigantic supervillain's motions and actions, and to keep him calm when necessary. But after several hours, something went wrong. One of the electrodes malfunctioned, inflicting intense pain in Grond's head. That was enough for him to overcome the control. Within another hour, all but one of the scientists, and all of their support personnel, were dead, their base was completely destroyed, and the mesa had been reduced to a mere hillock. Fortunately Grond headed north into the desert, rather than turning west and coming across Bentonville.

The surviving scientist, Dr. Nelson Dupree, now confined to a wheelchair, remains convinced the neuro-electrode procedure, if sufficiently refined, will live up to its promised potential.

THE ORIGIN OF MECHANON

No one on Earth can say with certainty who built Mechanon, where he comes from, or what his history is prior to 1985. Numerous theories have been voiced, and less reasoned speculation abounds in Internet chatrooms, the pages of superhero fan magazines, and coffeehouse conversations. The most popular ideas include:

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The government built Mechanon: A few conspiracy theorists place the blame for Mechanon squarely at the feet of the U.S. government. They claim he was one of the military's super-weapon projects that accidentally developed sentience and escaped from their control. That would explain his desire to destroy life, certainly, but leaves open the question of why the government, if it possesses the expertise to build something like Mechanon, hasn't built similarly sophisticated devices.

Dr. Destroyer built Mechanon: Destroyer is certainly a master of robotics, and could theoretically have built a robot so advanced it escaped from his control. The superhero Digitak of the Justice Squadron was the first person to widely express this idea, and the fact that Mechanon hunted him down and brutally slaughtered him a few weeks later is taken by many as proof of its correctness. But others question why Destroyer would build so advanced a robot, particularly one programmed to kill the people Destroyer wants to rule.

Dr. Destroyer is Mechanon: Some people think that Mechanon is simply a suit of armor worn by Destroyer, or a mechanical vessel operated by him through implanted or broadcast brainwaves. According to this theory, Mechanon is a feint, an attempt by Destroyer to scare the world into accepting his rulership in exchange for protecting the world from the robotic menace.

Mechanon is an alien construct: Some experts believe Mechanon was built by some alien civili-

rise from their graves to serve him, and ghosts appear to wreak harm on the living. Everyone who stands against him and is slain comes back to unlife to do as he commands.

Takofanes first appeared in 1987. His manifestation was initially noted in Oklahoma (why there, no one knows), where he destroyed the entire town of Tahlequah and turned its residents into zombies. From there he proceeded eastward, leaving death, devastation, and madness in his wake as he crossed the United States. A combined effort by several superteams to stop him from crossing the Mississippi River failed, resulting in the deaths of Archangel, Corundum, Delphi, the Hyperkinetic Man, Tightwire, Flechette, and Goldfire. A second effort to stop him, in eastern Kentucky, by a larger group of superheroes (and not a few villains) succeeded, with no further loss of superhuman life, but the Archlich vanished from the battlefield before anyone could lay hands on him. It was not until this final battle that anyone saw him so much as lift a bony finger or even acknowledge the existence of those opposing him.

Since then, Takofanes has returned several times, always in a different location, always spreading death and havoc wherever he goes. His exact goals and intentions remain obscure, since he rarely speaks, though most mystics believe he wants to take over the world by killing everyone in it and turning them into undead servants. He has never worked with other villains, and presumably regards all living beings as servitors-to-be, whatever their powers in life.

THE CROWN OF TAKOFANES

Takofanes wears on his head (or, more accurately, skull) an ornate golden crown. No hero has ever gotten near enough to him to examine it closely, but it seems to be made of seven interwoven golden dragons. The largest of the dragons rears up in front and holds a large emerald in its jaws.

Mystics who fight Takofanes have no difficulty sensing the evil magics imbued in the crown. The exact nature of the magic remains unclear, though it does seem to protect the Undying Lord from from certain mind-affecting spells. On some occasions, the emerald seems to glitter particularly brightly when Takofanes casts spells himself.

Some mystics, including Dr. Ka, claim the artifact is actually the fabled Dragon Crown, seventh and greatest of the Crowns of Krim, dwarfing in power even the Iron Crown worn by Dark Seraph. If so, that might give Takofanes the ability to summon Dark Seraph (and his followers) and make them all do his bidding — a truly terrifying prospect.

Teleios

Teleios is a threat not so much on his own, but because of the assistance he can provide other villains or organizations. A master of the biological sciences, the self-proclaimed "Perfect Man" can create cloned armies (or armies of cloned superhumans!), interfere with the biological processes of his enemies, create biological weapons of terrifying

destructiveness, and warp and mold flesh and bone to suit his whims. He himself seems to have no particular interest in conquest or rulership — though if he did, his ability to grow armies in his lab would make him extraordinarily dangerous. Instead, he regards the world as a vast laboratory, and all the people in it as his experimental subjects. Out of sheer perversity, and general loathing for humanity, he's perfectly willing to do work on behalf of organizations like VIPER and ARGENT, or to help supervillains in various ways (his expertise as a doctor used to dealing with bizarre biologies is highly sought-after in some circles). Teleios does not, however, get along with either Dr. Destroyer or Mechanon, both of whom he considers to have insulted him in years past by denigrating his chosen fields of expertise in favor of computers, robotics, and the like.

Teleios goes to great lengths to conceal his presence, preferring not to have to disrupt delicate experiments to flee from encroaching authorities. Analysts working for the United States Department of Defense believe his chief laboratories are in Canada and Central America, with lesser facilities in several places throughout the world.

The Warlord

The Warlord is something of a mystery. Ostensibly he's simply an arms merchant — an incredibly powerful arms merchant, with one of the world's mightiest powered armor suits, a gigantic aerial headquarters called the Flying Fortress, and a small private army at his beck and call — but just an arms merchant nonetheless. His goal seems to be the acquisition of wealth through the sale of military technology, and the fomenting of world conflicts as a way of maintaining a vibrant marketplace for his wares.

More than a few security analysts have questioned this viewpoint, however. The Warlord seems far too high-profile for his own good, and there are better ways to make money given the kind of resources he obviously commands. These observers opine that he's more like a junior-grade Dr. Destroyer — out to conquer the world, but taking a different approach. That, in turn, leads to speculation about what his overall plans *really* are, and how all the arms dealing fits into them.

Superheroes who have encountered the Warlord — or his bodyguards, a team of supervillains called the War Machine — haven't been able to shed much light on the matter. Unlike most villains of his caliber, the Warlord doesn't pontificate about his "master plan" or posture in front of his foes. He fights ruthlessly, with supreme tactical efficiency and with his mind focused entirely on the elimination of the enemy. Except for Destroyer, the Warlord has killed more superheroes (24) than any other known supervillain.

The Warlord is not known to have made any alliances with other supervillains, or villainous organizations. Undoubtedly, if he saw strategic value in an alliance, he would pursue it; otherwise he apparently prefers to act on his own.

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THE WAR MACHINE

The Warlord's corps of superpowered bodyguards, christened the War Machine, has five members:

Warbird: An aerial recon and combat specialist with a super-tech wings-and-jetpack combination that allows for fast, maneuverable flight, and wrist-rocket launchers for potent offense. Warbird is the team's commander.

Warcry: Possessing sonic powers strong enough to shatter walls, Warcry can also use more focused sonic blasts to accomplish several effects.

Warhead: A master of demolitions, explosives, and missiles, with a well-armed powered armor suit.

Warmonger: A psionic with the ability to inflict and enhance feelings of rage and tendencies toward violence.

Warpath: An American Indian woman who's an expert archer equipped with a high-tech bow and quiver of gimmicked arrows.

Although perhaps not as powerful as some supervillain teams, the War Machine makes up for its lack of raw power with its extensive combat expertise. The members have worked together for years, developing tactics and practices that greatly enhance their combat effectiveness. Superheroes who don't take them seriously are in for a rude surprise.

Dr. Yin Wu

This Chinese sorcerer, of indeterminate age, is barely known outside of his native China, where he lives in a castle in a valley the Chinese government has not been able to enter in over 50 years. Several attempts by the Tiger Squad to penetrate the castle or tempt "the Dragon Mandarin" into battle have met with either utter failure, or a sound defeat at the powerful Doctor's hands. Gossamer Storm, one of the leaders of the Squad and a powerful mystic in her own right, has described him as "a devil of gold and poison who dwells in safety where no one else can go." She refuses to explain what her statement means.

Despite the fact that he's supposedly been bottled up in his castle for the latter half of the twentieth century, Dr. Wu's name alone is enough to make brave men in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and the Chinatowns of the world pale with fear. Rumor has it that he maintains homes in many places besides China, traveling to and fro by walking the dragon lines that underlie the world. No one knows what his ultimate goals are — or no one's willing to talk about them — leaving the superheroes of the world to watch carefully and be prepared for anything.

Doctor Wu lives in isolation in his castle (and perhaps other homes), seeking the aid or counsel of no other man. Some superhumans do believe, however, that he secretly lent magical assistance to the forces opposing Takofanes in 1987, and Istvatha V'han in 1998.

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zation and sent to Earth — perhaps as a biosphere probe whose programming was warped by Earth's magnetic fields, perhaps as a military probe to assess the strength of Earth's superhumanity and militaries. However, examination of the bits and pieces of Mechanon's bodies that have been left behind after his battles with superheroes have failed to uncover any materials that could not have been manufactured on Earth.

Mechanon is the evolved intelligence of Earth's "technosphere": Just as Earth has an atmosphere and a biosphere, some scholars claim it has a "technosphere," and that Mechanon evolved from it — that he's sort of the gestalt intellect of all machinery all over the world. Some specifically blame his evolution on the rise of the Internet. No one has offered any firm proof of this theory, or even any ideas about how it could be proven.

ORGANIZATIONS: THE GOOD GUYS



While it sometimes seems to the superheroes of the Champions Universe that everyone's arrayed against them, a few organizations exist to fight the good fight alongside more colorful crusaders for justice.

L'INSTITUT THOTH

In 1954, the United Nations sponsored a systematic study of all aspects of paranormal and superhuman powers. The initial leader of this effort was a respected French scientist named Etienne Ste. Germaine, and he assembled a dedicated staff of biologists, chemists, physicists, sociologists, psychologists, and parapsychologists interested in exploring the nature of superpowers, their effect on society and the world, and related issues. Of course, the main reason the UN wanted to study these subjects was to help member nations capture supervillains and prevent superhuman threats, but many of the scientists were more interested in pure research than "military affairs." Christening their broad field of study "paraphysics," they set out to unravel the mysteries of superhumanity.

When UNTIL was founded in 1965, Ste. Germaine's organization was transferred to it. One year later, Dr. Ste. Germaine retired after arranging for his daughter Yvette, a recent Ph.D graduate, to take his place. The new Dr. Ste. Germaine enjoyed her work immensely, but chafed at the idea of helping the "right-wing militarists" of UNTIL. Six years into the job, she couldn't take it anymore. Deciding the impoverished life of a true scientist was better than helping put oft-misunderstood superhumans in jail, she left the organization in 1972, taking the majority of her staff with her.

Moving to Switzerland, Dr. Ste. Germaine and her staff pooled their own money together with donations from charitable organizations (and, it's rumored, more than a few wealthy superhumans) to establish *L'Institut Thoth*, named for the Egyptian god whose books supposedly contain all wisdom and knowledge. The purpose of the Institut is to study all aspects of paraphysics, both the good and the bad, so as to increase human understanding of a profoundly human subject.

But lofty goals do not pay bills, and Dr. Ste. Germaine and her colleagues realized that. To support the Institut, they also established a consulting role for it. Governments interested in exploring paraphysics issues, superhumans looking for insights into their powers (or cures for debilitating conditions), and other such clients pay hefty fees for the Institut's considerable expertise. The fees are

always based on ability to pay, rather than a flat-rate scale, but the Institut insists on receiving its money in advance as a retainer (a necessary precaution, given some of the people it deals with). Part research institute, part think tank, part hospital, the Institut plays an intriguing role in the Superhuman World — despite the fact that none of its directors or employees are themselves superhuman.

Additionally, the Institut takes a limited number of students each year, most of them college graduates pursuing Ph.D degrees. The students pay tuition, either on their own or through various scholarships established by governments, businesses, or charities who work closely with the Institut.

The Institut's ethical rules forbid it to actively assist superhuman criminals to commit crimes or evade law enforcement, but not to work with "supervillains" *per se* — anyone with superhuman powers is a subject of interest to the Institut's scientists. On a few occasions the rules have been bent slightly to allow for the study of a particularly interesting superhuman, but never broken. Despite this, the Institut is generally recognized as being on the side of the angels. Much of the data it gathers is made freely available to law enforcement, and it works for legitimate governments and superheroes far more often than for more... questionable... employers.

Now in her 60s, Dr. Yvette Ste. Germain still serves the Institut as its most influential director, Chief of Operations, and a dedicated scientific investigator. She herself specializes in psychological issues pertaining to superhumans. Any other subject relating to superhumans probably has two or three Institut personnel (at least!) studying it assiduously. Many Institut scientists are recognized as world leaders in their field.

The Institut is still headquartered in Lucerne, Switzerland, but it has established numerous "branch offices" in cities with active superhuman communities. It maintains facilities in, among others, London, Millennium City, New York City, Paris, San Francisco, Tokyo, and Vibora Bay.

THE TRISMEGISTUS COUNCIL

For over two centuries, a cold war — sometimes verging into the hot — has been waged in the shadows of civilization. The participants: mystics and savants, masters of the Arts Arcane, scholars well-versed in the lore of the occult, sorcerers,

witches, and wizards. Arrayed on one side are the forces of darkness — black magicians, demon-worshippers, greedy fools seeking power in wizardry, soul-bereft sorcerers revelling in the misery they cause. Arrayed on the other is the Trismegistus Council.

In the 1780s, in the dark days leading up to the French Revolution, certain French nobles sought both dissipation and safety in studies of the occult. Willing to walk the left-hand path to easy power, they were soon corrupted (though magic was, at that time, at one of its lowest ebbs ever). Such were the seeds from which the Circle of the Scarlet Moon (see below) was born.

As the nineteenth century began, wiser occultists and scholars in Europe, England, and America could sense the rise of the Circle, and of the evil it embodied. Unwilling to let black magic work its will in the world unhindered, three of these people — Lord Reginald MacKenzie of Scotland, Eustace Blackmun of Virginia, and Franziska von Hersbruck of what is today Germany — decided to create a counter-force. Taking their name from the fact that there were three of them, and from Hermes the patron of magicians, they called themselves the Trismegistus Council.

Unlike the Circle, which tended to recruit more readily, the Council watched prospective members long and carefully, to determine if they had the knowledge, the wisdom, and the moral fiber to belong. When someone was judged ready, and all members voted in favor of him, an offer of membership was extended. No one offered membership ever refused it. When the group became too large for unanimous voting to work efficiently, a Leadership Board of five members was chosen to evaluate potential recruits.

The size of the Council, like that of the Circle, increased steadily through the 1800s, especially in the latter half of the century. The battles between them — dark and subtle things, often worked through curse, counter-curse, and seemingly mundane accidents and events — became more frequent, and often more deadly.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the Council expanded the scope of its activities, taking on other threats besides the Circle. During the pulp era, several members were bold adventurers, taking the fight directly to the Circle in the struggle to obtain lost artifacts, recover ancient texts, and unravel the mystic secrets of the world. It's even said by some that the Raven, famed Hudson City crimefighter of the 1920s and '30s, was a Trismegistus associate. But the Council experienced its greatest failure — and greatest triumph — when it failed to stop the Circle from helping the RSvKg to raise the level of the world's magic and usher in the Era of the Superhuman.

Since 1938, the Council's role has shifted away from direct activity and back into the shadows. Now there are superheroes, many of them with mystic powers, to fight the dangers that threaten the world. Though all too often naive, these beings can battle the forces of darkness in ways the Council's members never could. The Council has become more of a body of watchers and advisers, aiding mystic superheroes while continuing the struggle against the Circle of the Scarlet Moon, which works its evil still (often through or with supervillains, or organizations like DEMON).

Possessed of great magical lore and wisdom, and in the case of many members potent spellcasting ability as well, the Trismegistus Council could be a welcome ally, or significant hindrance, to any mystic superhero. By and large, the Council regards itself as a body of seasoned professionals, and most superheroes as bumbling amateurs and showoffs. It helps only those it deems worthy, and only in the ways it deems appropriate; it has spent two hundred years concealing its existence through means mundane and magical, so only those heroes whom it wishes to find it succeed in doing so.

UNTIL

In 1963, with superhuman activity on the rise around the world, the United Nations established a commission, the Tribunal on International Law, to study the subject. After extensive discussion and study, the Tribunal concluded that the menace of supercrime was a global, rather than regional or national, one. Not only did many supervillains move from country to country and continent to continent with ease, but more than a few superhuman threats involved attempts to conquer or destroy the entire world. No one nation — not even the United States — had the resources and jurisdiction to cope with this worldwide problem.

The Tribunal had an idea for a solution... one so radical it caused a furor in the General Assembly and nearly led to the entire committee being disbanded. The Tribunal suggested that the U.N. itself should establish, maintain, and command a global police force for dealing with superhuman crime and related matters of global, regional, or even national security. The proposed police force would have the right to enter the territory of any U.N. member nation who signed the treaty establishing it, but would have to receive permission from other nations to conduct operations on their soil. The agency would not employ superhumans for the most part, but would instead equip trained human agents with the latest in high-tech law enforcement gear, some specifically designed for combatting supervillains.

Disturbed both by the costs and the implica-

MACKENZIE HOUSE

Located in a picturesque glen in the Scottish Highlands, MacKenzie House is the ancestral mansion of the MacKenzie family, one of whom, Lord Reginald MacKenzie, helped found the Trismegistus Council. Having no children to leave the mansion to, Lord Reginald bequeathed it to a trusted Council member. That member left it to other Council members, and so on to the present day.

MacKenzie House serves as a sort of unofficial "headquarters" for the Trismegistus Council. Protected by potent spells which prevent the Circle of the Scarlet Moon and other enemies from spying on the mansion or inflicting curses on those who occupy it, it's the perfect meeting-place for a group of scholars and mystics devoted to protecting the world from occult horrors and menaces. The mansion's library is as well-stocked with arcane tomes and reference works as its cellars are with the finest wines.

Any member of the Council is welcome to stay at MacKenzie House as long as he likes, or even to dwell there permanently. To see to the Council members' comfort, the House has a staff of well-trained servants led by an old butler named Swithins. Competent and confident, Swithins has a dry, clever wit that often leaves his employers wondering whether they've been subtly insulted.



UNTIL TECHNOLOGY

Here are a few examples of UNTIL technology in addition to the ones listed on the UNTIL Agent's character sheet.

U-07 "Rockabye" Sleep Gas Grenade: Many of UNTIL's weapons are designed to take targets alive or minimize the risk of civilian casualties. This knockout gas grenade, frequently issued to agents going into combat, is a perfect example.

EB 4d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing]; +1), Area Of Effect (6" Radius; +1) Continuous (+1) (80 Active Points); OAF (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼), 4 Charges lasting 1 Turn each (removed by high winds or rain; -½). Total cost: 29 points.

U-KTF "Katie" Blaster Assault Rifle: An improved version of the standard U-CCC Blaster Rifle, with automatic fire capability.

EB 10d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 4 clips of 32 Charges each (+½) (100 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 50 points.

UNTIL Force Field Belt: Only the largest field offices can afford these expensive items, which are issued to agents assigned to heavy combat missions.

Force Field (12 PD/12 ED); Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (36 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 24 points.

U-SHL "Shellie" Blaster Pistol: The standard sidearm issued to UNTIL agents. Trim and functional, the U-SHL resembles a large ballistic handgun in some respects, though the focusing crystal in the muzzle and the weapon's gold-colored body and

tions of this proposal, many member nations were initially skeptical. But the cogent and forceful arguments of the Tribunal's members, including the famed soldier and diplomat Major Juan Martinez of Paraguay, gradually won the members over. Many smaller nations realized this "police force" would provide them with a valuable service they otherwise could not afford, and larger nations realized their contribution to the agency's costs would be less than the cost of establishing a similar organization of their own.

On November 27, 1965, a treaty (now called the "Tribunal Treaty") was signed formally establishing the United Nations Tribunal on International Law — UNTIL. Not every member nation signed the treaty, though; notable exceptions were the United States, the Soviet Union, and the People's Republic of China. Not having the U.S. on board was a particularly egregious blow, since the majority of the world's superhuman activity occurred there, but the leaders of UNTIL — including its Secretary-Marshall, Juan Martinez — had to work with what they were given.

Over the next 25 years, UNTIL established an enviable record for opposing superhuman crime and related threats. Its agents, recruited from all U.N. member nations, were dedicated, brave, and intelligent, and by working together so well represented the epitome of everything the U.N. stood for. UNTIL developed and refined its equipment, becoming one of the most technologically advanced organizations in the world. In 1980, with some help from the United States, UNTIL established its own Stronghold-like superprison, the International Superhuman Correctional Facility (ISCF, nicknamed "the Guardhouse") on an isolated island in the North Atlantic.

"Major" Martinez retired in 1990, and was replaced as Secretary-Marshall by Wilhelm Carl Eckhardt of Germany. Eckhardt faced his first major crisis in 1992, when the infamous Dr. Destroyer launched his latest scheme for world conquest in the United States. Still barred from operating in the United States without permission, UNTIL was unable to reach the scene of the conflict in Detroit with new equipment that probably could have stopped Destroyer, or at least protected much of the city. When this fact became public knowledge in America, the resulting outcry finally forced the United States to sign the Tribunal Treaty and allow UNTIL to operate, unhindered, in American territory. (Similarly, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, UNTIL gained the right to conduct operations in Russia, but it remains barred from China to this day.)

As of 2002, UNTIL is recognized around the world as one of Earth's most powerful, competent, and successful law enforcement organizations. Devoted exclusively to stopping superhuman and paranormal crime and related dangerous phenomena, it has saved millions (if not billions) of lives and helped keep the world safe for 37 years. Since 1996, it has established the first truly permanent human presence in space, on its station GATEWAY, to remain alert for potential alien visitors or

invasions. No one knows what the future holds for humanity, but whatever may come, UNTIL stands ready to protect the world.

Organization

A *High Command*, consisting of the Secretary-Marshall, his assistant the Undersecretary, and the Field Marshall (commander of UNTIL's field agents), leads UNTIL. They are all based at UNTIL World Headquarters in New York City. Below the High Command, UNTIL organizes itself into regional commands, such as the North American Regional Command, European Regional Command, or Western Asia Regional Command. Leaders of special UNTIL projects, like Project Snakecharmer or Project Hermes, have equal rank with regional commanders; so do the commanders of important facilities like GATEWAY.

Below the regional commands are base commands, each headquartered at a specific facility. UNTIL has offices in most major cities of the world, with each office having an appropriate complement of field agents. Each base's commander has several field commanders (officers commanding squads of UNTIL agents) serving under him; most field commanders hold the rank of Captain, Lieutenant (1st or 2nd), Sergeant-Major, or Sergeant, depending on the squad or situation. Below these ranks are the "non-commissioned" agents — Corporal, Lance Corporal, and Private. Most UNTIL agents are Privates or Lance Corporals. UNTIL also has a Diplomatic and Administrative Corps, a Technical Corps, and other specialized branches.

Most UNTIL field squads include agents from more than one "branch" of UNTIL. The branches are defined by the type of environment the agent is specially trained to operate in, or the type of work he primarily does. Thus, UNTIL has Urban agents, Oceanic/Arctic agents, an Intelligence Corps, and so forth. Each squad contains what the commander feels is the right mix of agents to get the job done. UNTIL also has an official superteam, UNITY.

UNTIL AGENT (URBAN)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
14	CON	8	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
5	PD	2		Total: 11 PD (6 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 10 ED (6 rED)
3	SPD	5		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
28	END	0		
25	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 42

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
37	U-CCC "3C" Blaster Rifle: EB 10d6, 4 clips of 32 Charges each (+½); OAF (-1)	[32]
2	U-A1 Basic Sight: +1 OCV; OAF (-1), Only With UNTIL Rifles (-0)	0
2	U-A2 Infrared Sight: Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OAF (-1), Only With UNTIL Rifles (-0)	0
7	UB-1 Battle Knife: HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼)	1
	<i>Martial Arts: UNTIL Commando Training</i>	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes	
4	Block +2 +2 Block, Abort	
4	Punch +0 +2 5d6 Strike	
3	Throw +0 +1 3d6 + v/5; Target Falls	
12	U-AS Basic Combat Uniform: Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½)	0
2	U-AS Combat Helmet (Standard): Armor (2 PD/2 ED); OIF (-½), Only Protects The Head (-1)	0
7	U-AS Combat Helmet (Standard): Radio Perception/Transmission; OIF (-½)	0
var	Other equipment as needed for mission	

Perks

- 1 Fringe Benefit: International Driver's License
- 5 Fringe Benefit: International Police Powers
- 2 Fringe Benefit: International Weapon Permit
- 2 Fringe Benefit: Membership (UNTIL Private)
- 1 Fringe Benefit: Passport

Skills

- 2 +1 with U-CCC Blaster Assault Rifle
- 3 Criminology 12-
- 2 KS: International Law And Law Enforcement 11-
- 2 KS: The Superhuman World 11-
- 2 KS: The United Nations 11-
- 2 KS: UNTIL 11-
- 2 KS: World Politics 11-
- 2 Language: additional language (fluent conversation; must be English if English is not Native Language)
- 3 PS: UNTIL Agent 12-
- 3 WF: Small Arms, Blades
- 12 Choose four of the following: Bureaucratics, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Computer Programming, Deduction, Demolitions, Electronics, Lockpicking, Mechanics, Paramedics, Security Systems, Stealth, Streetwise, Systems Operation, Tactics, 3 points' worth of KSs/Languages/SSs/TFs/WFs, 1 3-point Combat Skill Level

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 126**Total Cost: 168****50+ Disadvantages**

- 5 Distinctive Features: UNTIL uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 10 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)

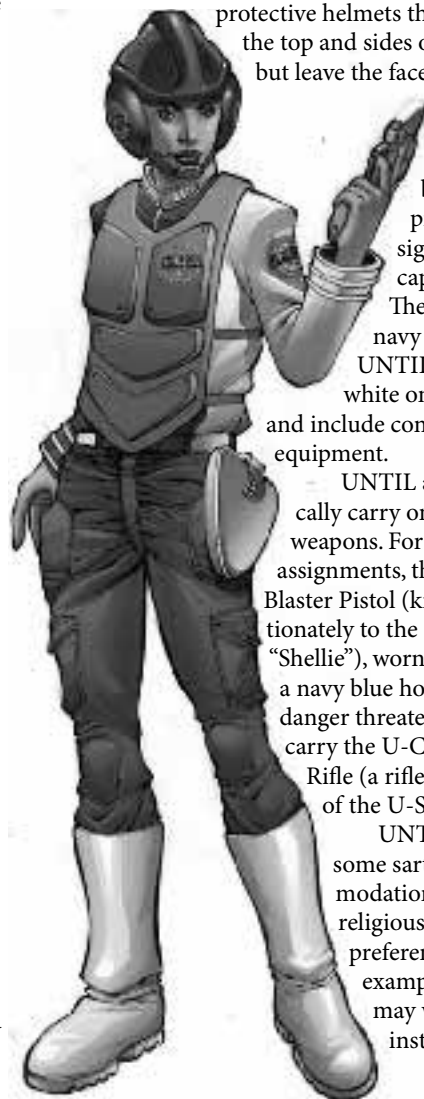
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Loyal To UNTIL And Its Ideals (Common, Strong)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 68 Experience Points or Disadvantages specific to the individual agent

Total Disadvantage Points: 168

Description: This character sheet represents a typical UNTIL agent of the Urban branch (to which most UNTIL agents belong).

Rank-and-file UNTIL agents wear a distinctive navy blue and white uniform, designated the U-AS Basic Combat Uniform, which is made from high-tech ballistic cloth. Sleeker than most military uniforms but by no means skintight, the U-AS consists of a long-sleeved jacket-like tunic that's navy blue on the right two-thirds of the breast and sleeve and white on the left third and sleeve, navy blue trousers, and white non-laced boots. The pants have several pockets for carrying personal items and gear; the tunic has no pockets at all, but does have rank insignia on the upper arms, and pins with the rank insignia on the tunic's raised collar. The piping on the uniform is gold.

For everyday occasions, agents cover their heads with navy blue berets. In the field, they wear protective helmets that cover the top and sides of the head, but leave the face uncovered



(special high-tech goggles can be attached to provide night-sight and similar capabilities). The helmets are navy blue, with the UNTIL symbol in white on both sides, and include communications equipment.

UNTIL agents typically carry one or more weapons. For routine assignments, the U-SHL Blaster Pistol (known affectionately to the agents as a "Shellie"), worn on the hip in a navy blue holster. When danger threatens, agents carry the U-CCC Blaster Rifle (a rifle-sized version of the U-SHL).

UNTIL makes some sartorial accommodations for agents' religious and cultural preferences. For example, Sikh agents may wear a turban instead of a beret.

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high-tech look give it away.

EB 8d6, 32 Charges (+¼) (50 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 25 points.

UNITY

In 1988, UNTIL decided, after more than a decade of discussion and debate, to found its own superhero team, the better to carry out its mission of protecting the world from super-powered dangers. As of 2002, UNITY, as the team is called, has six members:

Quasar: An energy projector and manipulator who once worked as a physicist for Dr. Destroyer before defecting to the side of truth and justice. Quasar leads the team.

Dr. White and Dr. Black: A married couple from England, both versed in the practice of the Arts Arcane.

Mentiac: The so-called "Human Computer," possibly the most intelligent man in the world. His advanced thought processes and perceptions give him some unusual abilities, but also make it difficult for him to relate to people of ordinary intelligence.

Myrmidon: A superhumanly strong warrior from Greece.

El Pícaro: A teleporting swordsman from Mexico with a flair for the dramatic.

UNTIL is always on the lookout for other superhumans of heroic bent who would be worthy to join the ranks of UNITY.

ORGANIZATIONS: THE BAD GUYS



Unfortunately, for every organization founded to help superheroes fight crime and combat super-menaces, there seem to be two devoted to crime and similar pursuits. Some seek wealth, some power, some both; they use various means, from science to sorcery and beyond, to achieve their aims.

ARGENT

Founded in 1974 as an American corporation devoted to cutting-edge technological research and development, the Advanced Research Group quickly established a reputation for its scientists' skills and inventiveness. Throughout the '70s and into the early 1980s, the company was a major United States defense contractor. In 1980, it changed its name to the Advanced Research Group Enterprises, or ARGENT, as a marketing ploy.

ARGENT's long string of successes came to an end in 1983, when investigative reporters from the *Washington Post* revealed to the world that ARGENT had secretly been passing United States defense technology secrets to a number of enemies, including the Soviet Union, China, VIPER, and Dr. Destroyer, and had built several secret factories to manufacture high-tech equipment for numerous criminal and terrorist organizations. Unwilling to spend the rest of their lives in jail, the executives and chief scientists of ARGENT fled the United States, taking with them as much of their data and equipment as possible. They found a new home in Awad, whose rulers were more than happy to offer ARGENT safe haven in exchange for a slice of the profits from their lucrative business.

Since moving to Awad, ARGENT has become a major player in the global underworld. While it still makes most of its money providing high-tech services and support to other criminals, it has also launched numerous criminal schemes of its own, often employing mercenaries to conduct missions (it does not maintain a large corps of its own agents, as groups like UNTIL do). It favors high-tech approaches to crime, and its usual targets likewise relate to high technology. The group has established numerous bases — public ones in places like North Korea, and many hidden ones in major cities around the world. In 1994, it spearheaded a coup in Guamanga in the hopes of acquiring an entire country of its own, but this plot was thwarted by the Justice Squadron. Since then, ARGENT's schemes have become increasingly large-scale and ambitious; it may eventually transform into a more VIPER-like organization.

THE CIRCLE OF THE SCARLET MOON

For all things, there must be a balance — any competent mystic will tell you so. Just as the forces of Light have the Trismegistus Council to aid them, the forces of Darkness know the cold comforts of alliance with the Circle of the Scarlet Moon.

Though in truth, it was the Circle that came first, and not the Council. Some in the Circle are said to trace the organization's roots back as far as certain blasphemous witch-covens in medieval Germany, but the only thing anyone can say for sure is that a French noble of the 1780s, Viscomte Gildas de Valenois, founded the Circle as a formal coven. The Viscomte recruited other dissolute members of the French aristocracy, eager for both power and perverse pleasures, to study black magic with him. Though their "powers" did not save most of them from the guillotine during the French Revolution, enough escaped to continue the Circle. Some say the ghost of de Valenois, carrying his severed head in his left hand, escorted most of the survivors to safety in the new land of America.

Settling in the former British colonies, the members of the Circle resumed their practice of the Dark Arts, only to find they had acquired an enemy — the Trismegistus Council, which sought to thwart their diabolic schemes. Aided, the Circle believes, by other forces of the Light, the Council defeated the Circle far more often than the Circle triumphed over it. Rumor has it that shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, the Circle worked a mighty spell to overcome its greatest enemy once and for all, but the spell failed, leaving the Circle badly weakened. Since then the organization has remained in the shadows, carefully hoarding its strength, and hatching only the most secretive of plots and schemes. Today, strengthened by many new and powerful members, it is once again poised to resume its quest for occult power.

DEMON

The origins of DEMON are obscure, even to superheroic mystics. It arose in 1925 as a Satanic cult in the United States, but under whose direction no one knows for sure. It remained mostly quiet through the Second World War, though cult members are said to have been involved in some bizarre crimes in New York City during the 1930s.

In the 1950s, DEMON revealed its true colors, adopting garb and methods similar to other villainous organizations and attempting to conquer the world — but with mystic power instead of technology. No



one really took the group seriously until the 1968 theft of the Basilisk Orb, an ancient artifact of vast, but poorly understood, arcane power. With the Orb in hand, the leaders of DEMON, a group apparently known as the Inner Circle, nearly did take over the world. Only concerted action by several superheroes and a young UNTIL stopped them, and in the process the Orb was lost again and has never re-appeared.

Its defeat in the Orb incident hit DEMON hard, costing it many members and much prestige in the underworld and Mystic World. For over a decade it struggled, often suffering additional losses at the hands of costumed do-gooders and the likes of UNTIL. But a major victory in 1981, when it lured several high-ranking UNTIL agents and four superheroes into a trap and slew them all in a bloody sacrifice to the gods of the underworld, brought DEMON a flood of new recruits and vaulted it into the Department of Defense's Superhuman Survey as a "Top Ten Most Dangerous Organization" — a ranking from which it has rarely fallen since.

DEMON ORGANIZATION

Repeated encounters with DEMON have given the world's superheroes some insight into the workings of the organization, though much about it remains unknown. DEMON apparently has four ranks: Brother (or Sister); Initiate of the Mysteries; Morbane; and at the very top, the Inner Circle.

Brothers (and Sisters) are the rank-and-file of the organization, the vast majority of members who participate in rituals (sometimes as the sacrifices!), serve as shock troops in battles against superheroes and PRIMUS, and the like. They are led by the Initiates, who serve DEMON as both priests and field

commanders. They intercede with the Lower Powers on DEMON's behalf, command Brothers in battle, and perform similar tasks of importance. As a badge of office, each Initiate carries a Golden Wand that can harm those it touches.

Initiates who show true talent, power, skill, and guile may eventually learn enough to be inducted into the ranks of the Morbanes. Every Morbane is a sorcerer of great power and dark wisdom, able to cast many spells and, typically, to stand against the average superhero in a one-on-one confrontation. Morbanes usually work by themselves, presumably according to the dictates of the Inner Circle; two or more of them together in one place at one time is cause for concern. In addition to his arsenal of spells, each one carries an Enchanted Mace and a Soul Gem, both quite useful in battle.

At the pinnacle of DEMON is the Inner Circle, about which outsiders (and even Brothers and Initiates) know almost nothing. Depending on which expert you ask, it ranges in size from three to two dozen, works together at all times or spends far too much energy on infighting, and exerts great magical power or simply commands the Morbanes through their Soul Gems. Given its undoubted cleverness, abilities, and resources, it's unlikely anyone will discover the truth about the Inner Circle anytime soon.

DEMON FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

DEMON has headquarters, known as Demonhames, in many cities and at places of power throughout the world. A typical Demonhame has perhaps four dozen Brothers and Sisters, six to ten Initiates, and one Morbane (sometimes more) as overall leader; some Demonhames are much larger

THE VIPER-EUROSTAR WAR

From 1996 to 1998, VIPER's European Nests engaged in an extensive conflict with the members of Eurostar. The precise causes of the conflict remain unknown; most criminologists believe it was either a territorial dispute of some sort, VIPER seeking revenge for a real or imagined insult, or an attempt to eliminate what VIPER sees as an obstacle to its plans for world domination.

The war started with a carefully-planned ambush that, despite VIPER's overwhelming advantage in numbers and firepower, only partly succeeded. Two members of Eurostar, the wind-controller Bora and the weapon-master known as the Whip, were killed in the initial attack, but Eurostar quickly regrouped and retreated, killing about a dozen agents in the process. Fiacho and his comrades quickly repaid the favor, inflicting serious damage to the Madrid Nest and leaving the remains of its equipment and complement of agents for the authorities to capture.

For nearly two years, the battle raged across the cities of Europe, depleting the resources of both sides and resulting in no significant gains by either combatant. More than thirty innocent civilians were killed in the crossfire, and three lesser VIPER's Nests were exposed. Finally, seemingly by unspoken mutual agreement, both sides realized it wasn't worth it and agreed to a cease-fire. But enmity between the two remains high, and the possibility of another "war" exists.

than this, some smaller. Most Demonhames are located underground, but a few may occupy locations above the surface.

DEMON's weapons and methods are entirely magical; the group eschews the firearms, powered armor, and hovercraft favored by its peers, and looks with contempt on the likes of Dr. Destroyer and Mechanon. Instead, it arms its Brethren with wands of power, and travels through enchanted gateways that its enemies cannot use.

Many Morbanes and/or Demonhames possess a few enchanted items of greater power, which they use only in dire emergencies or to accomplish particularly important tasks. The members of the Inner Circle almost certainly have much more extensive arsenals, but are probably even less likely to risk them in personal confrontations.

Although it rarely allies itself with mystic supervillains, whom it finds uncontrollable and possessed of goals contrary to its own, DEMON has occasionally used black magic to create supervillains of its own. Most are helpless victims warped by magic for a time, and forced to serve DEMON through chains of sorcery. Superheroes fighting them have learned to be wary, for if the spell ends, an unwitting energy bolt or punch could kill an innocent.

EUROSTAR

Eurostar, the most dangerous supervillain team in Europe (and, according to some estimates, the world), consists of six powerful villains: *Fiacho* ("that which is very bad"), the team's leader; *Durak* (Bully), a brutish Russian strongman; *Feuermacher* (Firemaker), a German with fire powers; *Mentalla*, a Spanish psionic who once

served Dr. Destroyer; *Scorpia*, an Irish terrorist skilled with poisons and blades; and *Ultrasonique* (Ultrasonic), a blind Frenchman who uses sound-waves not only to sense his surroundings, but to attack his enemies. Occasionally they recruit other European villains as temporary allies (or possible candidates for membership), or work with other teams or organizations.

Eurostar is regarded as more powerful and dangerous than most other supervillain teams, such as the Ultimates, for two reasons. First, it has strong group cohesion, which is rare in most supervillain teams. *Scorpia* and *Feuermacher* are relative newcomers (having been with the group a mere four years), but the others have all worked together for a decade or longer. They seem to trust each other, and are well aware of how their powers work best in a small-unit tactical situation. Second, they have no scruples about using deadly force. Many supervillains have powerful attacks, but Eurostar routinely "goes for the jugular" in a battle. It pulls no punches and offers no mercy.

Eurostar's agenda is unclear, though *Fiacho* has stated on numerous occasions that he intends to force all Europe to unite into a single nation ruled by him. The group does not seem to desire either conquest (beyond Europe) or profit exclusively. If anything, they seem anarchistic, even nihilistic. They enjoy wreaking havoc, causing excessive damage to property, and disrupting the normal and orderly functioning of society. They also like to humiliate American superheroes and citizens, considering them buffoons and Europe the true center of Western civilization.



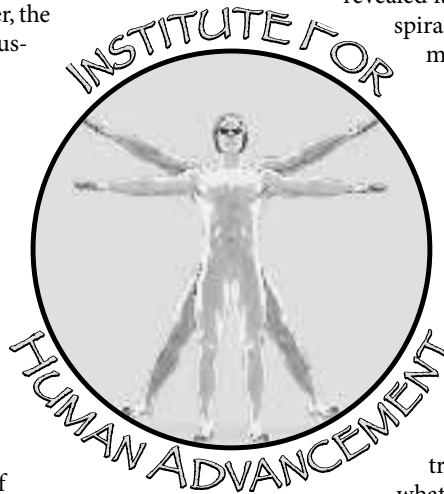
THE INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN ADVANCEMENT

Although the Institute's name makes it sound like a benevolent scientific group or think tank, it's actually a political organization. Its goal is not "human advancement," but more accurately, the advancement of "true humans" as opposed to mutants and other superhumans. Founded in 1982 by Annette Berkelheimer, the Institute is a lobbying group focusing on issues relating to the Superhuman World, primarily mutant superhumans.

While the IHA often objects to and lobbies against superhumans in general, it mainly focuses on mutant superhumans. The Institute regards mutants as "the single most dangerous threat to true humans on this planet today," according to their promotional literature. IHA reports discuss, in lurid detail, the possibilities of mutants supplanting true humans, and then either killing them all or herding them into "camps" to serve mutantkind as slave labor. Most people, both in and out of government, dismiss the Institute as a bunch of crackpots, but there's no denying that their reports and "white papers" are professionally-made and designed to convey the IHA's message skillfully. Every time a superhuman battle or incident causes significant damage to a city, or results in the loss of human life, the Institute is there, railing against the "abomination" of mutantkind and the "severe hazard mutant superhumans post to all true humans."

The Institute's founder died in 1994 and was replaced by a man named Archer Samuels, who if anything is even more rabidly anti-mutant than Berkelheimer was. Under Samuels, a skilled businessman and public relations flack, the IHA has obtained a higher, better profile in American society, and significantly increased its fundraising revenue. The vocal support of Senator Phillip Glassman of Wyoming has given the Institute and its message a new legitimacy that has more than a few mutants (on both sides of the law) worried.

Although the IHA got started in the United States, and has its largest, strongest following there, it has opened several branch offices in major European cities. Rumors persist that some governments, including Iraq and Awad, have consulted with IHA leaders regarding "the mutant problem," and even offered covert support to the organization.



PSI

Formed in 1986 by Dr. Sebastian Poe, a world-renowned expert on superhumans in general and psychic powers in particular, the Parapsychological Studies Institute was allegedly devoted to the study of superhuman phenomena and the training of young supers. It maintained that facade for eight years, until 1994, when a bungled operation revealed it for what it was: a criminal conspiracy made up of supervillains with

mental powers. Its cover blown, PSI went on the lam, becoming a somewhat nomadic supervillain group with a few minor bases scattered throughout the United States.

PSI's methods and crimes rely heavily on its members' mental powers. They use Telepathy to steal valuable data, passwords, and the like, Telekinesis to open locked doors, Mind Control to make helpless innocents do what the group wants, and so forth.

Although no one member has anywhere close to the raw power of Menton, PSI's ability to use group tactics and multiple attacks when engaging a foe makes it nearly as frightening an opponent — and every bit as terrifying to politicians, policemen, and the tycoons of industry.

Because its members can use their powers to erase memories of them from the minds of others, tracking or pursuing PSI is difficult at best. Superhero teams have had the most success against PSI in two circumstances: when the heroes just happen to stumble onto a PSI operation in mid-caper (allowing them to engage PSI in open battle, which it often avoids); and situations where PSI has to remain in one location for an extended period of time to complete a job (thus giving the heroes more opportunities to find PSI's lair).

PSI makes some use of super-technology, including high-tech vans for traveling, but prefers to rely on its members' powers as much as possible. The group has supposedly worked with ARGENT to try to develop psionic enhancement technology, but if so, they have not succeeded (or not yet revealed their successes to the world).

THE COTTONMOUTH INCIDENT

Much of the publicly-known information about VIPER comes from two sources: Nest technology and records recovered by superheroes; and the confessions of a former VIPER supervillain named Cottonmouth.

Captured by superheroes in 1990, Cottonmouth (whose powers derived from a mingling of his DNA with that of the venomous serpent of the same name) proved particularly averse to spending any lengthy time in prison. In exchange for a greatly reduced sentence, he provided extensive information about VIPER's structure, organization, methods, and technology. Thanks to the data he provided, PRIMUS and UNTIL were able to strike some significant blows against VIPER in the early 1990s.

Cottonmouth, unfortunately, didn't live to enjoy the fruits of his betrayal. VIPER takes a dim view of traitors, and has only one punishment for them: death. A VIPER assassin, surgically disguised and equipped with highly toxic venom-sacs implanted beneath artificial fingernails, infiltrated the secured facility where Cottonmouth was being housed and poisoned him, silencing him forever.

VIPER

By far the most powerful and dangerous villainous agency in the world today, VIPER first appeared in the mid-1960s, sending its green and yellow-garbed agents to plunder weak societies and slay any who would oppose it. Its activities prior to that time (if any), and its precise origins, remain unknown to the authorities, since no superhero or police officer has ever captured a VIPER leader of high enough rank to possess those secrets.

VIPER's goal, stated on more than one occasion to superheroes or through bombastic press releases, is nothing less than the conquest of the world. Although it functions more like a criminal cartel or terrorist organization than a military, in truth VIPER is a private army assembled for the purpose of bringing the rest of the world under the sway of VIPER's leaders.

VIPER prefers to work on its own, knowing that eventually it must defeat the underworld to assert rulership over the Earth. But unusual circumstances sometimes throw it together with other groups or supervillains. In the past it has occasionally worked with ARGENT, Gravitator, and the Warlord. It does not get along well with DEMON (whom it has fought on several occasions) or Dr. Destroyer (whom it regards as the chief obstacle to its plans).

VIPER ORGANIZATION

Recovered VIPER records, and confessions made by captured VIPER agents, have revealed something of the inner workings of the organization.

As of 2002, the once-monolithic and hierarchical VIPER has evolved a structure resembling a network of terrorist cells — or even a franchised business. It divides the world into "territories," each containing a headquarters referred to as a "Nest." In less populated areas, a Nest may be responsible for all criminal activity in a large region, but a major urban area like London, Millennium City, or Tokyo often contains multiple Nests. Usually Nests operate independently, but they may team up to perform jobs or confront opponents too big or powerful for a single Nest to take on. All Nests are linked to each other via a sophisticated computer network known as Serpentine.

A Nest Leader commands each VIPER base, and in turn reports to so-called High Serpents who oversee all VIPER activity within a region or continent. Many agents and records have made reference to a Supreme Serpent who controls the High Serpents, and thus all of VIPER, but no firm evidence of this person's existence (or his location)

has ever been obtained. Some experts suspect the "Supreme Serpent" is just a smokescreen created by the High Serpents, who govern the organization as an oligarchic council. The High Serpents as a group are sometimes referred to as "VIPER Central Command," though that implies a greater unity of purpose than often exists.

VIPER's lower ranks are organized into several groups. The basic VIPER agent, lightly trained and relatively inexpensively equipped, makes up the bulk of the rank-and-file, and is the type of agent most frequently encountered (and captured!) by superheroes, PRIMUS, and UNTIL. But there are also VIPER "Elite Agents," as well-trained and supplied as any special forces soldier. Many Elite

Agents are specialized — VIPER has Air

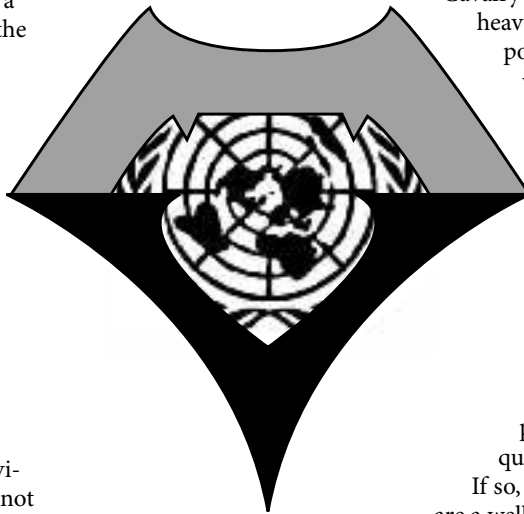
Cavalry equipped with jetpacks, heavy infantry sporting light powered armor and heavy weapons, intelligence-gathering agents, hacker agents, and many, many more. Indeed, it's the organization's versatility and adaptability that make it so dangerous.

VIPER FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

In addition to its many Nests, VIPER supposedly has a World Headquarters somewhere on Earth. If so, its location and capabilities are a well-kept secret; the authorities have no idea where to begin looking for it.

VIPER relies on high technology, often verging into the realm of super-technology, to accomplish its goals. Its agents carry blaster pistols and rifles, ride in sophisticated hovercraft, and often employ devices even more advanced. Some analysts claim the organization even has a lunar base.

VIPER also employs superhumans, though its record in this regard is somewhat mixed. In the past, it has frequently attempted to create its own supervillains, only to have them defect from the organization and become independent operatives. Mercenary villains have turned on the organization a time or two, betraying it to its enemies in the underworld for more money. But it has persevered and learned from its mistakes. As of 2002, VIPER boasts a large corps of loyal, powerful supervillains. Some, such as Adder, Diamondback, and Side-winder, draw on the serpent motif of which VIPER is so fond; others, including the immensely strong Ripper, the powerful energy blaster Oculon, and the almost-indefeatable Viperia, don't worry about blending in with their green-garbed underlings.





CHAPTER SIX: THE THUNDER OF THE DICE: GAMING IN THE CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE

This chapter contains a wealth of gamemastering advice pertaining to the Champions Universe, including an extensive “GM’s Vault” with behind-the-scenes information relating to the material in the first five chapters of this book. There’s also a sample scenario, *Return*

Of The Destroyer, which introduces Dr. Destroyer back into the setting and makes a good campaign kick-off.

If you’re a player, don’t read any part of this chapter unless your GM permits you to. Otherwise, you could spoil your enjoyment of the game.

CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE CAMPAIGNING



Here's some basic information and options about running games in the Champions Universe.

CAMPAIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

The Champions Universe campaign, as presented in this book, is a Standard Superheroic campaign where starting characters (like the Champions) begin the game with 350 Character Points — 200 Base Points, plus up to 150 Disadvantage points. Other guidelines and standards for this type of Superheroic campaign, as set forth on page 28 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, generally apply.

Most characters in the Champions Universe, particularly starting superheroes, have powers with about 60 Active Points (particularly attacks). Exceptions are sometimes made for characters who are otherwise more restricted, for characters' special "schticks," and similar circumstances. Villains, naturally, don't suffer from the general Active Point ceiling nearly as often as heroes. Being less well-rounded than heroes, they often have more powerful attacks, for example. This is particularly true of master villains like Mechanon, Dr. Destroyer, and Gravitator, who scoff at restrictions placed on mere superheroes. After all, an enemy intended to be powerful enough to face down an entire superteam needs to be pretty tough!

CAMPAIGN OPTIONS

Naturally, you can run any sort of *Champions* campaign you want in the Champions Universe — from typical four-color superheroes as of 2002, to an espionage-oriented, Communist-smashing Silver Age game, to a gritty Iron Age "graphic novel" campaign, to anything in between. The history has been left reasonably open, so that you can insert whatever events and characters you want into the main continuity.

Here are a few suggestions on possible campaigns you could try that are a little out of the ordinary. As always, feel free to tinker with these ideas to create just the right sort of game for you and your players.

CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE: FIRST WAVE

Ignore the established history and background set forth in this book. Instead, the PCs are the very first heroes ever to appear in the setting, circa 2002

(or any other year you choose). As discussed on page 27 of *Champions*, this requires you to make a few decisions and do a little more work than for a regular campaign, but with this book to help you it shouldn't be too difficult. Once you get the characters introduced to the setting, you can start to roll out well-known adversaries, like VIPER and Mechanon, reworking their origins, *modus operandi*, and abilities to suit the campaign. In essence, you use the contents of this book as the building blocks, but you and the players put the blocks together in a different way than was done to create the normal CU.

A CU: *First Wave* campaign should feature characters built as either Low-Powered or Standard Superheroic characters, depending on GM preference. Standard Superheroic usually works best, since it means less work revising established villains to fit the lower point totals of Low-Powered.

CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE: LONG ARM OF THE LAW

In this campaign, the PCs aren't superheroes at all; they're Standard Heroic characters, built with 75 Base Points plus up to 75 points in Disadvantages. They're Millennium City's finest — the policemen and policewomen of the MCPD. As cops in one of the most superhuman-heavy cities in the world, they encounter renegade mutants, power-hungry supervillains, gigantic rampaging beasts that escaped from some ARGENT laboratory, and other such excitement during the course of a typical work-week.

As Heroic characters, the PCs of course get their equipment for free. It's up to the GM whether they're plain old beat cops with .45s and bullet-proof vests, or they belong to the MCPD's world-renowned MARS squad and have blaster rifles and other such super-tech goodies to help them get the job done. Either approach can make for a fun campaign.

CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE: RAVENSWOOD ACADEMY

A little ways outside Millennium City, near the suburban community of Orchardville, there's an exclusive private school, Ravenswood Academy. Most of the students come from wealthy families, the elite of Millennium City and nearby communities. But a few are special for different reasons.

Located in and beneath Ravenswood is a secret facility, a school-within-a-school. This school specializes in the teaching and training of young superhumans. Given opportunities they'd never have at an ordinary school, with understanding teachers (many of whom are former superheroes

themselves) to help them cope with the difficulties of being a teen superhuman, these students learn what it means to be a hero.

Ravenswood — both parts of it — was founded, and is still run, by Headmaster Kristina Pelvanen, a naturalized Finn. Highly acclaimed as an educator and an academic, Pelvanen is much less well known for her activities in the 1960s and '70s as the superheroine Rowan, whose telekinetic powers often helped save the day against the likes of VIPER, TyrannoMan, or Scorch. After retiring from active superheroing in 1979, Pelvanen (a professor in her Secret Identity) realized young superhumans needed more guidance than ordinary teens did — she remembered how confused and scared she was when her own powers first manifested. She discussed the idea with some of her superheroic colleagues, who were all highly supportive. After some additional training, and with financial backing from several of them, she opened Ravenswood in 1989.

On the surface, Ravenswood is an ordinary, if exclusive, private school — the average student's parents make \$200,000 or more per year, the tuition is high, the facilities are the finest available, and the teachers are all eminently qualified. But that's really just a cover. The school's real purpose is to teach teen superhumans how to cope with their powers and, hopefully, become *superheroes* in time. Secret rooms within the school, and elaborate training facilities beneath it, are where the young supers learn how to use their powers. The superhuman teachers recruit new super-students by keeping their ears open for gossip from the Superhuman World about young supers, using their powers to track down potential candidates, and so forth. Super-students attend on a full scholarship.

Naturally, being superhumans and teenagers, the super-students get into a bit of super-powered trouble from time to time. After all, Millennium City, with all its wonders and action, is just a little ways down the road... especially if you can teleport!

A *Ravenswood Academy* campaign features “teen hero” PCs built on 125 Base Points plus up to 75 points in Disadvantages. The campaign should typically start with a low Active Point ceiling — about 40 points, probably — unless a player comes up with a particularly clever and fun power, suitable to the subgenre, that requires more points. Most of the PCs should have only one or two superpowers, often heavily Limited. As the game goes on, they improve their abilities as they learn how to use them. See *Champions*, page 42, for more information on *Teen Champions* campaigns.



CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE: SUPER-AGENTS

This campaign is a variant on *Long Arm Of The Law*. In this game, instead of being MCPD cops, the characters are agents working for PRIMUS or UNTIL. Armed to the teeth with the latest high-tech anti-superhuman gear, they take on supervillains, VIPER, and anyone else who gets in their way. Also unlike the *Long Arm* campaign, the PCs are likely to do a good bit of traveling — they have national or international jurisdiction, so they can pursue villains other than ones who happen to come to Millennium City.

Super-Agents PCs are usually built as Standard Heroic characters, with 75 Base Points plus up to 75 points of Disadvantages. However, some GMs may prefer Powerful Heroic characters instead (100 + 100 points), since the PCs are going to spend most of their time taking on superhuman foes.

CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE: WHISPERS OF THE ARCANES

This is an ordinary Champions Universe campaign in terms of point totals and other guidelines, but with a restricted character type: all the PCs have to be mystics. That doesn't necessarily mean supermagics; some could be reformed vampires or the like. But each character needs some strong association with magic and/or the supernatural.

Typically a *Whispers Of The Arcane* campaign starts out with relatively “weak” characters — Heroic or Low-Powered Superheroic. At first, the PCs get caught up in the war between the Trismegistus Council and the Circle of the Scarlet Moon, gradually working their way up to more dangerous foes and greater powers. Eventually they become this dimension's defenders against the likes of Tyrannon, Skarn, and Dark Seraph.

THE GM's VAULT



PAGE 38: ALL-AMERICAN PLOT SEEDS

A renegade general begins using the Perseus procedure to create his own army of super-mercenaries. The All-American has to recruit the PCs' help to put an end to this menace.

A former All-American contracts cancer, and concludes that he got it because of the Perseus treatments. Embittered by the government's refusal to pay for his medical care, he embarks on a campaign of terror and destruction, which the PCs need the All-American's help to investigate and stop.

Dr. Macabre returns from the dead with a plot to gain revenge on the All-American. He kidnaps all the surviving former All-Americans. The current All-American has to team with the PCs to rescue them and stop Macabre's scheme.

This section contains additional and/or secret information about the Champions Universe that is for the GM's eyes alone. *If you're not a GM running a Champions Universe campaign, do not read this section!!!*

The information in the GM's Vault is organized by chapter and page number. If no players are going to read your copy of *Champions Universe*, you can also make notes in the appropriate parts of the main text to remind you that there's GM's Vault information associated with a particular section of the book.

If the GM's Vault doesn't comment on some part of the main text, it's usually safe to take what's written there as accurate — though each GM is free to change anything in this book to suit his own preferences or campaign. Some subjects, particularly specific villains, are covered in other books like *Conquerors*, *Killers*, and *Crooks*, and that information is not repeated here. And of course, there are questions or hints in the main text that this section doesn't address because they're left open for you, and possibly future Hero Games products, to explore on your own....

CHAPTER THREE

PAGE 36 — DOSPA PERSONNEL

As the main text notes, not everyone working for DOSPA is as sympathetic toward superhumans as Andrew Rochester. Of particular note is Assistant Undersecretary for Mystic Affairs Brenda Tagwell, who is in the pay of Dr. Destroyer. Thanks to her, Destroyer gets his hands on much of the information available to DOSPA. Tagwell, a greedy and unprincipled person, would gladly sell the same information to VIPER and other organizations, if she could make contact with them.

PAGE 40 — AMERIFORCE ONE

The statement in the main text that all the members of Ameriforce One were killed in the 1983 Soviet sub explosion is incorrect. One member, Russell Watkins, survived, though he was badly injured. He washed ashore in Finland, without any memory of who he was or what had happened. A farmer's family found him and nursed him back to health, though he never regained his memory. He's spent the past two decades as a homeless person in Europe, tormented by occasional flashes of recollection. It may be that one day a supervillain will dupe him and recruit him to help commit crimes, or that his memory will return and, bitter over being "abandoned" by his country, he will launch a scheme to get revenge on the United States....

PAGE 43 — PRIMUS

Although the public in general, and even many superhumans, considers Cyberline a drug/biofeedback process of some sort, in truth it's a form of advanced genetic engineering. It introduces low-powered superhuman DNA, obtained from several superhumans by Dr. Alexander during his researches, into the Avengers' bodies via an RNA retrovirus. Avengers periodically go in for new doses of the virus to "update" their superhuman genes or correct any minor problems that may have arisen.

This method gives PRIMUS some built-in security. Since Cyberline isn't a drug that could affect anyone, but a genetic engineering process that only works on a few people with compatible genes, a theft of Cyberline materials or data isn't as damaging as it might be, and a theft of the "update" viri even less so. PRIMUS still takes any such incidents *very* seriously (since analysis of stolen materials could reveal its secrets and methods, or allow the thief to find a way to "counteract" Cyberline), but they don't pose the threat the public thinks.

PAGE 44 — STALWART

Here's the lowdown on Stalwart, the armored superhero who works with the FBI's Hostage Rescue Teams.

STALWART

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15+35*†	STR	25	12-/19-	Lift 200 kg/25 tons; 3d6/10d6 [1/5]
12+8*†	DEX	20	11-/13-	OCV: 4/7-DCV: 4/7
18+17*†	CON	35	13-/16-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
13+12*	PRE	13	12-/14-	PRE Attack: 2½d6/5d6
10	COM	0	11-	
6	PD	3		Total: 26 PD (20 rPD)
6	ED	2		Total: 26 ED (20 rED)
3+2*	SPD	24		Phases: 4, 8, 12/3, 5, 8, 10, 12
7	REC	0		
36	END	0		
40	STUN	8		Total Characteristic Cost: 147

*: OIHID (Powered Armor; -¼)

†: No Figured Characteristics (-½)

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Leaping:	10"/20"
	Flight:	15"/30"
	Tunneling:	3"/6"

Cost	Powers	END
43	<i>Batteries:</i> Endurance Reserve (240 END, 30 REC); OIHID (-¼)	0
48	<i>Onboard Weaponry:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve; all OIHID (-¼)	
5u	1) <i>Concussion Blaster:</i> EB 12d6; OIHID (-¼)	6
5u	2) <i>Stunner:</i> EB 6d6, NND (defense is ED Force Field or Armor; +1); OIHID (-¼)	6
5u	3) <i>Tangleweb Cannon:</i> Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF; OIHID (-¼)	6
5u	4) <i>Tangleweb Grenade Launcher:</i> Entangle 4d6, 4 DEF, Explosion (+½); OIHID (-¼)	6
3u	5) <i>Strobe:</i> Sight Group Flash 6d6, Area Of Effect (7" Cone; +1); OIHID (-¼), No Range (-½)	6
4u	6) <i>Tractor Beam:</i> Telekinesis (30 STR); OIHID (-¼)	4
60	<i>Powered Armor:</i> Armor (20 PD/20 ED), Hardened (+¼); OIHID (-¼)	0
12	<i>Stealth Mode:</i> Invisibility to Sight, Hearing, And Radio Groups, No Fringe; OIHID (-¼), Increased Endurance Cost (x5 END; -2)	20
24	<i>Flight Pack:</i> Flight 15"; OIHID (-¼)	3
19	<i>Burrowing Lasers:</i> Tunneling 3" through DEF 6 material; OIHID (-¼)	2
7	<i>Communications Suite:</i> HRRP; OIHID (-¼), Flashed As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
4	<i>Sensor Suite (Heat Sensors):</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OIHID (-¼)	0
4	<i>Sensor Suite (Nightsight):</i> Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group); OIHID (-¼)	0
8	<i>Sensor Suite (X-Ray Vision):</i> N-Ray Perception (Sight Group; cannot see through lead, gold, or Force Fields)	0
10	<i>Sensor Suite (Enhancers):</i> +4 versus Range Modifier for the Sight and Hearing Sense Groups; OIHID (-¼)	0

Perks

20	Contacts: various in the U.S. government
3	Fringe Benefit: Federal Police Powers
4	Fringe Benefit: Security Clearance
6	Reputation: American law enforcement superhero (throughout Earth, 14-) +2/+2d6

Talents

10	<i>Onboard Computer:</i> Absolute Range Sense, Absolute Time Sense, Bump Of Direction, Lightning Calculator; all OIHID (-¼)
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Skills

9	+3 with Onboard Weaponry Multipower
1	Computer Programming 8-
3	Conversation 12-
3	Criminology 12-
3	Demolitions 12-

1	Electronics 8-
2	KS: The FBI 11-
2	KS: The Superhuman World 11-
1	Mechanics 8-
3	Persuasion 12- (14-)
3	Stealth 11- (13-)
2	WF: Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 342**Total Cost: 489****200+ Disadvantages**

20	Hunted: ARGENT 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
20	Hunted: The Warlord 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
20	Psychological Limitation: Overconfidence (Common, Total)
10	Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Common, Strong)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Lucius Grimes) (Frequently, Major)
20	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
184	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 489

Background/History: In the early 1990s, the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team began developing a weapon to help them counter the increase in hostage and terrorism situations involving superhuman powers and technology. This weapon — a suit of powered armor with heavy defenses and a suite of weaponry designed to incapacitate hostage-takers without causing significant harm to hostages and innocent bystanders — was dubbed "Stalwart." When it was completed in 1995, the FBI looked around for someone to wear it. Rather than use one of the members of the HRTs (who were already trained to do their job the way they'd been doing it all along) or an FBI agent (who were trained for other duties), they found Lucius Grimes, a former student at the FBI Academy who'd been expelled for cheating on an exam. They weren't fond of his ethics, but he fit the physical and psychological profile necessary for the job, so they offered it to him.

Grimes accepted immediately. Getting to be a full-time superhero was a *much* better job than training to be a cop in Washington, D.C. Since then, he's participated in hundreds of hostage rescue situations, combats against supervillains, and similar missions. His success in thwarting the plots of ARGENT and the Warlord has earned him their enmity, but that doesn't bother him. With the Stalwart armor backing him up, he can take on anyone!

Personality/Motivation: Stalwart is not particularly admirable, as superheroes go. He does his job and he does it well, but that's all it is to him — a job. He doesn't have a truly heroic personality, and he's not devoted to serving "the greater good" like most superheroes are. In fact, he tends to be self-centered; he can be petty, vengeful, picky, and self-absorbed if the mood takes him. He often complains when his duties interfere with personal plans, like a date or a vacation. It's possible he'll eventually decide it's not worth it to take the FBI's

PAGE 41: VICTORY PLOT SEEDS

Kristine's powers begin to grow out of control to the point where anyone near her is harmed by the energy output. Desperate to find out what's going on and correct the problem, she turns to Teleios. What price will the fiendish biologist exact for his services?

While out exploring the galaxy, Victory encounters an armada of strange alien ships heading for Earth, conquest obviously on their minds. Barely escaping from their attacks, she falls to Earth, comatose, right into the center of the PCs' base. Can they figure out from her condition what's going on in time to save Earth?

Mechanon captures Victory and hooks her up as the "living battery" for one of his super-weapons. Can the PCs stop him from using the weapon without killing Victory? If not, what will they do?

STALWART PLOT SEEDS

Grimes goes rogue, taking the Stalwart armor with him. The FBI, wanting to keep the matter quiet, recruits the PCs to get it back instead of going through official channels. Can the heroes handle the job — especially after Stalwart joins up with the Ultimates?

The War Machine takes some hostages at a building in Chicago and insists it will only negotiate with Stalwart. Unfortunately, Grimes is on vacation in the Bahamas and either can't, or won't, answer his communicator. The PCs go down to the Caribbean to bring him back... only to find out he's mysteriously disappeared!

After Grimes suffers a bad injury fighting VIPER, the FBI recruits one of the PCs to take his place inside the armor for a little while. Unfortunately, all of Grimes's enemies choose that particular time to launch attacks against him.

orders and just quit, stealing the suit and becoming a super-mercenary.

Once he's at a mission site, though, Stalwart becomes professional. Years of experience have shown him that his armor is pretty tough, especially against the sort of weapons wielded by typical hostage-takers and terrorists, so he's developed an overconfident streak that sometimes gets him in trouble (particularly when he's facing superhuman foes).

Quote: "Put the gun down and step away from the hostage. No one has to get hurt here."

Powers/Tactics: The Stalwart armor is a powered battlesuit equipped with systems and weapons that allow it to defuse hostage crises and terrorist situations with a minimum of potential danger to innocents. Most of its weapons are designed to incapacitate rather than inflict injury, it has sensors able to see through walls, and it allows the wearer to fly or tunnel through the earth (both good ways to make surprise attacks) or lift up to 25 tons. It even comes equipped with a sophisticated "stealth mode," but this drains the suit's batteries so quickly it can't be activated for long periods.

In a typical hostage or crisis situation, Stalwart prefers to get as close to the targets as he can without spooking them. Then he uses the best weapon for the situation. If a terrorist has a gun pointed at a victim's head, Stalwart uses his tractor beam to jerk the gun out of the killer's hand. If he's confronting a whole gang of bank robbers, he uses tangleweb, or blinds them with his Strobe. The Concussion Blaster, and to a lesser extent the Stunner, are weapons of last resort.

Grimes has spoken repeatedly with his superiors about expanding the armor's capability. He'd like to build on the tractor beam technology and give the suit the power to create walls of force, deflect attacks aimed at other people, and so forth. So far the FBI has not been able to muster the budget to begin research on any such systems.

Grimes has never bothered to learn much about maintaining the Stalwart armor; after all, the FBI has technicians to do things like that. If he were to steal the suit and strike out on his own, he'd have to develop a relationship with an underworld armorer who could keep him supplied and

in repair.

Campaign Use: Stalwart can serve as a more-or-less ordinary NPC hero — or perhaps, by showing the bad side of his personality, you can use him to remind the PCs of what it means to be a true hero in thought as well as deed. If he goes renegade, he makes a good member of impromptu teams of villains assembled for specific jobs.

Stalwart, as a renegade, is most likely to start Hunting a hero because of his vengeful nature. A significant defeat, or even a thorough humiliation of some sort, will be enough to put him on the warpath seeking revenge. He's not likely to

work up enough hatred to want to kill anyone — he's a jerk, not a killer — but he'll gladly give a PC a sound thrashing.

To increase Stalwart's power, make some of the modifications mentioned above under "Powers/Tactics" — basically, give the suit an Elemental Control of Force Powers, with Telekinesis (transferred from the Multipower), Force Wall, Missile Deflection, and any other appropriate powers. To make him a little less powerful, get rid of the Stealth Mode and Burrowing Lasers, and reduce his Armor a few points.

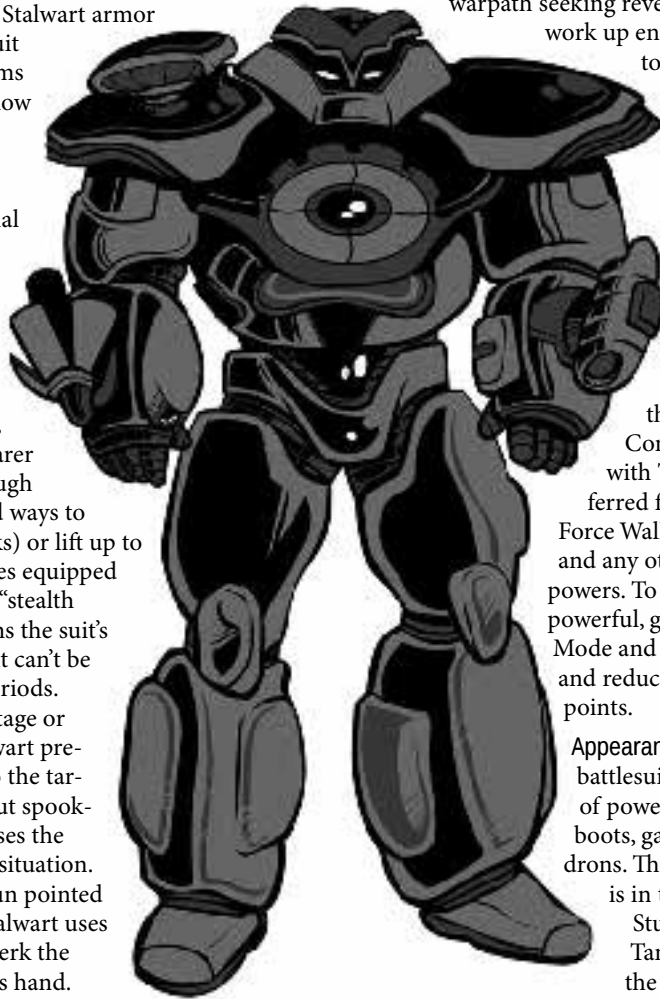
Appearance: The Stalwart battlesuit is a steel-grey set of powered armor with large boots, gauntlets, and pauldrons. The Concussion Blaster is in the right palm, the Stunner in the left; the Tangleweb Cannon on the right arm, the gre-

nade launcher on the left; the Tractor Beam on the right arm; and the Strobe is mounted on the chest. While wearing it, Grimes is an imposing eight feet tall.

Lucius Grimes himself is a 6'2" tall, 32-year-old black man with short hair, a moustache, and a look of confidence. His FBI salary allows him to dress well, and he does. When he's not wearing the armor, he carries it in a large, high-tech briefcase.

PAGE 53 — CASSIDY'S SUPERSPORTS NETWORK

The rumors about Thomas Cassidy trying to create enough superhumans to launch a Super-Sports Network are just that — rumors. Cassidy would love to create "SSN," but he has no desire, and has taken no steps, to mass-manufacture superhumans for it.



PAGE 53 — THE ARENA

The Arena is real; it exists mainly in New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago, though the people who run it are considering expanding into several other venues, including Millennium City and Milwaukee. As the main text notes, most of the fighters are low-powered superhumans — people stronger and faster than normal humans, but not strong, fast, or motivated enough to make it as superheroes or villains. Deaths on the circuit are rare, but do occur, especially when fierce rivals meet for a match.

PAGE 54 — SUPER-TALK.COM

Super-Talk.Com's success is due in large part to Sheila Swinson, who possesses minor superpowers herself. She's got low-level precognitive abilities, and these allow her to learn news before established reporters and even predict certain business trends. So far she hasn't caused any trouble doing this, but it's possible her actions might at some point disrupt the time-stream, or attract the attention of a supervillain who wants to exploit her powers for his own gain....

PAGE 58 — BINARY MAN

Here's a character sheet for the Binary Corporation's official superhero, Binary Man.

BINARY MAN

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 [3]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
20	CON	20	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
14	COM	2	12-	

12	PD	6		Total: 18 PD (6 rPD)
8	ED	4		Total: 14 ED (6 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	0		
40	END	0		
40	STUN	5		Total Characteristics Cost: 122

Movement: Running: 9"/18"
Leaping: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
70	<i>Binary Form:</i> Duplication (creates one 350-point Duplicate)	0
25	<i>Binary Blaster:</i> EB 10d6; OAF (-1), 16 Charges (-0)	[16]
	<i>Martial Arts: Kung Fu</i>	
	Maneuver	OCV DCV Notes
4	Block	+2 +2 Block, Abort
4	Disarm	-1 +1 Disarm, 40 STR
4	Dodge	+0 +5 Dodge all attacks, Abort
4	Escape	+0 +0 45 STR versus Grabs
3	Joint Lock/Grab-1	-1 Grab Two Limbs, 40 STR

5	Kick	-2	+1	10d6 Strike	
4	Knife Hand	-2	+0	½d6 HKA (1d6+1 with STR)	
3	Legsweep	+2	-1	7d6, Target Falls	
4	Punch	+0	+2	8d6 Strike	
3	Throw	+0	+1	6d6 +v/5, Target Falls	
24	<i>Binary Fighting Array:</i> Aid DEX 3d6, Delayed Return Rate (5 Character Points per Minute; +¼), Invisible Power Effects (Fully Invisible; +1); Self Only (-½), Usable Only Within 5" Of Other Self (-1), Only Increases OCV And DCV (-¼)				0
12	<i>Bulletproof Costume:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½)				0
6	<i>Fleet-Footed:</i> Running +3" (9" total)				1

Perks

5 Money: Well Off

Talents

9 Ambidexterity (no Off Hand penalty)

Skills

3	Acrobatics 13-
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Climbing 13-
3	Contortionist 13-
3	KS: Binary Corporation & Its Products 12-
3	Oratory 13-
3	Persuasion 13-
2	PS: Marketing 11-
2	PS: Public Relations 11-
2	SS: Biology 11-
3	Stealth 13-
9	Teamwork 16-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 228

Total Cost: 350

200+ Disadvantages

10	Distinctive Features: Mutant (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
20	Hunted: Institute for Human Advancement 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
10	Hunted: PRIMUS 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
20	Psychological Limitation: Code Against Killing (Common, Total)
15	Psychological Limitation: Greedy Lover Of Luxury (Very Common, Moderate)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Thomas Dupree) (Frequently, Major)
20	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
20	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Electricity (Common)
20	Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Electricity (Common)

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

BINARY MAN PLOT SEEDS

Unbeknownst to Dupree, his corporate masters have kept careful tabs on all his indiscretions — the drunken fights, the excessive use of call girls, the way he cheats on his taxes, you name it. When he refuses to assist with a smear campaign against a popular hero who's been poking his nose into a couple of the Special Project Division's "experiments" with induced mutation, the Board of Directors blackmails him with the information to ensure his corporation. Will they, instead, force him to take a long, hard look at his life and become a *real* hero?

PRIMUS recruits the PCs to help solve a mystery. For fifteen hours three weeks ago, all of its surveillance of Binary Man inexplicably malfunctioned. No recording device worked at all, and no agent on duty was able to remain on duty (they all became ill, or were called away by other events). PRIMUS wants to know what the Binary Man was up to during those fifteen hours, and what caused the universal gap in the surveillance net.

Eager for more wealth, Binary Man has been working with VIPER on the side, using another costumed identity (Duo). When the PCs get lucky and capture him, he offers to tip them off to a secret Binary Corporation project that could threaten everyone in the Millennium City area — provided they let him go and say nothing about his involvement in either matter to anyone. Will the heroes go for it?

Background/History: In 1999, following several major public relations disasters, the Binary Corporation, a massive conglomerate with business interests all over the world, and one of the contributors to the construction of Millennium City, decided it needed to improve its image a little. Since superheroes are “hip” and “cool,” the marketing wonks at Binary decided the corporation needed to find a superhero of its own to sponsor — someone who, through his conduct and deeds, would make Binary itself look good.

Enter Thomas Dupree. A junior employee in the company’s advertising division, Dupree had long concealed a secret from the world: he was a mutant, with the power to duplicate himself! He figured he was perfect for the company’s needs, so he revealed his secret to his superiors. Liking what they saw, they quickly developed a pitch for “Binary Man” and presented it to the Board of Directors.

The BoD loved it and authorized the company’s Special Projects Division to proceed.

Special Projects brought in consultants to design a costume, trainers to teach Dupree how to fight (since just being able to split himself in two wasn’t much good for battling evil), R&D to design a weapon and defensive equipment for him, and on and on. The entire process took a couple of years, but in 2001 the Board of Directors was pleased to present Binary Man to the world. Since then, the “Twin Titans of Justice” (a title coined by Dupree’s former colleagues in the advertising department) have helped battle crime and injustice in Millennium City and elsewhere... but only when they could make the Binary Corporation look good.

While the public mostly approves of Binary Man, some of the authorities are not so sanguine. PRIMUS, in particular, has been keeping tabs on him, since they figure Binary is up to something fishy, and whatever it is, they want to make sure it doesn’t involve an army of cloned Duplicating soldiers or anything else that might threaten national security.

Personality/Motivation: Binary Man is not particularly heroic, or self-sacrificing. He’s in this deal for the money, and in fact he finds he gets paid a *lot* better than he did when he was an advertising copywriter. He does get some satisfaction out of helping people, and a little thrill out of combat, and plenty of ego-boosting from appearing on television, but it pretty much just comes down to

the bucks for him at the end of the day. If he didn’t throw so much of his earnings away on gambling, women, and liquor, he’d have a pretty tidy nest egg already.

Quote: “It takes two to triumph!”

Powers/Tactics: Binary Man is a mutant with the power to create an identical duplicate of himself. The two Binary Men have spent many hours training together, and it shows; their movements coordinate flawlessly, and their fighting abilities complement each other. Typically the first thing they

do in combat is activate their array (if it gets disrupted they’ll try to get it going again as soon as possible). Then they either use

Teamwork to Coordinate attacks on a single target, or they stagger their Phases, with one Holding his Action

each time so he can act on Segments the other doesn’t act on. If hand-to-hand combat isn’t feasible, the two Coordinate with their Binary Blasters. If faced with more foes, or a stronger foe, than they can

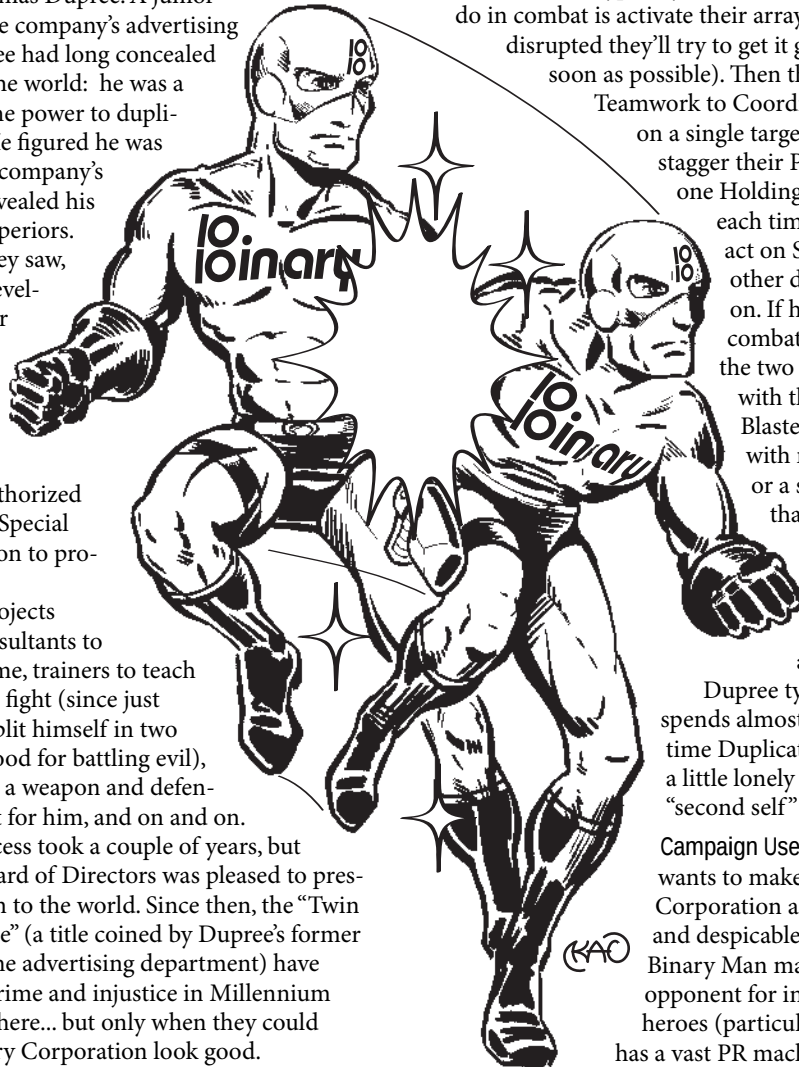
comfortably handle, the Binary Men will retreat and regroup.

Dupree typically spends almost all of his time Duplicated. He feels a little lonely when his “second self” isn’t around.

Campaign Use: If the GM wants to make the Binary Corporation a corrupt and despicable institution, Binary Man makes a good opponent for investigative heroes (particularly since he has a vast PR machine backing him up, ready to spin the media to make the heroes look like the bad guys). If the Binary Corporation isn’t that bad, Binary Man might team up with the PCs from time to time. Wherever he goes, cameras and reporters tend to follow, so his presence might garner the PCs some much needed publicity (or a lot of attention they’d just as soon avoid...).

Binary Man won’t Hunt anyone unless his corporate masters order him to. Even then, he won’t pursue anyone doggedly (*i.e.*, on more than an 8-), unless he’s promised a *big* bonus for success.

To make Binary Man more powerful, you can give him some additional gadgets, boost his SPD, or provide him with a few minor superpowers (perhaps the result of Binary Corporation-manu-



factured technology or drugs). To tone him down, reduce his STR to 20 and get rid of the Binary Fighting Array.

Appearance: As the sponsored hero of the Binary Corporation, Binary Man wears a costume in the corporate colors, orange and blue: the boots, trunks, and flared gauntlets are blue, and the rest of the suit is orange. A half-face mask conceals his identity. On his chest is the logo of the Binary Corporation (featuring the word “Binary” prominently) in blue.

PAGE 59 — FRANKLIN STONE

The description in the main text of Stone is accurate, though it doesn't go far enough. He is indeed ruthless, ambitious, greedy, powerhungry, and more than willing to ignore the law if he can get away with it. But beyond that, he has ties (carefully concealed) to VIPER and some organized crime groups, and has various parts of his corporate empire engaging in all sorts of practices (like attempts to genetically engineer superhumans) that are both blatantly illegal and extremely dangerous. He is, in short, the perfect antagonist for super-heroes who are already involved in the corporate world in some way.

Stone is both intrigued and repelled by superhumans. On the one hand, he recognizes their value as advertising pitchmen, sources of new technology, and the like, and he never overlooks or ignores potential sources of profit (or hirelings and patsies he can use against his enemies). On the other hand, superheroes have on more than one occasion interfered (knowingly or unknowingly) with ACI affairs, and to brook Franklin Stone is to make an enemy for life. Moreover, something about superhumans subtly offends him; it's as if, with their gaudy costumes and flashy powers, they're deliberately flaunting their “superiority.” It irks him to no end that he doesn't have that kind of personal power himself (though he'd *never* risk his health trying to gain his own powers; he's no fool).

Stone is currently in his mid-50s and in extremely good health. He stands 6'3" tall, with dark hair and eyes and the build of a man his age who exercises regularly. He's serious-minded and disciplined, almost always focused on business to the exclusion of everything else. He has no children, and is married to his third wife, Melissa, a gorgeous 27-year-old who's perfectly willing to put up with the fact that he also keeps two mistresses in their house as long as she has access to his money.

FRANKLIN STONE

10	STR	10	DEX	12	CON	10	BODY
20	INT	18	EGO	23	PRE	12	COM
3	PD	3	ED	2	SPD		
5	REC	24	END	25	STUN		

Abilities: Computer Programming 8-, Conversation 13-, High Society 13-, KS: Business And Finance 20-, PS: Businessman/Industrialist 20-, Persuasion 13-, Money: Filthy Rich

0+ Disadvantages: Age (40+), Psychological Limitation: Greedy For Wealth And Power, Rivalry (other business moguls)

PAGE 59 — THE ESPIONAGE WORLD

Rumors of the continued involvement of superhumans in espionage are true; both the United States and China, in particular, still have super-spies in their employ. Leaving aside the Air Force's use of Victory for aerial reconnaissance and the like, the United States has at least two superhumans — a clairvoyant psionic named Frederick Wilson, and the light-manipulating heroine Brightmoon — working for it. China's superhuman spies include Glorious Mind (a superhuman with low-level psionic powers and Eidetic Memory), Dark Cloud (who possesses powers of intangibility), and a robotic shapeshifter designated Agent 57.

PAGE 60 — THE TOURNAMENT OF THE DRAGON

The Tournament of the Dragon is real, and extremely important. It is held every sixty years because that is when *Szé Lóng*, the Death Dragon, an evil that was ancient when mankind was young, strains his bonds and threatens to break free to ravage the world. The Champion earns the honor, and responsibility, of fighting this terrifyingly powerful creature and keeping the world safe... with the fate of the world hanging on whether he succeeds or fails.

PAGE 60 — YENGTAO TEMPLE

The precise origins of the Yengtao Temple are lost in the mists of time, although knowledgeable martial arts scholars have several different theories. Some date its origin to China's Epoch of the Warring States (403-221 B.C.), while others associate it with the better-known Shaolin Temple. Various early martial artists, cults, secret societies, and wizards have all been named as among its founders, but the true facts remain unconfirmed.

According to the most common stories, Yengtao's purpose is to preserve and pass on all martial knowledge and wisdom to those deemed worthy. Its masters — many of whom have supposedly lived far longer than average men do — know and can teach any martial arts style ever created, plus many wondrous and amazing abilities developed only at the Temple (such as the ones in the sidebar accompanying the main text).

Yengtao Temple existed, concealed from the outside world and its concerns, until the 1990s. While almost all martial artists regarded (and still regard) Yengtao as a myth, a few discovered the truth behind the legends and entered the Temple to train. As they had since the Temple's founding, the masters gave each student a nickname or title reflecting his or her personality and goals.

In 1994, two new students arrived at Yengtao: a brash Chinese youth named Cong Feng, and an eager Westerner called Stephen J. Chase. Because he was skilled, but often burned with anger, Cong was named Jade Phoenix; Chase was called Wind of the Night because of his skill at stealthy movement. Cong studied kung fu, seeking ultimate mastery of that style; Chase studied a variety of styles and soon progressed to learning unique Yengtao techniques (much to the anger of Cong, who was slow to learn

PAGE 64: SHUGOSHIN PLOT SEEDS

Shugoshin comes to the PCs for help — some mysterious force is draining the mystic energies of the *Seishinken*! He needs to find out what's going on and put a stop to it before they lose all their magical power... which could have disastrous consequences.

The yakuza start some sort of major scheme in the campaign city. Lacking significant information about the Japanese gangsters (or needing information about clues that lead back to San Francisco yakuza clans), the PCs have to team up with Shugoshin.

A Japanese demon was once imprisoned within the *Seishinken*, and now it starts to break free. The first thing it does is possess Shugoshin and turn him back to the path of evil. The PCs have to figure out what's going on and stop the demon without hurting Shugoshin.

those advanced abilities). The two became rivals. Cong's envy and anger were frequently expressed in the form of anti-Western epithets and vicious beatings when he could take Chase by surprise.

The Yengtao masters knew that Cong was troubled, but in truth his heart was far more evil than they realized. In 1996, Cong decided he would be the greatest kung fu warrior in the world if he destroyed the Temple and its masters, thus leaving himself alone as a repository of their knowledge. One night, he poisoned the evening meal, making all who ate it sick and weak. Next, he attacked Chase and Chase's mentor, Zhu Hsaio, knocked them out, and tied them to a pole in the main temple area. Then he set the Temple on fire and fled. Chase woke up in time to save himself and Zhu Hsaio, but all the other masters and students died a horrible, fiery death.

Chase returned to America, bringing the aged and weak Zhu Hsaio with him, and soon put his Yengtao knowledge to good use by becoming the crimefighter Nightwind. Cong eventually made his way to America as well, where he renewed his rivalry with Chase and began a criminal career under the name Jade Phoenix (*Qí Fèng*). Cong seeks to kill not only Chase, but anyone else who still possesses knowledge of Yengtao techniques, so that he remains the only one in the world who knows them.

PAGE 64 — STEEL COMMANDO

Here's a character sheet for the Steel Commando.

STEEL COMMANDO

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15+15*†	STR	12	12- /15-	Lift 200/1,600 kg; 3d6/6d6 HTH [1/3]
18+7*†	DEX	34	13- /14-	OCV: 6/8-DCV: 6/8
20+5*†	CON	25	13- /14-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
15+8*	PRE	10	12- /14-	PRE Attack: 3d6 (4½d6)
10	COM	0	11-	
8	PD	5		Total: 20 PD (12 rPD)
7	ED	3		Total: 19 ED (12 rED)
4+1*	SPD	19		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12 (3, 5, 8, 10, 12)
10	REC	6		
40	END	0		
40	STUN	9		Total Characteristic Cost: 142

*: OIF (Powered Armor; -½)

†: No Figured Characteristics (-½)

Movement: Running: 8"/16"
Leaping: 20"/40"

Cost	Powers	END
75	<i>Energy Rifle:</i> Multipower, 75-point reserve, 125 Boostable Charges for entire Multipower (+1); all OAF (-1) [125]	
3u	1) <i>Direct Fire Mode:</i> EB 12d6; OAF (-1)	
4u	2) <i>Automatic Fire Mode:</i> EB 10d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½); OAF (-1)	
2u	3) <i>Power Blast Mode:</i> RKA 4d6; OAF (-1), Requires 4 Charges Per Use (-½)	
4u	4) <i>Underslung Energy Grenade Launcher:</i> EB 10d6, Explosion (+½); OAF (-1)	
8	<i>Energized Gauntlet:</i> Does x1½ Knockback for up to 10d6 Strike; OIF (-½), 2 Charges (-1½) [2]	
5	Another Energized Gauntlet (as above)	
7	<i>Combat Dagger:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼) 1	
	<i>Martial Arts: Commando Training</i>	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes	
3	Aikido Throw +0 +1	5d6 (8d6) + v/5, Target Falls
4	Boxing Cross +0 +2	7d6 (10d6)
4	Choke -2 +0	Grab One Limb, 3d6 NND (2)
4	Escape +0 +0	40 (55) STR vs. Grabs
4	Hold -1 -1	Grab Three Limbs, 35 (50) STR
4	Judo Disarm -1 +1	Disarm, 35 (50) STR
4	Karate "Chop" -2 +0	1d6 HKA (2d6 with STR)
4	Kung Fu Block +2 +2	Block, Abort
8	+2 Damage Classes (already added in)	
2	Use Art with Clubs, Knives	
24	<i>Battlesuit:</i> Armor (12 PD/12 ED); OIF (-½) 0	
9	<i>Jumpjets:</i> Leaping +14" (17" (20") total); OIF (-½) 1	
11	<i>Jumpjets:</i> Flight 20"; OIF (-½), Only To Change Direction Of Leaping (-2) 4	
4	<i>Fleet-Footed:</i> Running +2" (8" total) 1	
6	<i>Communications Array:</i> HRRP; OIF (-½), Flashed As Sight/Hearing Sense Group As Well As Radio Sense Group (-½) 0	
3	<i>Nightsight:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OIF (-½) 0	
3	<i>Nightsight:</i> Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group); OIF (-½) 0	

Talents

3 Resistance (3 points)

Skills

8 +1 with All Combat
9 +3 with Energy Rifle Multipower
5 Accurate Sprayfire
3 Combat Driving 13- (14-)
5 Concentrated Sprayfire
2 KS: The Espionage World 11-
3 KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 12-
2 KS: The Superhuman World 11-
3 KS: The French Foreign Legion 12-

- 3 Language: English (completely fluent; German is native)
- 1 Language: French (basic conversation)
- 2 Language: Spanish (fluent conversation)
- 3 Paramedics 12-
- 3 PS: Marine 12-
- 5 Skipover Sprayfire
- 3 Stealth 13- (14-)
- 3 Systems Operation 12-
- 3 Tactics 12-
- 3 TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Helicopters
- 6 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 287

Total Cost: 429

200+ Disadvantages

- 20 Hunted: Warlord 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
- 20 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Code Of The Mercenary (Common, Total)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Self-Centered (Very Common, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: amoral mercenary, 11-
- 10 Rivalry: Professional (with Lazer, Seek To Harm/Kill Rival)
- 10 Rivalry: Professional (with Mechassassin, Seek To Harm/Kill Rival)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Heinrich Kappel) (Frequently, Major)
- 30 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Electricity (Very Common)
- 74 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 429

Background/History: Heinrich Kappel, denied entrance into the German army due to “psychological problems,” and tossed out of the French Foreign Legion after several episodes of “conduct unbecoming a soldier” resulting from those psychological problems (including nearly beating one of his commanding officers to death), decided mercenary work was the best way for him to make use of his “talents.” But he realized he needed an edge. In a world where superhumans existed, just being good with a rifle wasn’t enough.

After robbing a couple banks to raise working capital, Kappel got in contact with agents of the Warlord, who was well-known for his ability to supply advanced technology and weaponry to customers with enough cash. After receiving Kappel’s down payment, scientists working for the Warlord built him a suit of light powered armor and a multi-function energy rifle. After taking delivery of the equipment, Kappel skipped out on paying the rest of the money owed, causing the Warlord to pursue him ever since to get his technology back.

Christening himself “Steel Commando,” Kappel soon made his mark in the mercenary world. Today, only Lazer and Mechassassin are considered his equals in most circles, and as far as he’s concerned, all doubts will be dispelled when he

next meets up with either of them.

Personality/Motivation: The Steel Commando is completely self-centered and amoral. If he wants something, he goes after it, and he doesn’t care what he has to do — or who he has to kill — to get it. If someone bothers him, he usually doesn’t think twice about brutally beating, or even killing, that person. His inability to see beyond his own needs and desires has gotten him into trouble on numerous occasions.

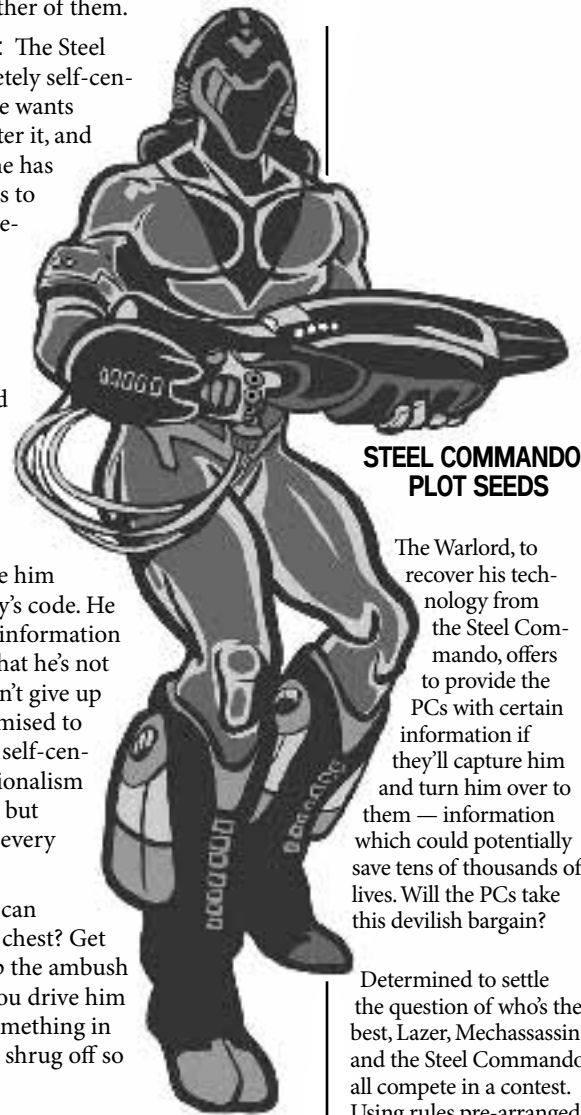
The only thing that ever seems to give him pause is his mercenary’s code. He refuses to release any information about his employers that he’s not authorized to, and won’t give up on a contract he’s promised to fulfill. Sometimes, his self-centeredness and professionalism war with one another, but the code has won out every time... so far.

Quote: “So what if he can bounce bullets off his chest? Get down there and set up the ambush like I told you to, so you drive him toward me. I’ve got something in this rifle that he won’t shrug off so easy.”

Powers/Tactics: The Steel Commando’s abilities result partly from training, and partly from the light battlesuit he wears. Although not as advanced as the armor worn by Lazer or Mechassassin (see *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*), the Commando’s armor is nevertheless tough. Its energized gauntlets allow him to punch his foes with extra power, knocking them around like tenpins. However, the cybernetic leads and circuitry in the armor cause it to generate painful feedback if hit with an electrical attack.

Most of the Steel Commando’s offensive capabilities come from his Energy Rifle. He favors the Automatic Fire Mode (especially in conjunction with his Autofire Skills), but switches to Direct Fire (or even the energy-intensive Power Blast) when facing particularly tough opponents. The rifle even has a system attached to the underside of the barrel that drains most of a shot’s worth of energy into a tiny explosive capsule, then uses the rest of the energy to launch it, resulting in a grenade-like explosion.

To move quickly around the battlefield, Steel Commando has Jumpjets that let him make long, compressed air-assisted leaps. He has separate omnidirectional jets for changing direction in mid-leap, so he can dodge obstacles or “leap around



STEEL COMMANDO PLOT SEEDS

The Warlord, to recover his technology from the Steel Commando, offers to provide the PCs with certain information if they’ll capture him and turn him over to them — information which could potentially save tens of thousands of lives. Will the PCs take this devilish bargain?

Determined to settle the question of who’s the best, Lazer, Mechassassin, and the Steel Commando all compete in a contest. Using rules pre-arranged through negotiators, each hires a mercenary team and starts turning the city inside-out trying to win the “scavenger hunt” (and possibly kill his rivals at the same time). Stopping the three of them should cause the PCs enough problems, but what happens if other rivals show up?

The Steel Commando takes a contract to kill one of the PCs. He shows up at precisely the wrong time, just when the PCs have something more important to take care of. And eliminating him won’t solve the problem — the targeted character needs to find out who took out the contract and stem the tide at its source, but the Steel Commando will never reveal his employer’s identity.

corners.” (In game terms, Steel Commando makes a Half Move with his Leaping, and at some point in the arc of the leap makes a second Half Move with his Flight to change direction.) In appropriate situations, the GM may award him a Surprise Move bonus for this.

Campaign Use: The Steel Commando is a typical mercenary villain, interested only in making lots of money and satisfying his urges for excitement, danger, and beating people up. He’ll gladly go to work for anyone who can afford his exorbitant fees, though he’s always wary of a possible Warlord trap.

Steel Commando is certainly foul-tempered and cruel enough to Hunt a hero who captures or defeats him, but he’s too self-centered to keep at it for long. Eventually he’ll decide it’s not worth it and turn to other pursuits... unless repeated encounters with, and losses to, the hero keep stoking the fires of his hatred. As a Hunter, he pulls no punches, going straight for the kill and attacking at inopportune moments.

Appearance: The Steel Commando battlesuit is a menacing grey and black. It has a sleek, streamlined look that sets it apart from bulkier, stronger suits of true powered armor. The boots have obvious jump-jets on the left and right side of both legs; the omnidirectional jets for mid-course changes of direction are concealed at several places around the suit. The gauntlets are stylistically similar to the boots, with a series of small raised studs along the knuckles that reveal their Energized Gauntlets power. The helmet covers the entire head, with a large one-way view-screen covering the entire face. A small backpack-like attachment contains a power unit and other technology necessary for running the suit.

The Commando’s Energy Rifle was obviously designed to go with the suit; it has a similar aesthetic. It resembles a high-tech assault rifle, with the odd-looking “grenade launcher” attached beneath the barrel.

Out of his armor, Heinrich Kappel stands 6’5” tall and has short, dirty blonde hair, pale blue eyes, no facial hair, and ruddy skin. He speaks English well, but with a noticeable German accent.

To make the Steel Commando more powerful, increase the size of his Multipower reserve and slots, and/or create more slots (additional settings for his Energy Rifle). Or, you could emphasize his personal combat skills, giving him even better HTH Combat abilities (such as more Martial Maneuvers, Extra Damage Classes with his Martial Arts, and the like). If he needs to be toned down a little, reduce his Multipower to a 60 Active Point reserve and get rid of one or two of his Autofire Skills.

PAGE 65 — THE MYSTIC WORLD

The main text leaves out or deliberately misstates several facts, based on the “common knowledge” of the average member of the Mystic World.

Tyrannon And The Archmage

The first, and most important, is the existence of the extradimensional entity known as Tyrannon the Conqueror. Unquestioned overlord of millions of dimensions, Tyrannon is an extraordinarily

powerful being who splits his self into hundreds, even thousands, of “avatars” of varying form and power. So far Tyrannon has only been mentioned on Earth in the softest of whispers and the rarest of dark tomes, for fear of his power and what it might do to this world. At long last he seems to have taken notice of Earth, thanks to two things: first, its risen level of magical power, which makes it potentially valuable to him; second, the attempts of his archrival Istvatha V’han (see page 100) to conquer it (anything she wants, he wants so she cannot have it to use against him).

Unfortunately, Earth at present lacks what would normally be its chief defense against Tyrannon and similar mystic threats — the Archmage. Historically Earth has had an Archmage, greatest of its heroic spellcasters and mystics, who received special relics and powers to help him defend this reality. But the last Archmage, a gifted Russian wizard and mystic named Bohdan Stanislavski, was killed in 1908 by a magical attack so powerful it obliterated him, his home, and probably his artifacts of office as well. The source of the attack remains a mystery, since no group seems to have tried to take immediate advantage of the Archmage’s absence to conquer the world. The Trismegistus Council, which has filled the Archmage’s shoes as much as it could for the past century, believes the Circle of the Scarlet Moon was responsible, but so weakened itself in the attack that it wasn’t able to capitalize on its gains (see page 140). Though the Council remains unaware of Tyrannon’s turn toward Earth, it continues its long quest to find and “ordain” the next Archmage. Some members of the Council believe the superheroine Witchcraft may be the long-prophesied Archmage-to-be; others are not so sure.

DEMON

As the main text notes, DEMON conducts itself much like other villainous organizations — it simply uses magic in place of technology, robed followers in place of costumed agents, and focuses its activities on things mystical (e.g., stealing ancient relics from museums or long-lost grimoires from libraries, trying to take over places of mystic power and tap them, and so forth). But DEMON is not entirely what it seems.

As far as the rank and file, and even the lower-ranking leaders, know, DEMON is nothing more than what it appears to be — a mystically-inclined criminal organization through which they hope to obtain riches and power. But DEMON’s lieutenants, the Morbanes, and its ultimate leaders, the Inner Circle, know better. DEMON is actually a cult devoted to the worship, and eventually the manifestation, of the Kings of Edom, horrible extra-dimensional entities of immense power. DEMON’s leaders believe that, in exchange for their services, they will receive the rulership of Earth and all its people from the Kings.

For more on DEMON, see page 141.

CHAPTER FOUR

PAGE 68 — NOVA

The gossip that Decibelle has some association with Howler is completely untrue. Decibelle is a mutant.

Arcane is wanted by the police for a murder he didn't commit. A young black man with an unusual gift for mysticism, he began developing his magical powers (various innate abilities moreso than cast spells) under the tutelage of an old Jewish kabbalist named Hyrum Weisman. After Nova first began clashing with ARGENT, that organization found out about Arcane's association with Weisman, and in revenge murdered Weisman and framed Arcane for the crime. For obvious reasons, Arcane would desperately like to find out who did it, bring them to justice, and clear his name. He'd also like to find someone to help him continue his magical studies, and hopes to perhaps "apprentice" himself to the Drifter someday.

PAGE 69 — VILLAINOUS AGENCIES IN AMERICA

ARGENT does indeed have some ties to some of the companies that helped fund Millennium City, but those ties are not as strong as many law enforcement officials fear. Nevertheless, they may cause significant problems for the Champions and other local heroes in the future.

The IHA is doing more with its money than lobbying. It's also been building several new secret bases, and producing more Minuteman combat robots (see page 145). The Institute's leaders are trying to think of a way to lure most of the nation's prominent mutants to a single location so the Minutemen can obliterate them at a single stroke.

PAGE 69 — MEXICO

DEMON maintains several Demonhames in Mexico, including ones in Mexico City and Acapulco, because of the magical energies prominent in that part of the world. Among their many objectives is to obtain the legendary Jade Mask of Tzitzlanahuac, which is said to grant immense mystic powers to anyone who wears it.

Both VIPER and ARGENT have taken advantage of Mexico's high degree of corruption and nearness to the United States to establish secret bases and laboratories there. They have the protection of local and national officials, and

could easily become a major thorn in the side of any American superheroes (particularly those in cities like Los Angeles, Houston, or Phoenix which are near the border).

PAGE 70 — CHÍQUADOR

President For Life Garrastazu e Silva poses an even greater threat to the rest of South America than anyone realizes. He's been building up his military with the aim of eventually launching wars of conquest, but he knows he can't hope to compete with the likes of the Brazilian Army using conventional weapons alone. Instead, he has recruited teams of unscrupulous scientists to develop a crash program to create superhuman soldiers obedient to his will. His researchers haven't had much success yet, but their latest "test case" — a crazed, superhumanly strong man whom they released in the *favelas* (slums) of Rio de Janeiro to go on a rampage — showed signs of promise. If they can simply figure out how to make the superhuman soldiers more controllable, Garrastazu e Silva can destabilize, and perhaps conquer, much of South America. And it's doubtful his ambition would stop there.

PAGE 71 — GREAT BRITAIN

Albion is just what he claims to be — a manifestation of the heroic qualities of the British people. Possessing enormous strength and resilience, the ability to fly, and several other powers, he only appears when some danger threatens all of Britain.

Dweomer, the Irish supermage, is thought by some members of the Trismegistus Circle to possibly be the next Archmage. They watch him as closely as they do Witchcraft, though he's never studied with them or met any of them (that he knows about).



SAMHAIN PLOT SEEDS

Talisman decides Samhain is perfect for one of her schemes and uses magic to “capture” him and bring him to Millennium City. Does she truly have him, or is he merely playing along with her plans to escape a mystic confinement that has trapped him in the British Isles for his entire existence? If the former, will his powers be at full strength in America, or will Talisman find her plan faltering as he weakens away from his “native soil”?

Samhain begins planting seeds of fear in the minds of certain terrorists, hoping to provoke a deadly attack in downtown London. The PCs have to piece together the clues to stop the terrorists, then figure out the root cause of their actions and stop Samhain from trying the same scheme again in a few months.

With Samhain rampaging through London, getting stronger by the minute thanks to the fear he’s creating, the PCs have to go on a deadly quest to recover an ancient Tualan magic amulet that can repel and weaken him.

SAMHAIN

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	15	14-	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 [2]
30	DEX	60	15-	OCV: 10/DCV: 10
25	CON	30	14-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
30	INT	20	15-	PER Roll 15-
30	EGO	40	15-	ECV: 10
60	PRE	50	21-	PRE Attack: 12d6
4	COM	-3	10-	
10	PD	5		Total: 10 PD (10 rPD)
10	ED	5		Total: 10 ED (10 rED)
7	SPD	30		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
10	REC	0		
50	END	0		
50	STUN	4		Total Characteristics Cost: 276

Movement: Running: 15”/30”
Flight: 15”/30”
Teleportation: 15”/30”

Cost	Powers	END
22	<i>Terrorsense:</i> Detect Person’s Fears 15- (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Range, Sense	0
115	<i>Fear Powers:</i> Multipower, 115-point reserve	
5u	1) <i>Evoke Fear:</i> Mind Control 14d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only To Control/Inflict Fear (-1)	0
5u	2) <i>Images Of Fear:</i> Mental Illusions 14d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only To Confront Target With Things He Fears (-1)	0
11u	3) <i>Susceptibility To Fear:</i> Drain PRE 4d6, Area Of Effect (6” Radius; +1), Ranged (+½), Personal Immunity (+¼)	11
22	<i>Black Claws:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR), Penetrating (+½)	2
30	<i>Corrupt Antlers:</i> HKA 1d6 (1d6+1 with STR), NND (defense is ED Force Field or any magic-based rED; +1), Does BODY (+1); Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	8
40	<i>Spirit Form:</i> Desolidification (affected by magic)	4
120	<i>Spirit Body:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75%	0
10	<i>Spirit Body:</i> Damage Resistance (10 PD/10 ED)	0
10	<i>Spirit Mind:</i> Mental Defense (16 points)	0
10	<i>Spirit Resilience:</i> Power Defense (10 points)	0
47	<i>Spirit Body:</i> Life Support: Total (except for Diminished Eating, but including Longevity: Immortality)	0
18	<i>Spirit Swiftess:</i> Running +9” (15” total)	2
30	<i>Spirit Swiftess:</i> Flight 15”	3
30	<i>Spiritwalking:</i> Teleportation 15”	3

Skills

3	Power: Fear Powers 15-
3	Stealth 15-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 525

Total Cost: 801

200+ Disadvantages

25	Distinctive Features: Aura Of Ancient, Absolute Evil (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Causes Fear)
10	Hunted: Trismegistus Council 8- (As Pow, Kill)
25	Psychological Limitation: Utterly Evil; Can Never Perform Kind Or Unselfish Acts (Very Common, Total)
25	Susceptibility: to holy places and objects, takes 2d6 damage per Phase is on holy ground, in a holy place, or within 1” of a holy object (Common)
516	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 801

Background/History: He arose in the minds of the Tualans, birthed by the fears and doubts which all too often afflicted them. Thereafter, nothing could destroy it; even after a cataclysm of the world, it remains still, feeding off the terrors in the minds of men. It was here when the British Isles first thrust their putrid green heads above the waves, lurking in the forests and mountains and hills and meadows. It has seen the Romans, Arthur, Normans, Shakespeare, Cromwell, Pitt, Victoria, Churchill, and many others come to life, live, and die, existing always within the shadow of its glorious fear. And even today, when the heroes are of a different sort, with gaudy costumes and foolish names, it remains strong and undefeatable — for wherever there exists a mind susceptible to fear, it can live on....

Personality/Motivation: Samhain is an ancient spirit of evil and fear. It exists only to inspire and “sculpt” fear in human beings and animals, and it feeds on that fear. While content to thrive on the fears of small, individual minds, it prefers the greater taste and nourishment of fear on a wide scale — such as it helped to foster during the Battle of Britain in World War II.

Quote: “You cannot withstand my touch. Your courage is but a wilting flower compared to my power!”

Powers/Tactics: Samhain’s powers mostly involve the evocation and shaping of fear. He can simply create raw fear within a victim’s heart (Mind Control), or show a victim his greatest specific fears (Mental Illusions). With the latter power, he often tries to achieve a +20 affect so he can cause STUN and BODY damage (he scares the victim so badly, a heart attack ensues). If he wants to cause fear in a large number of people, he’ll rely on his Drain PRE and Presence Attacks.

At the GM’s option, Samhain can make a Fear Powers roll to use his Evoke Fear ability in a more tailored fashion — to place so specific a fear in a victim’s mind that he acts in the way Samhain desires. Typically Samhain would use this power to make people commit random murders, engage in terrorist acts, and do other things that increase the “ambient fear level” within society.

Samhain prefers to operate in secret as much as possible. He lurks in the shadows on the edges of society, using his Stealth and Desolidification to

remain unseen. Only when he has the chance to induce fear in a large number of people is he likely to reveal himself openly.

Campaign Use: Although not a “master villain,” Samhain should have sufficient power to oppose an entire group of PCs. His appearance in the campaign should signal a major threat that the PCs have to do their utmost to defeat. If Samhain isn’t sufficiently powerful for this, increase his abilities as appropriate, or add new ones; if he’s too strong for your PCs to have any hope of defeating, reduce his power until he’s just an extremely tough (but not impossible) challenge.

Defeating Samhain should pose great difficulties for the heroes. The best method is to trap him in an area where there exist no creatures he can affect with his fear-inspiring powers. Confronted with such bravery, he will shrivel and diminish, eventually winking out of existence... or so the heroes should believe. In time Samhain will return in full strength, for who can truly abolish terror?

Samhain does not Hunt heroes. Petty rivalries and thoughts of vengeance are beneath him; he merely wishes to create a grand tableau of fear throughout the world.

Appearance: Samhain resembles a muscular man with a deer’s head and antlers, but the antlers are black and the deer fur (and his body in general) are speckled with ever-bleeding wounds and suppurating sores. He wears no clothes, but a mass of fur/hair covers his waist. He has claws on his hands. His feet are human feet, not deer’s hooves.

PAGE 72 — FRANCE

The public at large does not realize that the Seine is not precisely Tricolor’s daughter, but a clone made from his genetic material. Sterile, and desperate for a child of his own, Tricolor made a devil’s deal with the master of the biological sciences, Teleios, and had him create Seine. Now he not only owes Teleios a favor, but Teleios has samples of his DNA. Seine is unaware of the true nature of her existence thanks to Teleios’s memory-implantation technology.

The rumors about DEMON’s activities in France are accurate. One of the Morbanes in America came into possession of an ancient tome that described what sounded to him like a cave paint-

ing depicting proto-human worship of the Kings of Edom. Thinking that this painting, if real, might help them contact and free the Kings, the members of the Inner Circle ordered a mission team to find the painting. All they know right now is that it’s somewhere in the southern part of France — but with every passing week, they get closer and closer to finding it....

PAGE 72 — GERMANY

Zeitgeist’s powers of time manipulation have been increasing in strength — slowly, but definitely — since Captain Chronos first appeared in the modern Earth timeframe (see *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*). Unfortunately, as his powers improve, Zeitgeist’s mind becomes weaker; psychologically, he can’t handle some of the implications of what he can do (or might be able to). Without some help from the Captain (and maybe even with it), Zeitgeist could implode, going on a mad, destructive rampage that would warp the time-stream across decades or centuries.

PAGE 72 — LARISAGRAD

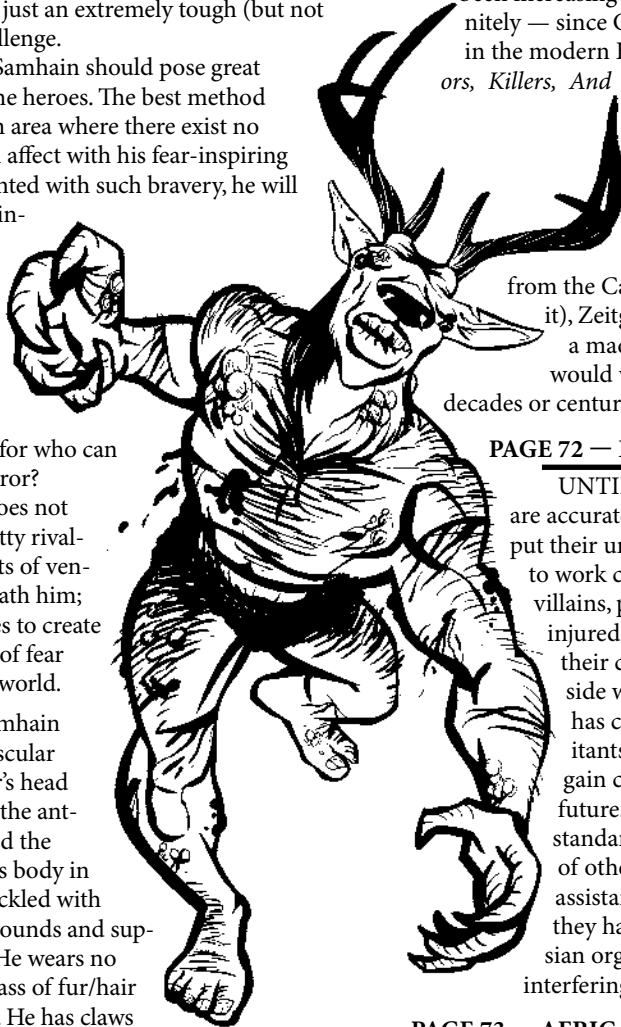
UNTIL’s reports about Larisagrad are accurate. The scientists there often put their unique acumen and equipment to work creating technology for supervillains, providing medical care for injured superhumans who don’t want their condition revealed to the outside world, and so forth. (ARGENT has corrupted many of the inhabitants, and hopes to essentially gain control of the city in the near future.) Most Larisagradians enjoy a standard of life far higher than that of other Russians, and thanks to the assistance of grateful superhumans they have helped, have kept the Russian organized crime groups from interfering with their lives.

PAGE 73 — AFRICA

The rumors about Pridemaster and Ogun are true; they exist and have the powers described in the main text.

Stories have persisted for centuries about a mysterious “Kingdom of the Apes” hidden deep within the jungles of the Congo. Tales whispered in dingy bars in Lagos, Kinshasa, and Nairobi say the apes who live in this land are not only intelligent and able to speak, but inimical to human beings, whom they regard as destructive despoilers of the land. These stories are, for the most part, true. Should any of your PCs stumble across the gorilla kingdom, use the Guardian Ape (*HERO System Bestiary*, page 40) for the average resident’s game statistics.

Joseph Otanga, President of Lugendu, is not the simple despot he seems. His terrified subjects





PAGE 80: KINETIK PLOT SEEDS

Kinetik accidentally kills a mugger and is put on trial for murder. Did he really do it, or is this some elaborate set-up by VIPER?

One of Kinetik's siblings becomes involved in the drug trade. What will Kinetik do when he finds out... and more importantly, when he discovers there's more to the gang his sibling is in than just ordinary drug dealing?

After Kinetik suffers a couple of humiliating defeats at the hands of VIPER, a mysterious underworld figure offers him a way to boost his powers so it won't happen again. Will Kinetik take the offer — and if so, what happens?

are correct when they say he possesses mystical powers. When he performs blood sacrifices at a strange altar deep in the jungle, an altar known only to him, he gains the power to assume animal forms (even forms mixing the attributes of several beasts), or to transform anyone he wishes into an animal. It is by these methods — sacrifice or transformation — that he disposes of anyone he even suspects of harboring harmful intent toward him.

PAGE 73 — WESTERN ASIA

The vague reports about an Iraqi-Awadi program to create superhumans are true. Using a secret lab built in Awad (to avoid U.N. observers in Iraq), Hussein and King Abukal of Awad hope to custom-build enough superhuman soldiers to avenge Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War, take over the Middle East, and establish a chokehold on much of the world's oil supplies. Shield Of The People is the program's first true success; many failures have been dropped in the deep desert to die.

PAGE 74 — CHINA

The main text does not mention one of the greatest supervillain threats to China — the Cult of the Red Banner, a mysterious ancient sect that worships Lung Wang, the "Dragon King" (actually the Death Dragon itself; see page 121). With its members (including high-ranking priests able to cast spells) scattered throughout China and the Far East, ties to DEMON, and superhuman resources such as the brother-and-sister martial artist team of

Iron and Gold, and the low-powered brick Sodep-tan, to call on, the Cult is far more than the simple crackpot religious group the government thinks it is. When the time is right, it will arise, to spread its evil first over China, then the world....

For more on Dr. Yin Wu, see pages 103, 138.

PAGE 74 — JAPAN

Tsunami, one of Japan's World War II-era superheroes, is still alive and every bit as healthy as he was back then, thanks to his mystic powers — he simply chooses to remain in self-imposed exile in the ocean, revealing himself only to stop anything that threatens the tranquility and safety of the seas.

PAGE 75 — OCEANIA

The lack of superheroes in this part of the world makes it ideally suited for ARGENT, which prefers to conduct its experiments away from the prying eyes of "costumed do-gooders." It recently bought an entire island in an isolated part of French Polynesia and has established a base there to work on many illicit projects.

PAGE 75 — ANTARCTICA

The main text is accurate — there's nothing down there but a lot of penguins (and, of course, the Emphyreans). Though who knows what eons-old ruins or other surprises the largely-unexplored interior may hold....

PAGE 76 — MILLENNIUM CITY

Among the many things in Millennium City to interest GMs is *Mind, Incorporated*, a self-help movement that's been sweeping the city recently. Considered a "cult" by some, MI purports to help people "master their wandering minds and focus on what matters." But it's not quite what it seems — in fact, it's nothing but a front for the insidious organization PSI (see pages 111, 146). PSI's mentalists are using their powers to make innocent people "join" *Mind, Incorporated*, knowing that eventually a recruit will lead them to people in power whom they can take control of as well.

PAGE 83 — THE HIGH APOSTOLIC CHURCH

The hints in the sidebar text — that the High Apostolic Church remains true to its voodoo roots — are entirely accurate. All but the most casual members of the church participate in voodoo rituals to some degree, and a few are involved in dark magical practices (and have ties to DEMON). Though it's not readily apparent to a casual visitor to Vibora Bay (except in terms of cheesy tourist souvenirs), voodoo charms, hexes, and more are available for sale in certain parts of the city... though the price is not always one that can be paid in money.

PAGE 83 — ROBERT CALIBURN

Caliburn is a strange and mysterious figure. Other members of the Mystic World know him by the nickname "the Magnum Mage," since he often uses his magic in unorthodox, militaristic ways. For example, he carries a .45 semiautomatic he claims Azrael, the angel of death, has blessed, and



a submachine gun supposedly consecrated to the god Shiva... and he doesn't hesitate to use either if necessary. "Why waste magic when bullets get the job done?"

Caliburn's magic is mostly Hermetic theurgy — the calling-on of angels and other Powers for mystic ability — and kabbalism, though he's been trained in many other arcane disciplines. Besides his guns, he often carries other temporarily or permanently enchanted items, rather than trying to cast spells on the battlefield, since his most potent magics typically take time to cast. Among these is the Fire Gem, one of a set of magical gemstones, which grants him greater than usual command of fire magic.

Unbeknownst to him (as yet), Caliburn is a pivotal figure in a war that has been brewing for centuries between Heaven and Hell — a war whose final battleground will be Vibora Bay. The exact nature and causes of the war remain obscure, but mystics all over the world can sense the coming storm... and the fact that Caliburn's actions will likely be what determines the outcome.

Reports that Caliburn has "a large lizard" with him are true, though somewhat mistaken. The "lizard" is his familiar, a miniature dragon named Nicotine, whom he claims to have conjured while studying with mystics in India.

PAGE 84 — MCLAUGHLIN AIR FORCE BASE

Most people believe the Haynesville Project was shut down in 1946, just like President

Truman said. This is not true — Department 17, as the Project is now called, never completely ceased operations. Today it is alive and well at McLaughlin AFB, and is still a center of the United States military's efforts to create and control superhumans. A top-secret division of the the Department of Defense, functioning in conjunction with and under the oversight of DOSPA, Department 17 has made some intriguing breakthroughs during its fifty-year existence (see *Superhuman Soldier Projects*, page 40), but has never discovered a safe, consistent method either for creating superhumans, or controlling them once they're created.

As of 2002, the head of Department 17 is General Clarence Smith. Under his leadership, the program is focusing most of its current efforts on trying to develop an improvement to the Cyberline procedure used by PRIMUS — a procedure that would create stronger, but also more easily controlled, superhu-

mans. To that end they have been experimenting with all sorts of genetic engineering, unusual chemicals, strange radiations, and the like. They're always interested in information about any new manifestation of superhuman or paranormal abilities.

The current members of the Haynesville Project consider themselves true patriots, and are preparing for what they consider the inevitable return of Communism as a threat to national security. Furthermore, General Smith has been engaging in a bit of creative accounting to keep his secret project alive — if his DOSPA superiors or Congress were to learn of this, they would be very unhappy. Smith might go to great lengths to keep his project a secret, though not all of his employees would approve.

PAGE 88 — SHARNA-GORAK

The entities to whom Dalsith sacrificed his soul were the Kings of Edom (see pages 235, 133). Their Qliphothic energies changed him into Sharna-Gorak the Destroyer. Although he has been dead now for over thirty thousand years, such power as that never truly dies. It may be that one day Sharna-Gorak will revive, to threaten both Atlantis and the surface lands with his world-shattering might.

PAGE 93 — OGURN

Ogurn is not dead, as the Emphyreans believe. He lives still, trapped in a cavern beneath the deepest pits of the Lemurians, plotting both his eventual

PAGE 87: CAPTAIN PATRIOT PLOT SEEDS

One of the Haynesville Project scientists flees the Project's headquarters, taking some unique and valuable data and equipment with him. Cap and his friends must find out what's going on and stop the man from selling the secret of Cap's powers to the Nazis!

Der Sturmvoegel issues a public challenge for a one-on-one battle to Cap, the loser to surrender to the other for the duration of the war. Is it a legitimate offer, or a trap?

When Cap participates in a charity fundraising project with the New York Jets in 1970, a group of supervillains takes everyone hostage. Can Cap's fading powers save the day one last time... perhaps with a little help from the PCs?

escape and the destruction of the surface world.

PAGE 94 — THE PROGENITORS

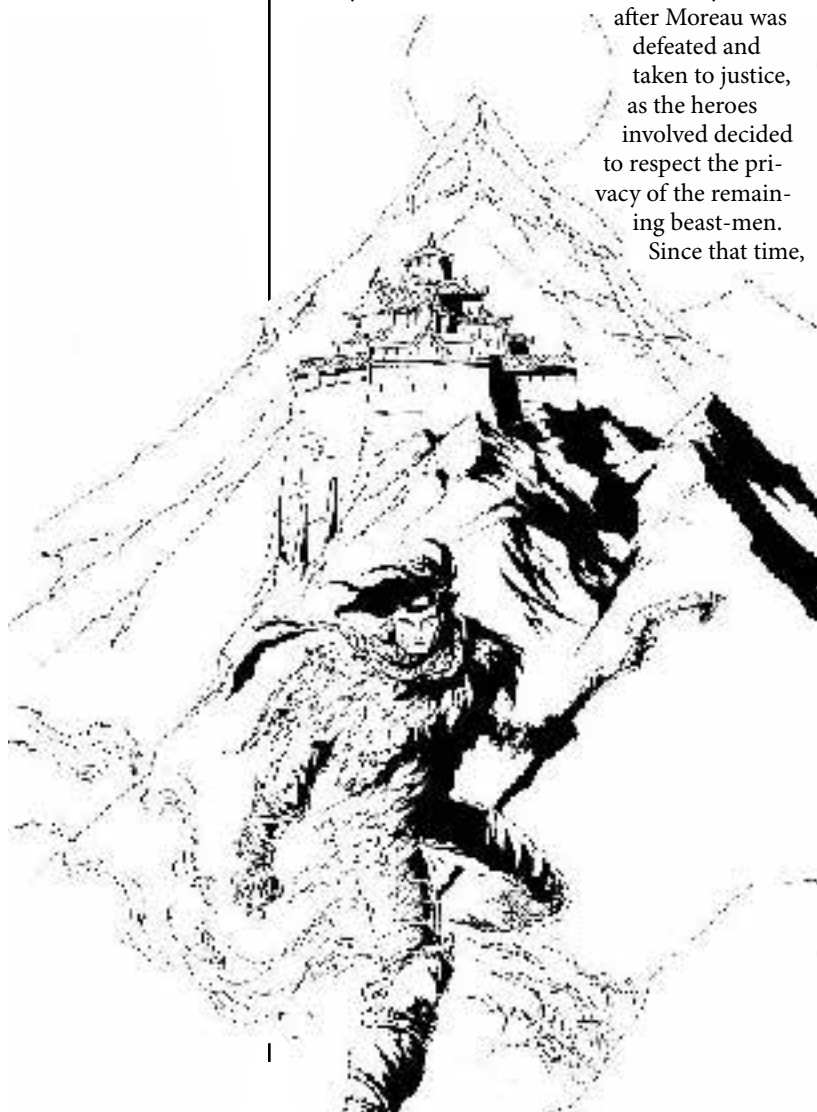
The Progenitors remain a mystery, even to those few humans who know so much as the name. They apparently disappeared from the galaxy many centuries ago. Most of the starfaring races have some awareness of them, but none claim to know what eventually became of them, or for what purpose they apparently manipulated the creatures of several primitive planets.

OTHER MYSTERIOUS PLACES

Beast Mountain

In a remote part of a Ukrainian forest stands a small mountain known to the natives as *Gornyj Zver*, or Beast Mountain. In a small village at the top of this mountain stands the former laboratory of Phillippe Moreau, grandson of the mad scientist H.G. Wells wrote of (and whom the world widely but falsely considers to be fictional). Moreau continued where his grandfather's studies left off, creating a large number of hybrid animal-men to serve as his personal army (most notable of these was Dr. Silverback, who helped several British heroes defeat him). The lab has largely been dismantled, and the facility itself was left in the hands of the hybrids

after Moreau was defeated and taken to justice, as the heroes involved decided to respect the privacy of the remaining beast-men. Since that time,



the village has been ruled by Father Elk, generally acclaimed as the wisest of the hybrids, and only a small handful of beastmen have ever left the village to try to make their way in the outside world (examples include the supervillain Snake, and Ram, the bouncer at Vibora Bay's notorious nightclub, Minefield). For the most part, the villagers enjoy a peaceful, idyllic existence, far from the prying eyes of the world.

Shamballah

Beneath the Tibetan Himalayas, only a few miles from Mount Everest, a small tributary of the Brahmaputra River flows through a fantastic set of caves deep inside the mountains themselves. Only the strongest-willed of men can pass through these caverns, because their shadows play tricks upon the minds of the unwary, and fearsome shades can become all too real and deadly if one does not have the mental strength to disbelieve them. At the end of these passages, whose layout is known to some of the holy orders of monks who live in lamaseries in these mountains, is the legendary city of Shamballah.

The repository of much of the magical knowledge of the ancient Chinese and Tibetan warrior-mages of centuries past, Shamballah is ruled by a hidden council of nine monks who never show their true faces to anyone. Powerful mystics like Dr. Yin Wu and the mystic martial artist superhero Lo Han have traveled there to study among the monks, and it is believed by some that the principles of fighting taught at the storied Yengtao Temple were developed there. Some legends claim the monks of Shamballah have mastered the secrets of immortality, but only for as long as they remain within the city — if they were to depart, they would suddenly show their true ages, becoming crumbling skeletons as soon as they left the city's grounds.

Elsewhere in the same set of caverns, but many miles distant, is a similar city, Shamballah's shadowy twin, Agharti. Legends say that Agharti is the home of evil sorcerers, equal in power to the monks of Shamballah. The two cities are apparently locked in a mystical war that has raged for countless centuries.

Sunday Pond, Maine

Among the most mysterious of the mystical presences of the Champions Universe is the strange being known only as The Witness. Even the wisest of powers on Earth know little of his history, and he shows no interest in enlightening anyone as to his origins. It is known that he is extremely old, at least as old as the second generation of Empyreans, and that he is somehow drawn to locations where powerful magics are used or where terrible tragedies are likely to occur. At times he seems to be a force for good, frequently providing information to heroes and occasionally, in moments of cosmic crisis, battling at their sides against the forces of darkness; at other times he seems to act as an impartial observer, solemnly observing events without interfering or attempting to affect them in any way. His powers are apparently vast, yet he seems hesitant to use them, preferring to employ only the most subtle

applications of magic or to find others to act on his behalf.

Though The Witness has appeared in all corners of the globe at one time or another, he regularly returns to the one place he calls home: the woods of central Maine. According to several mystically-inclined supers who have visited him there, he lives in an abandoned church near the town of Oxford; the church is protected by powerful wards and guarded by mysterious wild spirits. This particular part of Maine, by coincidence or not, is also plagued by far more than its share of vampires, lake monsters, and other manifestations of the supernatural.

What is unknown even to most mystics is that the area around Oxford, and Sunday Pond in particular, is the location of a dimensional convergence — a nexus point linking several different continua and a “weak point” in the fabric of the multiverse. In such an area, portals to other worlds commonly appear and then vanish suddenly, either taking with them some unlucky local or, alternatively, depositing an inhabitant of another dimension here on Earth. The area around such a convergence is magically “charged,” rich with eldritch energy that can give spellcasters a bit of extra energy or allow them to create effects normally beyond their ability. The Witness himself is aware of the convergence, of course, and spends a great deal of time assisting accidental travelers as well as helping defend Earth from the machinations of evil creatures who recognize the convergence as a “weak spot” through which to attack our dimension.

The Valley Of Night

In a small valley in northwest Peru, not far from the Colombian border, where the great rain forests are at their deepest and thickest, is a valley where an amazing group of natives live. Descendants of Incas who escaped the destruction of their empire by Spanish invaders in the fifteenth century, the inhabitants of the Valley of Night have been separated from the rest of humanity for hundreds of years. A small order of Jaguar Priests, lycanthropes who wield dark magics and draw their powers from human sacrifices, rules them.

In recent years the Jaguar Priests have become aware of the existence of modern civilization encroaching on their valley, as large sections of the rain forest are torn down for industrial uses. They have so far kept their people in the dark, but this situation cannot last forever. Also, one of the most notorious of the Colombian drug cartel leaders has discovered the existence of the Jaguar Priests and is attempting to bring them under his sway so he can use their magics to enrich himself.

The Well Of Worlds

Deep in the Australian outback stands a natural monolith called Ayers Rock by the Australian government, and Uluru by the Aborigines. More than eight kilometers in circumference, and rising over 300 meters from the desert floor, the massive, colorful sandstone column exists both in our dimension (called the “Shadow World”) and in another world, called *Tjukurpa*, or “The Dream-

time,” of which our world is said to be a poor imitation. The Dreamtime is inhabited by talking animals, some of which have non-intelligent counterparts in our world, some of which are extinct, and even more that probably never existed here — and some of which are quite dangerous. Beings in the Dreamtime have limited powers to affect our world, which they find mysterious and frightening (though some can claw their way through to our world to wreak havoc). However, some super-mages, like Walkabout (see page 45) can draw upon the powerful magical energies of the Dreamtime.

A labyrinth of caves permeates Uluru, which is part of the Kata Tjuta National Park and owned and run by the Aborigines. Many of these caves contain beautiful murals and paintings that were created thousands of years ago, with periodic touchups and additions. Unbeknownst to almost everyone, deep inside one of these caves is a pit that is apparently truly bottomless. Known as the Well of Worlds, it is in fact a dimensional portal that connects Tjukurpa to an infinity of other mystical dimensions. Only the most puissant of mages can use it to access a specific other world — for most people a trip into the Well leads to a random location anywhere in the Assiatic dimensions of the multiverse. The keeper of the Well is an ancient Aborigine mystic, the Wanambi Man, who is known to a few mystics as a powerful force for good.

According to legend, the Wanambi Man and a Western mage teamed together many centuries ago to defeat an invasion of our dimension by Poisonous Snake Men, who apparently used the Well of Worlds as their point of entry to this dimension. Exactly who the white mage might have been remains unclear. Nevertheless, defending the world against such invasions appears to be the responsibility of the Wanambi Man to this day, and he has been known to call on some of the other heroes of Australia for assistance from time to time.

Earth's Solar System

Earth's Moon is inhabited by a strange alien race named the Selenites by their discoverer, Amazing Man of the Fabulous Five. Insectile in appearance, the Selenites have chitinous, beetlelike shells over ten-legged bodies. They stand about three feet tall, with long, angular faces, and are completely immune to the effects of vacuum and cold. They have no technology of their own, but for a brief period in the 1960s were ruled by the supervillain Revenger, who treated them as his slaves. The Selenites were freed by the Fabulous Five, and have lived in peace except for one brief period in the 1980s when a rogue Selenite used some of Revenger's leftover devices to take control of them and threaten Earth with nuclear destruction. This plan was thwarted by MeteorMan, and since then the Selenites have kept to themselves.

Mars was used as a staging area for an invasion of Earth in 1938 by a race called the Sirians. Their attack, involving several gigantic tripods armed with heat-rays and poisonous gas, was thwarted on October 30 by the collection of heroes who wound

PAGE 90: STINGRAY PLOT SEEDS

Stingray decides to trick the American government into thinking there's an underwater VIPER base where Atlantis is, so the United States will attack it, destroying or weakening her mother and brother. She begins attacking and sinking ships in the vicinity, leaving clues that point to VIPER. The PCs are called in to investigate and put a stop to the attacks.

Stingray decides she needs more power to gain the Atlantean throne, so she plans to summon the shade of Nereus to teach her his most terrifying magic spells. The conjuration spell requires several rare and dangerous substances, so she goes on a crime spree to get them.

A rebel faction loyal to Stingray springs to life in Atlantis. Civil war looms on the horizon, so Prince Marus appeals to the PCs for help — after all, an Atlantis ruled by Thalassa is not as likely to co-exist peacefully with the surface world as his mother's regime is. Among other things, he'd like the PCs to find out how the rebellion developed so swiftly; a few months ago, everything seemed fine in Atlantis.

up forming the Defenders of Justice. At first, it was believed that the aliens were in fact native to Mars, but in the 1960s the Sentinels encountered these aliens again and discovered they had only built a forward launching base on Mars. This base, abandoned by the Sirians, is now the home of an Empyrean, Deloss, who is thought to be the only living being on Mars at this time.

The asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter was once a planet, though how it was destroyed, and by whom, remains a mystery. Unbeknownst to the superhumans of Earth, over two million years ago this former world was once the home of a race of plant creatures whom the Progenitors nurtured and protected. Within the asteroids themselves can be found hidden repositories of Progenitor knowledge and technology, which would be invaluable to individuals powerful and wise enough to understand them.

Europa, one of the moons of Jupiter, is the location of our solar system's Star*Guard base. The Star*Guard is an ancient order of warriors devoted to the protection of the good and innocent, originally founded on the planet Odragar but now made up of representatives from dozens of races. Star Guardians are trained in hand-to-hand combat and mental disciplines, given the powerful Star-Staff as a weapon, and then assigned to particular regions of space. Andre Almena, a Spaniard, is currently the Guardian of our region and lives on Europa with a small support team of various aliens. He rarely comes to Earth, considering it well-protected by its own heroes.

PAGE 95 — ALIENS AND THE GREATER GALAXY

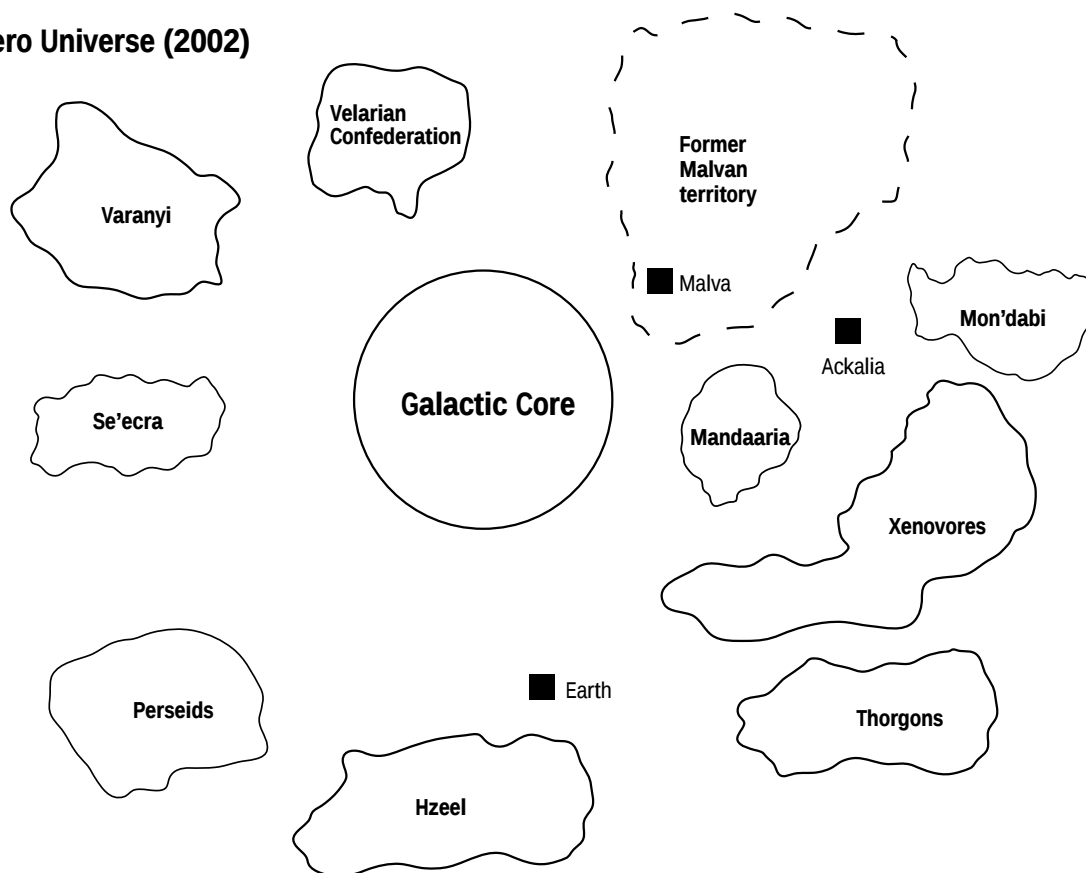
The information presented in the main text is accurate, and represents the extent of the public's knowledge of alien life. Some of Earth's governments, primarily the United States, know considerably more details gleaned from information that hasn't been publicly released, but no one on Earth knows the full extent of the galactic community (see the accompanying map for the current galactopolitical state of affairs as of the Earth year 2002). More importantly, no one on Earth is aware of several potential alien threats to Earth's security.

The Hzeel

The greatest of these threats is posed by the Hzeel, a humanoid species with bluish-grey skin, large reddish eyes, and technology significantly more advanced than Earth's. The Hzeel control an empire rimward of Earth, and are expansionistic. The chief threat to their aims as of 2002 is the Perseid Empire (Ironclad's people), which lies spinward of both them and Earth. In the hope of outflanking the Perseids, the Hzeel are considering a sweep into Earth's part of the galaxy, and that would include conquering Earth for use as a forward base and supply station.

In recent years the Hzeel have sent numerous scout ships to covertly explore Earth and learn more about its people and technology, particularly peoples with superhuman powers (which likewise occur among the Perseids, but are quite rare among the Hzeel). Most of these missions have gone

Map of Hero Universe (2002)



without incident, but on a few occasions a Hzeel scout has lost control of his ship and crashed. One such crash yielded an alien body from which the VIPER supervillain Oculon received the alien eyes that give him his powers (the Hzeel do not have eyebeam powers naturally; Oculon's powers result from the intermingling of his particular DNA with that of the Hzeel scout in question). Another crashed ship was recovered by the Warlord, and its technology has influenced his own designs.

As yet, no Earth government or superhero is aware of the Hzeel or their hostile intent toward Earth.

The Xenovores

The Xenovores (you can see a picture of them on page 298 of the *HERO System 5th Edition*, and find information about some of their war animals on pages 212-13 of the *HERO System Bestiary*) control a large territory antispinward of Earth and rimward from Mandaarian space. They use a technology that's at least partly organic, and are inimical to most other forms of sentient life. At their present rate of expansion, they are not likely to pose a threat to humanity for several centuries, but events may change that. It's also possible a Xenovore faction or raiding band might attack Earth on its own, without being part of some larger invasion force.

The Varanyi

Located over 50,000 light-years from Earth, the Varanyi pose no immediate threat to humanity; there are plenty of worlds nearer to their territory to attract their ambitions first. But they do intend to establish a large space empire, and their vast mental powers may detect a whisper of similar power from Earth, drawing them here much sooner than they would otherwise come.

PAGE 96 — OTHER DIMENSIONS

The structure of the multiverse described in the main text is accurate (if "accurate" can truly apply to any limited human conceptualization of so limitless a concept). As GM, you should try to fit the dimensions you create into the scheme of the Four Worlds, but don't worry about it too much — after all, not even master mystics are always quite sure how the planes of the multiverse intersect and interrelate.

The Qliphothic World is home to the Kings of Edom, mentioned earlier with regard to DEMON. Nor are they the only Qliphothic horrors that might come to Earth at the call of mad sorcerers....

Tyrannon the Conqueror, described on page 124, is not mentioned as a dimensional danger, because Earth as yet remains unaware of the threat he poses.

CHAPTER FIVE

For more information on many of the villains and villain groups discussed in this section, please refer to *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*.

PAGE 98 — DARK SERAPH

Dark Seraph and his followers don't get along with Takofanes because they know Takofanes wants the Crowns of Krim (the actual artifacts, not the people wearing them) for himself. They are aware of the Undying Lord's true identity (see below), and know that he once owned and used all six of the Crowns himself. Were Takofanes to regain possession of the Crowns, his already formidable power would be magnified many times over, making him virtually unstoppable. Thus, out of sheer self-interest, Dark Seraph does whatever he can to weaken or harm the ancient sorcerer.

PAGE 98 — DOCTOR DESTROYER

Intelligence estimates of Destroyer's capabilities, while quite accurate in terms of assessing his personal power, overestimate the extent of his resources somewhat, and overlook other assets. Destroyer has four primary bases: a underground facility in Siberia; a base built into the mountains ringing the long-hidden Vale of Javangari in the Himalayas; a mobile underwater base; and a stealth technology-cloaked space station. Destroyer's personnel number no more than 20,000; some are recruits (many from the people of Javangari, who worship Destroyer as a god and serve him with fanatic loyalty), others are robots; Destroyer does not typically use cloned servitors.

PAGE 101 — MECHANON

Mechanon's major bases are the underwater facility in the Pacific and the Sahara base; he has no facility on the Moon, and the base in the Caucasus isn't as important as the first two.

PAGE 101 — MENTON

Menton maintains "bases" at about a dozen of the most luxurious hotels in the world, where he rents entire floors of rooms on a full-time basis and maintains his cover through careful use of both his vast wealth and vast psionic abilities. Each of these homes is well-stocked with the best food and wine, the most beautiful women, and just about any amenity you can think of.

PAGE 101 — TAKOFANES

Takofanes first arose in Oklahoma because that is where, deep, deep beneath the surface, his ancient tomb lies. Sixty-five thousand years ago, in the Turakian Age, when he was known as Kal-Turak, Ravager of Men, the free peoples of that time finally cast him down and imprisoned him, undead and undying, in that tomb, which survived many cataclysms of the world thanks to the potent magics placed upon it. But at long last, in 1987, with the tide of magic higher in the world than it had been in centuries, the Archlich freed himself. His goal is the same as ever: overlordship of the world, with all who walk or crawl upon it utterly obeisant

to him — and whether they remain alive, or return from the grave at his call, matters little to him. If anything, he prefers the dead to the living.

Takofanes’s crown is, in fact, the Dragon Crown, and may give him power over the other Crowns of Krim if he performs certain obscure rituals.

PAGE 102 — TELEIOS

The Department of Defense correctly places Teleios’s biggest and best laboratory in Canada. It’s carefully concealed in northern Ontario. When he tires of the cold weather, his laboratories in a number of tropical and semi-tropical areas — Nicaragua, Oceania, equatorial Africa — offer him a refreshing change of pace.

Teleios is intrigued by the idea of conquering the world, but mainly because that would allow him to use all humanity as fodder for experiments. He’s perfectly willing to assist other villains with their conquests instead, if that gets him to the same place.

Here’s a character sheet for Teleios:

TELEIOS, THE PERFECT MAN

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 [3]
30	DEX	60	15-	OCV: 10/DCV: 10
30	CON	40	15-	
30	BODY	40	15-	
50	INT	40	19-	PER Roll 19-
30	EGO	40	15-	ECV: 10
30	PRE	20	15-	PRE Attack: 6d6
30	COM	10	15-	
15	PD	9		Total: 18 PD (3 rPD)
15	ED	9		Total: 18 ED (3 rED)
7	SPD	30		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12
12	REC	0		
60	END	0		
60	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 318

Movement:	Running:	12”/24”
	Leaping:	7”/14”
	Swimming:	7”/14”

Cost	Powers	END
210	<i>Biochemical Wizardry</i> : Variable Power Pool (Biochemistry Pool), 150 base + 75 control cost; Biochemical Powers Only (-¼)	var
30	<i>The Fighting Arts Of A Dozen Lands</i> : Multipower, 30-point reserve	
2u	1) <i>Strikes</i> : HA +6d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	3
2u	2) <i>Trained Strength</i> : +30 STR; Only To Disarm, Escape, And Grab (-¾)	3
12	<i>Fleet-Footed</i> : Running +6” (12” total)	1
1	<i>Strong Leaper</i> : Leaping +1” (7” total)	1
5	<i>Strong Swimmer</i> : Swimming +5” (7” total)	1

Perks

15	Money: Filthy Rich
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Talents

6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
4	Double-Jointed
5	Eidetic Memory
3	Lightsleep
3	Perfect Pitch
3	Resistance (3 points)
3	Simulate Death
4	Speed Reading (x10)

Skills

30	+6 with HTH Combat
3	Acrobatics 15-
3	Breakfall 15-
3	Climbing 15-
3	Computer Programming 19-
3	Contortionist 15-
3	Conversation 15-
3	Electronics 19-
3	Forensic Medicine 19-
3	High Society 15-
3	Inventor 19-
3	Mechanics 19-
3	Paramedics 19-
3	Persuasion 15-
15	Power: Biochemical Wizardry 25-
3	PS: Wargames 19-
3	Stealth 15-
6	TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Parachuting (Basic and Advanced), Snow Skiing, Small Planes
3	Scholar
2	1) KS: Art History 19-
2	2) KS: History 19-
2	3) KS: Literature 19-
2	4) KS: Music 19-
2	5) KS: The Superhuman World 19-
2	6) KS: Superpowers 19-
3	Scientist
2	1) SS: Anatomy 19-
2	2) SS: Biochemistry 19-
2	3) SS: Biology 19-
2	4) SS: Botany 19-
2	5) SS: Chemistry 19-
2	6) SS: Genetics 19-
2	7) SS: Medicine 19-
2	8) SS: Microbiology 19-
2	9) SS: Pharmacology/Toxicology 19-
2	10) SS: Physics 19-
2	11) SS: Virology 19-
2	12) SS: Zoology 19-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 446
Total Cost: 764

200+ Disadvantages

10	Distinctive Features: perfect human body (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
20	Hunted: UNTIL 11- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)
10	Hunted: Dr. Destroyer 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
20	Psychological Limitation: Megalomaniac (Common, Total)

- 20 Psychological Limitation: Regards Humanity As Fodder For Experiments (Common, Total)
- 20 Reputation: supervillain of world-threatening power, 14- (Extreme)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Dr. Jakob Stroessen) (Frequently, Major)
- 449 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 764

EXAMPLE POWERS FOR BIOCHEMICAL WIZARDRY POOL

Here are a few uses for Teleios's Variable Power Pool:

Clone: Teleios can prepare a clone of himself, periodically update its memories through his mind transference processes, and then have the clone "activate" only in the event of his death. The clone starts out slightly weaker than Teleios himself due to various unavoidable flaws in the consciousness transferral and other factors.

Duplication (creates 750-point Duplicate) (150 Active Points); OAF Immobile (cloning machines; -1½), Extra Time (takes 1 Month to grow clone; -5), Cannot Recombine (-0), Duplicate Is Incapacitated And Helpless While Teleios Remains Alive (-1). Total cost: 18 points.

Cloned Army: Teleios can create an army of clones, each identifiable only by a serial number and/or barcode tattooed on some of its "parts," and equip them to fight his foes (see below).

Summon 125 181-point agents, Slavishly Devoted (+1) (142 Active Points); OAF Immobile (cloning machines; -1½), Extra Time (takes 1 Month to grow cloned army; -5). Total cost: 19 points.

Grow Superhuman: Teleios can clone a human being and induce mutations in it as it grows to give it just about any sort of superpowers he can think of.

Summon 350-point superpowered human (Teleios chooses the powers to create when breeding the clone), Slavishly Devoted (+1) (140 Active Points); OAF Immobile (cloning machines; -1½), Extra Time (takes 1 Month to grow cloned army; -5). Total cost: 19 points.

Knockout Dust: Teleios can breed special microscopic spores that render organic beings unconscious, and then throw packets of the spores at his foes.

Energy Blast 5d6, NND (defense is Self-Contained Breathing; +1), Area Of Effect (6" Radius; +1), Personal Immunity (+¼) (81 Active Points); OAF (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼), 6 Charges (-¾). Total cost: 27 points.

Paralyzing Dust: Teleios can breed special microscopic spores that paralyze the muscles of organic beings, and then throw packets of the spores at his foes.

Entangle 5d6, 5 DEF, Area Of Effect (9" Radius; +1), Takes No Damage From Attacks (+½), Personal Immunity (+¼) (137 Active Points); OAF (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼), 6 Charges (-¾). Total cost: 46 points.

Remove Superpowers: If he gets his hands on a troublesome superhero (say, one of the PCs...), Teleios can genetically "devolve" him or otherwise strip him of his innate superpowers.

Major Transform 6d6 (superhuman to ordinary human, heals back through application of reversed process), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (135 Active Points); OAF Immobile (biochemical manipulation equipment; -1½), Limited Target (humans; -½), Extra Time (1 Day; -4). Total cost: 19 points.

Background/History: Jakob Stroessen, the child of Austrian parents who had emigrated to Canada, was not a winner in the genetic lottery. Several negative factors combined to afflict him with neurological disorders and a small, stunted, easily broken body. But to counterbalance this, he was born with an amazing mind — one whose towering intellect had him enrolled in college when he was but twelve years old.

Stroessen focused his studies on biology and genetics. He was convinced the means existed to cure his diseases and conditions... all he had to do was find it. But even after he obtained his Ph.D with a brilliant thesis, his theories on eugenics, cloning, and other controversial subjects left him marginalized within the academic community and unable to find work.

Raging against the fools who impeded his progress, Stroessen used his inheritance to set up his own lab and continue experimenting. But still he got nowhere; though he was a genius, his genius could not overcome the intellectual roadblocks established by his demented dreams and strange scientific ideologies.

But then, one day, he fell into an exhausted sleep at his laboratory table after working for nearly three straight days without a break. When he awakened, he saw that a pad of paper on the table was covered with writing. As far as he could remember, it had been blank before, so he picked it up to look more closely.

The formulae and notes on that single piece of paper, written in a strong and confident hand, astonished him. He recognized their implications immediately. Contained amid those few letters and numbers were the keys to unlocking several genetic problems that had bedeviled him for years. A few weeks' worth of work, and he had unlocked many more by taking the notes to their logical scientific conclusions. In the space of a month, he'd gone from being a frustrated biochemist to one of the most knowledgeable geneticists — if not *the* most knowledgeable — in world history.

Stroessen didn't hesitate for a moment. Once he had worked out the formulae thoroughly, he used them to build a new body for himself — a body representing the pinnacle of human physical and

TELEIOS PLOT SEEDS

Teleios replaces an important world leader (such as the President of the United States) with a clone, while keeping the real leader imprisoned. The PCs have to figure out what's going on and stop it before the *faux* leader, following Teleios's commands, starts a war or initiates some other disaster.

In an effort to distract two of his most powerful enemies so he can begin an important scheme unobserved and unhindered, Teleios creates a clone of Dr. Destroyer and has him attack UNTIL's headquarters in the campaign city. A major "war" between Destroyer and UNTIL results, leaving Teleios free to pursue his own plans. The PCs have to deduce what's really going on (perhaps when the real Dr. Destroyer seeks to enlist their help "to save the lives of innocents" as a way of putting them in his debt), stop the fighting, and stop Teleios.

To test some of his new botanical experiments, Teleios scatters special seeds across the campaign city. Overnight, man-size carnivorous plants have sprouted all over the city, threatening the lives of millions! The PCs have to eradicate the deadly plants (and stop all the crimes taking place while the police are distracted), and then stop Teleios from repeating the attack.

mental achievement, sublime in its biological perfection. He waited with barely-contained eagerness as the cloning chamber did its work. When the body was ready at last, he used other technology, also suggested to him by the mysterious notes, to transfer his own consciousness into the new body. Able to move freely and without pain for the first time in his life, Stroessen revelled in his newfound abilities. He destroyed his old body, having no further use for it. Since he had been reborn, he chose a new name for himself as well: Teleios, from the Greek word for "perfection."

Personality/Motivation: Driven in part by an unshakeable belief in his own mental (and now physical) superiority, and in part by years of built-up rage and scorn at a world that regarded him as nothing more than a deluded cripple, Teleios is convinced that he can, and someday will, rule the world (or at least create a situation where he has free rein to tinker with humanity as he chooses). The key to his schemes is his ability to manipulate biological and biochemical processes in his laboratories, rather than the electronic and mechanical prowess of the likes of Dr. Destroyer and Mechanon, or the mental powers of Menton. It is a sometimes subtle difference, but an important one.

Teleios has little, if any, emotional connection to the rest of humanity any more. Instead, he regards other people as glorified lab rats (or in his more poetic moments, as canvases upon which he works his art). All he cares about is their potential usefulness to his work. If he were to gaze upon the face of a gorgeous woman, he wouldn't think about her beauty at all, except in the abstract — he'd wonder at the combination of genetic factors that led to such an advantageous appearance. His cloned servants he has even less regard for. He thinks nothing of casually killing one that offends him; he creates an endless stream of tailored clone-women as his sex-slaves, callously tossing them, screaming, back into his work-vats when he tires of them.

To this day Teleios remains unaware of who, if anyone, left him the note with the scientific formulae that led to the breakthrough in his work. In fact, thanks to his academic vanity, he's suppressed the incident altogether, and has convinced himself that it was all his own doing. If confronted with solid evidence to the contrary, he may snap under the strain of having his delusions so forcefully shattered.

Quote: "Perfection is not an unattainable goal. I achieve it every day in my laboratories. I am the living emodiment of it!"

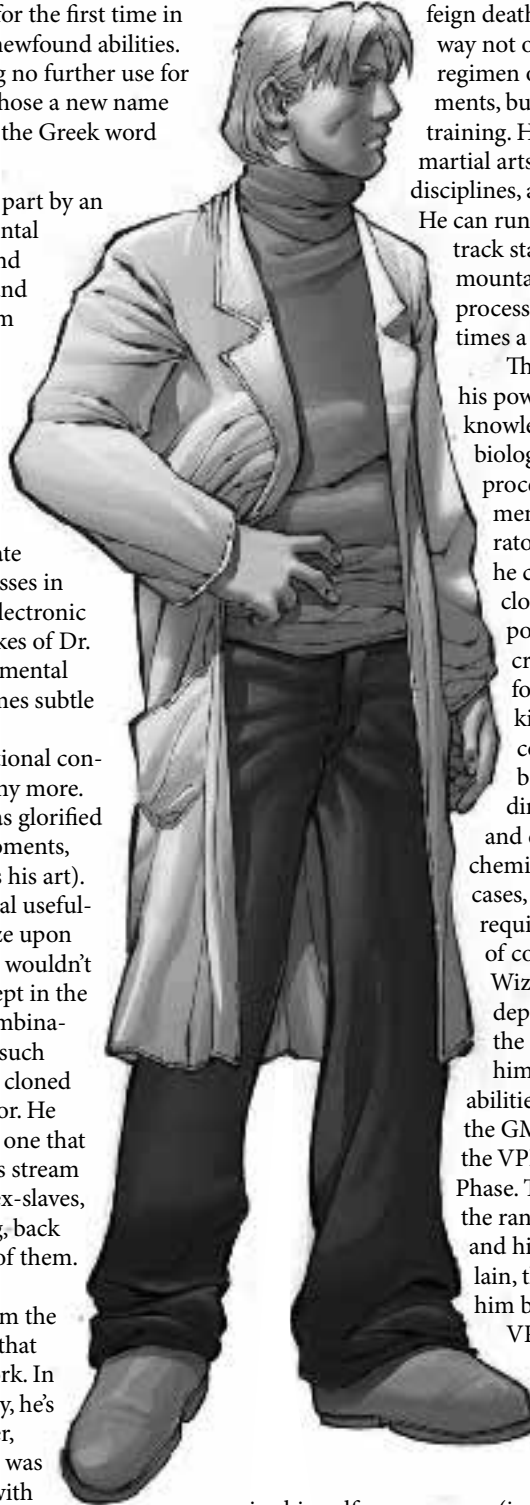
Powers/Tactics: Teleios's abilities derive from two

sources. The first is his body itself, which he planned and grew to be the acme of human potential. It is as strong, fast, and durable as a human body can be without verging into the superhuman, and possesses many other remarkable "gifts" (like a photographic memory and the ability to feign death).

He maintains it that way not only through a careful regimen of biochemical treatments, but lots of exercise and training. He has studied many martial arts and other combat disciplines, and is a lethal fighter. He can run as fast as an Olympic track star, climb like the best mountaineers, and read and process information at ten times a normal person's rate.

The second source of his powers is his extensive knowledge and control of biological and biochemical processes. Using the equipment in his hidden laboratories around the world, he can create armies of clones, induce superpowers in test subjects, create duplicate bodies for himself in case he's killed in battle, transfer consciousness from one body to another, breed dinosaurs and monsters, and develop potent biochemical weapons. In most cases, changing his VPP requires a lot of time (and, of course, a Biochemical Wizardry roll). However, depending on his location, the equipment available to him, and the nature of the abilities he wants to create, the GM may let him change the VPP in as little as a Full Phase. To properly simulate the range of Teleios's powers, and his role as a master villain, the GM may need to let him buy things through his VPP — like cloned Followers — that might not otherwise be allowed.

Despite the fact that he could easily give himself superpowers (including non-visible ones, like damage-resistant skin) Teleios has persistently refused to do so. He seems to regard such things as beneath him — as a sully of his perfect body. Superpowers are for flunkies he controls, and for the fools who oppose him. All he needs is his matchless brain and body, and he can triumph over any obstacle.



Campaign Use: Although not as personally powerful as Takofanes, Destroyer, Gravitator, or Mechanon, Teleios is still a “master villain” capable of threatening, and even conquering, the world. As such, the GM should give him whatever he needs to conduct his schemes — Bases, Vehicles, super-technology, and the like. Teleios’s VPP indicates the rough extent of the resources he can normally bring to bear during any given scenario and/or combat, but think of it as a guideline, not an absolute restriction. You can make him more or less powerful, as appropriate for your campaign, by increasing or decreasing the size of the VPP. Don’t change Teleios’s Characteristics, or give him superpowers; that would violate his character concept too much.

Unlike the villains listed above, Teleios is not designed to take on a superteam of PCs in combat and defeat them. If he gets into a fight like that, he will almost certainly lose, and he knows it. He has cloned minions, vat-grown monstrosities, and other products of his biochemical wizardry to fight for him, and he’ll gladly let them. If a situation turns against him, he’ll flee, preferring to regroup and start the battle again later.

As a Hunter, Teleios is an insidious and dangerous foe — particularly if he can get his hands on samples of the character’s DNA. With that (and often even without it), he can grow clones of the character and send them out to commit crimes and sully the character’s reputation, develop superhumans tailor-made to exploit the character’s weaknesses, inflict all sorts of unpleasant illnesses on the character and his friends, and so forth. He usually toys with his victims for a long time before making a concerted effort to kill them.

Appearance: Teleios is a stunningly handsome blonde-haired, blue-eyed, muscular white male who usually dresses in the finest of clothes. He most often favors dark turtlenecks, dark slacks, and a white labcoat. There’s a hint of malevolence to his countenance and his glance that makes it clear he’s not just a harmless scientist, but something far more dangerous and evil.

CLONED SOLDIER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
15	CON	10	12-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
10	COM	0	11-	
5	PD	2		Total: 5 PD (1 rPD)
5	ED	2		Total: 5 ED (1 rED)
3	SPD	5		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
30	END	0		
31	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 59

Movement: Running: 7”/14”

Cost	Powers	END
60	Weapons, equipment, and gear <i>Martial Arts: Basic Fighting Techniques</i>	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes	
4	Block	+2 +2 Block, Abort
4	Dodge	— +5 Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4	Punch	+0 +2 5d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0 +1 3d6 + v/5; Target Falls
1	<i>Tough Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (1 PD/1 ED)	0
2	<i>Strong Legs:</i> Running +1” (7” total)	1
5	<i>Enhanced Nightsight:</i> Nightvision	0
6	<i>Enhanced Senses:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0
	Talents	
5	Resistance (5 points)	
	Skills	
8	+1 with All Combat	
2	KS: Owner’s Combat Doctrines & Procedures 11-	
3	Stealth 12-	
3	Tactics 12-	
3	WF: Small Arms, Blades	
9	Choose three of the following: Bugging, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Computer Programming, Concealment, Deduction, Demolitions, Electronics, Fast Draw, Interrogation, Lockpicking, Mechanics, Paramedics, Security Systems, Shadowing, Systems Operation, 3 points’ worth of KSs/Languages/SSs/TFs/WFs, 1 3-point Combat Skill Level	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 122

Total Cost: 181

50+ Disadvantages

5	Distinctive Features: barcode tattoo on forehead and shoulders (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
20	Psychological Limitation: Loyal To Owner (Common, Total)
15	Psychological Limitation: Will Not Harm Teleios (Uncommon, Total)
91	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 181

Description: Teleios breeds these vat-grown mercenaries for whoever can afford them (past clients have included Eurostar, ARGENT, and VIPER). Their Skills and memories are implanted in them via a memory induction process, and can be tailored to suit the customer’s taste. The owner supplies them with whatever weapons and equipment he chooses, as well as any additional training desired.

MONSTERSAURUS

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
60	STR	50	21-	Lift 100 tons; 12d6 [6]
18	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
40	CON	60	17-	
35	BODY	50	16-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
35	PRE	25	16-	PRE Attack: 7d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
				Total: 18 PD (9 rPD)
18	PD	6		Total: 18 ED (9 rED)
18	ED	10		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
4	SPD	12		
20	REC	0		
80	END	0		
85	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 227

Movement:	Running:	12"/24"
	Leaping:	0"/0"
	Swimming:	0"/0"
	Flight:	10"/20"

Cost	Powers	END
75	<i>Fiery Breath:</i> RKA 3d6, Area Of Effect (72" Line; +1 ½); No Range (-½)	11
45	<i>Jaws:</i> HKA 3d6 (6d6 with STR)	4
15	<i>Forelimb Claws:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR)	1
9	<i>Tough Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (9 PD/9 ED)	0
20	<i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -10"	0
13	<i>Monstrous Wings:</i> Flight 10"; Restrainable (-½)	2
12	<i>Big Body And Long Legs:</i> Running +6" (12" total)	1
-2	<i>Can't Swim:</i> Swimming -2"	
6	<i>Dinosaur Senses:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0
6	<i>Tail:</i> Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼)	0

Skills	
10	+2 Hand-To-Hand

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 209
Total Cost: 436

200+ Disadvantages

15	Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
10	Physical Limitation: Huge (up to 18m long/tall and 9 tons; -6 DCV, +6 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
10	Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, cannot leap (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
15	Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
15	Psychological Limitation: Will Not Harm Teleios (Uncommon, Total)
171	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 436

Description: Bred from tyrannosaurus genetic material taken from blood in the stomachs of flies trapped in amber, supplemented with pterosaur DNA and a few touches inspired by Teleios's artistic sensibilities (like the ability to breathe fire), the Monstersaurus is just the sort of thing for destructive rampages through the city of your choice. It even comes equipped with wings, so that it can fly over annoying obstacles like rivers and armored divisions.

PAGE 103 — DR. YIN WU

Doctor Wu is, as described, a Chinese sorcerer of great power. As such his magic is unlike that of Western mystics, but no less strong for all that. An immortal born in 578 AD, he desires first, to rule China as Emperor, and second, to lead China in a war to crush the West and establish the Chinese dominance the world so rightly deserves. For most of the twentieth century he has sought the Jade Mirror of Transcendence, a legendary magical item that can remake the entire world into medieval China — and thus a world where he will unquestionably reign supreme. Having determined the Mirror no longer exists, he has decided to create his own. For this he requires many rare substances and other appurtenances, which will take time to gather... but he has time, all the time in the world, while lesser men age and wither to dust.

The Dragon Mandarin did, in fact, secretly use his magic to help the world's heroes fight Takofanes and Istvatha V'han. After all, it will be much easier for him to take over the world if it remains as it is, than if some other master villain conquers it. He may offer similar help in the future, though never openly.

PAGE 104 — L'INSTITUT THOTH

Despite the hints dropped in the main text, there's nothing particularly sinister about the Institut. It's just what it appears to be — a research institute devoted to superhuman-related issues that serves as a consultant to governments and superhumans. It, or some of its scientists, could easily get mixed up in some dangerous doings (*i.e.*, a scenario!), but that's the exception rather than the rule.

PAGE 104 — THE TRISMEGISTUS COUNCIL

The Council is largely as described in the main text — a body of "good" low-powered spellcasters and scholars of the occult banded together to oppose the likes of the Circle of the Scarlet Moon. It was forced out of its relatively low-key role by the death of the last Archmage in 1908 (see page 124). For reasons the Council has never clearly understood (but has speculated about endlessly), no new Archmage was born to fill the post, as has happened so many times in the millennia dating back to Thanoro Azoic, the legendary first Archmage of Earth. Lacking an Archmage to assist, the Council did its best to step into his place, but even combined, the Council members' might was not equal to that of an Archmage. Mistakes were made, including the failure to stop the RSvKg from performing the ritual that created Der Sturmvoegel

and unleashed superhumanity on the world.

Although the Council remains united in its purpose to oppose the Circle and other forms and practitioners of black magic, it is not necessarily united in other things. Its members — pedantic, didactic, opinionated, often touchy — tend to squabble more than is good for them, and a few actively hate each other. The Leadership Board long ago learned it was impossible to stop this bickering and infighting, but also that despite it, the Council members always seemed to pull together and put aside their differences when it was truly necessary. Still, any superhero who receives the assistance and tutelage of the Trismegistus Council — such as Witchcraft of the Champions — could easily find himself caught up in the organization's internal politics.

As of 2002, the Council has nearly three dozen members living all over the globe. Some of the more prominent include:

Aloysius Abercrombie: Born in London in 1853, Aloysius Abercrombie, while not a practicing spell-caster of any significant power, seems somehow able to channel magical energies to keep himself from aging at the same rate as normal people. Despite being 150 years old, he looks like he's in his early 40s, and quite fit. He's also got quite "the nose," as he puts it, for detecting magical energies, making him invaluable to the Council when it needs to find one of the Circle's covens.

Alicia Blackmun: Great-great-great-granddaughter of one of the original three founders of the Council, Alicia Blackmun is a surprisingly powerful wizard for one of her young years (though nowhere near as powerful as a superheroic mystic). She's good friends with Witchcraft of the Champions, keeps her updated on Council gossip, and is firmly convinced that Witchcraft is the prophesied Archmage-to-come.

Orlando Rodriguez: A wealthy Spanish dilettante, with homes in Spain, Portugal, Mexico, and Brazil, Orlando Rodriguez speaks 22 languages fluently and can read a dozen more with some effort. He also has some military experience, which the Council has found useful from time to time. A member of the Leadership Board, Rodriguez agitates for the Council to take a more proactive role in opposing the Circle of the Scarlet Moon.

Makalani Rogers: A native of Kenya, Makalani was raised with the superstitions of his Kenyan mother and scholasticism of his American father, an anthropologist. He is an expert on African tribal magic and religion, and can cast a few ritual spells as needed.

Alajos Veszprem: A scholar living in Budapest, Veszprem lives the life of an ascetic, devoting his every waking minute to research, writing, and teaching. Irrascible, temperamental, opinionated, prone to shouting, and a notorious misogynist, Veszprem is the Council's most vociferous proponent of the Irish mystic Dweomer as the prophesied Archmage. He and Blackmun loathe each other.

Akako Yamimori: Renowned around the world as a folklorist and storyteller, Akako Yamimori is also an expert on Oriental mysticism and demonology. Whenever the Council detects Circle activities in Asia, she's the first person it calls on to investigate.

Most members of the Council have minor magical powers, or can cast low-powered spells (typically no more than 20-30 Active Points, *at most*, and a member usually only knows one or two of those). They're not intended as combat support, but as out-of-combat helpers, teachers, and perhaps sources of exasperation from time to time.



ARGENT TECHNOLOGY

ARGENT possesses some of the most advanced technology in the world, which it sells to selected clients (including VIPER, rogue governments, terrorist organizations, individual supervillains, and the like). Rumors in the Superhuman World even claim that a few high-tech heroes actually get their equipment and supplies from ARGENT, though this has never been confirmed. A few examples of ARGENT's wares:

Dimensional Shunt: A powerful piece of defensive technology, this device (usually built into a suit of powered armor, a belt, or the like) creates a field around the wearer that acts as a low-level opening into a pocket dimension. Any force directed at the wearer is partly shunted into the pocket dimension.

Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50% (60 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 40 points.

Gravitic Repulsor: This is a small platform, big enough to hold maybe two people at most, with handles on either side. It allows the user to fly by selectively negating gravity. Ordinarily it would qualify as a Bulky Focus, but its built-in gravity negators make it extremely easy to carry. Flight 15", Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) (37 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 18 points) **plus** Usable Simultaneously (+½) for Flight (18 Active Points); OAF (-1), Both Characters Must Fly Together (-1) (total cost: 6 points). Total cost: 24 points.

Masquerade Field: This device, built into a belt

PAGE 108 — ARGENT

As noted in the main text, ARGENT employs relatively few agents of its own, preferring to simply hire mercenaries. You can use the Basic VIPER Agent character sheet, on page 147, to represent them — just change the names of the weapons and the appearance of the uniform.

PAGE 108 — THE CIRCLE OF THE SCARLET MOON

What the well-known (in the Superhero World, anyway) history in the main text omits is that the Council triumphed over the Circle during the 1800s so much because it had the aid of the Archmage, mystic defender of Earth. Determined to remove him forever, in 1908 the Circle worked a mighty magic, summoning a terrible force from Hell and unleashing it on the current Archmage's home in Russia. So terrible was the blast that it was felt hundreds of miles away. It accomplished its aim, and seems to even have destroyed the Archmage's artifacts of office to boot. Since then, Earth has been bereft of her chief mystic guardian, forcing the Trismegistus Council to do its best to take his place.

The Circle, unfortunately for it, was in no position to take advantage of its gain. So awesome was the spell it unleashed that over a dozen members of the group were slain by it, and many others weakened. It took them until the 1930s, not the present day, to recover their full strength — but that, at least, was just in time to help the RSvKg unwittingly create the first superhuman. That proved an error on the Circle's part, since superheroes have bedeviled it ever since... but at least its members now have greater magical power to draw upon if need be.

The Circle consists of two levels. The highest level, known simply as "the coven," consists of the thirteen most powerful members of the cabal. Through intimidation, persuasion, and dealmaking, they lead the Circle. The rest of the members occupy the lower level, though anyone who thinks himself powerful enough can challenge a coven member to a Duel Arcane in an effort to acquire the position. Duels between members over other matters are also not infrequent, though always carefully concealed from the mundane public.

The Circle is not, as villainous organizations go, particularly cohesive. A common goal — the acquisition of magical (and thus worldly) power — unites its members, but each seeks ways to gain power for himself without full regard for his fellows. They hoard information and lore, plot against one another, and disrupt each's others schemes secretly. Many of its members hate one another bitterly; sometimes only the strong hands of the coven keep the Circle moving forward at all.

Most members of the Circle are reasonably wealthy, if not fabulously so, and many hold positions of prominence in the Unawakened World (as they scornfully call it). Their magical prowess is by no means the only weapon they can bring to bear against their enemies.

Some of the most fiendish members of the Circle include:

James Abbott: A member of the coven for nearly a quarter of a century, Abbott is an expert on Necromancy and related disciplines. Many Circle members have noted how he's become increasingly paranoid and "weak" over the past dozen years — they feel it's only a matter of time before someone replaces him. What they don't know is *why* he's become such an anxiety-prone recluse. Abbott believes it was his necromantic conjuration spells that brought Takofanes the Archlich to life, and that the Undying Lord wants to consume his soul. Well aware he cannot confront so powerful a being, Abbott chooses to place his hope in hiding and defensive magics.

Roger and Martika Duquesne: The parents of Bethany and Pamela Duquesne (Witchcraft and Talisman, respectively), the Duquesnes expected to take control of the entire coven (of which both are members) with the help of their incredibly mystically gifted daughters. But one proved too squeamish for their purposes, and the other uncontrollable, leaving them humiliated and weakened in front of their fellow dark wizards. What schemes they intend to implement, or revenge they intend to obtain, to restore themselves to the prominence they once enjoyed, no one inside or outside of the Circle knows... but no one doubts they are making plans.

Iwalani Kapulika: A beautiful young Hawaiian woman, Kapulika looks like she should be enjoying herself on a beach or in a nightclub, not practicing black magic — but in fact she's nearly 70 years old and preserves her looks, health, and energy with spells. A veteran of the Circle's constant infighting, she's well-versed at watching her back while simultaneously locating an opponent's weaknesses. She's been planning her ascension to the coven for nearly a decade, and the time may soon be ripe to strike.

Walter Musgrave: Hailing from Texas, Musgrave has the heart of a snake and a mind like a steel trap. Best known to the world as an oil tycoon, he has a large mansion in Dallas, underneath which lies an underground cyst where cannibalistic Indian tribes once performed horriyng rituals. Now Musgrave does the same, forcing his young wife to help him with his twisted spell-workings.

Michaela Sorenson: A resident of London, Sorenson was inducted into the black arts by Sir Dennis of South Mallon, but fortunately for her was not present the night he slew the rest of his coven to gain the power of the Iron Crown. Since then she has spent much time studying him and his magic, hoping to find a way to steal it — and the Crown — for herself! With such an artifact, she could control the entire Circle, and all its resources, effortlessly.

A typical member of the Circle can cast at least a few low-powered spells, typically of no more than about 30-40 Active Points. Coven members are more powerful (most rank as about 200-250 point characters). The Circle does not have any supervillains working for it or with it on a regular basis (that was what Witchcraft and Talisman were supposed to become), but may form temporary alliances with mystic villains, like Black Paladin or the Slug, for specific purposes.

PAGE 108 — DEMON

As mentioned on page 125, DEMON is not just another villainous organization out to conquer the world — it's actually a cult devoted to freeing the Kings of Edom (see page 133) and setting them loose upon the world in exchange for power. (Though the leaders of DEMON may be overestimating their ability to control beings from the Qliphothic realms.) Neither the Brothers nor the Initiates know about this; they think the group is just a Satanic cult. Only those who earn the rank of Morbane learn the truth — but anyone who would become a Morbane is so corrupt and evil he would not scruple to traffic with the Kings.

DEMON began in 1918 (not 1925, as stated on page 108 and widely believed by the public) as the brainchild of Luther Black, a member of the Circle of the Scarlet Moon. Disgusted at the Circle's weakness, and thinking it would take many decades more for it to wear off, Black began delving deeper and deeper into forbidden lore, seeking a way to restore the Circle to its former grandeur. What he found was the Kings of Edom. He realized that if he could contact them, free them, he could achieve great power — for himself! Since the Circle now held nothing of interest to him, he left its ranks forever, taking several promising students with him.

As a cover for their researches, Black and his students created DEMON to masquerade as a Satanic cult and bring potential converts to the Kings to them. The front organization also served as an excellent

source of income. After superhumans arrived on the scene, DEMON's leaders found their mystic powers increasing, and to further their disguise entered the Superhuman World as a villainous agency. All along their goals have been not the acquisition of power for its own sake, but to free the Kings of Edom and obtain greater power still... and that remains the Inner Circle's goal today.

The main text's description of DEMON's facilities and resources is generally correct. But of course, each Demonname, and each Morbane, differs from all the others, so superheroes who rely on outdated or incomplete intelligence may be rudely awakened.

The text's description of how DEMON creates supervillains is slightly incorrect. Typically the creation process involves summoning a powerful demon or other entity from the Realms Beyond and merging it with a Brother, *not* an unwilling victim. For the duration of the spell, the joint being possesses great power and is DEMON's to command. When it wears off, the Brother is left weak and helpless, but this works to DEMON's benefit regardless of the outcome — either the superheroes become distraught over killing or harming an "innocent," or the Brother avoids capture (after all, he was an "innocent victim") and returns to the fold.

DEMON ENCHANTED ITEMS

Here are a few magical weapons and other items used by DEMON.

Blazing Amulet: These amulets, worn on a chain around the neck, can emit a burst of light powerful enough to blind many foes.

Sight Group Flash 8d6, Area Of Effect (11" Cone; +1), Trigger (magical command word; +¼) (90 Active Points); OAF (-1), No Range (-½), 4 Charges (-1). Total cost: 26 points.

Phantom's Mantle: By wrapping this diaphanous cloak around himself, a member of DEMON can become insubstantial, able to walk through walls and avoid attacks.

Desolidification (affected by magic), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (60 Active Points); OIF (-½), Extra Time (Full Phase to activate; -¼). Total cost: 34 points.

Ring Of Rescue: Morbanes often use these enchanted rings to escape from their foes when the battle turns against them.

*Teleportation 20", x32 Non-combat (60 Active Points); OIF (-½), 1 Charge (-2) (total cost: 17 points) **plus** 1 Floating Fixed Location (5 Active Points); OIF (-½) (total cost: 3 points). Total*

Continued from last page

or garment, generates a powerful hologram to disguise the wearer, who can even specify a hologram that looks like another person by cybernetic command.

Shape Shift (Sight Group; any humanoid form), Imitation, Instant Change, Costs Endurance Only To Change Shape (+¼) (44 Active Points); IIF (-¼). Total cost: 35 points.

Neural Scrambler: This weapon's energy beam interferes with the target's neural system, making it difficult for him to control his muscles or reflexes.

*Drain DEX 3d6, Ranged (+½) (45 Active Points); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½) (total cost: 18 points) **plus** Drain STR 2d6, Ranged (+½) (30 Active Points); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½), Linked (-½) (total cost: 10 points). Total cost: 28 points.*



DEMON
PLOT SEEDS

Determined to recover the Basilisk Orb and once again wield its power, the Inner Circle assigns a Morbane, Drogar Menitekles, to find and obtain it. Drogar's quest pits him against the PCs as he loots museums and libraries for the clues he needs to find the spell that will locate the Orb. Assuming he gets it, will he turn it over to the Inner Circle, or use it to become a powerful supervillain?

VIPER and DEMON put aside their differences to hatch a fiendish scheme — during a total solar eclipse visible over most of North America for several minutes, DEMON will lengthen the eclipse with a spell, creating a panic to occupy the authorities and keep them from interfering with several major robberies VIPER will commit. The two groups will split the proceeds. Can the PCs stop this plot? Will the two organizations each try to betray the other, causing further problems?

DEMON's new Pentacles of Dispatch allow its minions to travel great distances quickly, making the Pentacles an excellent way to escape from crime scenes. But they begin to attract certain extradimensional horrors that start ravaging the city. The PCs now have two good reasons to shut the Pentacles down entirely.

cost: 20 points.

Troll-Axe: These elaborately-carved, enormous axes are much more lightweight than they appear, making them dangerous weapons.

HKA 2½d6 (up to 5d6+1 with STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (60 Active Points); OAF (-1), No Knockback (-¼). Total cost: 27 points.

DEMON BROTHER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]
12	DEX	6	11-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
12	CON	4	11-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
12	INT	2	11-	PER Roll: 11-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
13	PRE	3	12-	Presence Attack: 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
3	PD	1		Total: 9 PD (6 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 9 ED (6 rED)
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
4	REC	0		
24	END	0		
21	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 21

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
14	<i>Brazen Wand:</i> Multipower, 35-point reserve, all OAF (-1), 8 Charges on entire Multipower (-½)	
2u	1) <i>Eldritch Blast:</i> EB 7d6; OAF (-1)	
2u	2) <i>Deadly Blast:</i> RKA 2d6+1; OAF (-1)	
12	<i>Amulet Of Protection:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½)	0
3	<i>Amulet Of Protection:</i> Power Defense (5 points); OIF (-½)	0

Perks

1	Fringe Benefit: Membership (Brother of DEMON)
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Skills

1	KS: Arcane & Occult Lore 8-
2	KS: Lesser Mysteries of DEMON 11-
2	PS: DEMON Brother 11-
3	Stealth 11-
3	Streetwise 12-
9	Choose three Skills from the following list: Concealment, Conversation, Cryptography, Disguise, Forgery (3 points' worth), Gambling (3 points' worth), Interrogation, Persuasion, Survival (3 points' worth), Tactics, 3 points' worth of KSs/Languages/SSs/TFs/WFs, 1 3-point Combat Skill Level with Brazen Wand

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 54

Total Cost: 75

50+ Disadvantages

5	Distinctive Features: DEMON Robes (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
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20	Hunted: UNTIL (or like organization) 8- (Mo Pow, NCI)
10	Hunted: DEMON 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Psychological Limitation: Loyal To DEMON And Its Ideals (Common, Strong)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 115

Note: The unspent points Brothers receive from Disadvantages represent points that slowly get spent as they increase their learning and ascend into the ranks of the Initiates (assuming they make it that far).

Description: This character sheet represents a typical Brother (or Sister) of DEMON — the lowest-ranking member of the organization. Brothers possess no spellcasting abilities themselves, but come equipped with enchanted Amulets of Protection, and Brazen Wands that can project deadly bolts of force. (Like most DEMON enchanted items, these are Personal Foci, usable by no one else, and crumble to dust after about a week of being separated from their owners.) They also have some magical lore and knowledge of the underworld.

Brothers typically dress in brown hooded robes, though they may wear other garb for specific rituals, when in disguise, or the like.

MORBANE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 [2]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
10	COM	0	11-	
10	PD	6		Total: 20 PD (10 rPD)
10	ED	6		Total: 20 ED (10 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
8	REC	0		
36	END	0		
35	STUN	6		Total Characteristics Cost: 114

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 4"/8"

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Black Magic:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve; all slots have Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), and Requires A Magic Roll (-½)	
3u	1) <i>Domination:</i> Mind Control 8d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½)	0
3u	2) <i>Befuddlement:</i> Mental Illusions 8d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½)	0
3u	3) <i>Spell Of Torment:</i> Ego Attack 4d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½);	

	Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½)	0
3u	4) <i>Touch Of Terror</i> : Drain PRE 4d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½)	0
3u	5) <i>Hellfire</i> : EB 9d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½)	2
3u	6) <i>Hellgate</i> : Teleport 15", x16 Noncombat, x8 Increased Mass; Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½)	6
3u	7) <i>Spell-Shattering</i> : Dispel Magic 16d6, any Magic power one at a time (+¼); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½)	6
2u	8) <i>Call Demonling</i> : Summon 4 233-point Demonlings (see <i>HERO System Bestiary</i> , page 51); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼)	6
15	<i>Enchanted Mace</i> : HKA 1d6 (1½d6 with STR), +2 STUN Multiplier (+½); OAF (-1) plus Drain CON 1d6, Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Minute; +¼); OAF (-1), Linked (-½), 8 Charges (-½)	2+[8]
12	<i>Defensive Spells</i> : Armor (4 PD/4 ED)	0
12	<i>Enchanted Robes</i> : Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½)	0
3	<i>Soul Gem</i> : Mental Defense (9 points total); OIF (-½)	0
3	<i>Soul Gem</i> : Power Defense (5 points); OIF (-½)	0
10	<i>Spellsight</i> : Detect Magic 13- (Sight Group), Discriminatory	0
5	<i>Darksight</i> : Nightvision	0
30	Individual Morbane abilities, created by GM	

Perks

8	Fringe Benefit: Membership (Morbane of DEMON)	
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Skills

9	+3 with Black Magic Multipower	
3	Analyze Magic 13-	
3	Concealment 13-	
3	Conversation 13-	
2	Cryptography 13-; Translation Only (-½)	
3	High Society 13-	
3	Interrogation 13-	
3	CK: City Of Operation 13-	
3	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 13-	
5	KS: Greater Mysteries Of DEMON 15-	
3	Language: Latin (completely fluent)	
2	Language: another ancient language of GM's choice (fluent conversation)	
3	Oratory 13-	
13	Power: Magic 18-	
5	<i>Soul Gem</i> : +4 to Power: Magic roll; OIF (-½)	0
3	Stealth 13-	
19	Ninety points' worth of Skills of the GM's choice	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 236**Total Cost: 350****200+ Disadvantages**

10	Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)	
20	Hunted: Trismegistus Council 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)	
20	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)	
10	Hunted: DEMON 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)	
20	Psychological Limitation: Powerhungry (Common, Total)	
20	Psychological Limitation: Self-Centered And Amoral (Common, Total)	
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (varies) (Frequently, Major)	
15	Susceptibility: to holy places and objects, takes 1d6 damage per Turn is on holy ground, in a holy place, or within 1" of a holy object (Common)	
10	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Holy/Divine Magic (Uncommon)	
10	Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Holy/Divine Magic (Uncommon)	

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Background/History: This character sheet represents a typical Morbane of the Outer Circle — a captain of DEMON, one who leads the organization's troops and cultists in battle and on important missions. The Morbanes' histories vary, but all share a lust for dark, secret knowledge... and for power of all kinds.

Personality/Motivation: Morbanes are uniformly evil. They care only about themselves — about how much power and riches they can accumulate, particularly when they can do so at the expense of their fellows. They are loyal to DEMON, but only because they see it as providing the surest path to greater power and influence.

Morbanes are full DEMON initiates; they understand the true nature and purpose of the organization. That they accept this fact without hesitation only goes to show how corrupted their souls truly are.

Quote: "Do you think your pathetic gods can save you? Nothing can withstand the might of DEMON!"

Powers/Tactics: A Morbane is a DEMON sorcerer-priest, easily as powerful as most superheroes. When they combine their powers, and have troops to back them, Morbanes present a terrifying threat. Their black magic powers (some the result of training, some considered gifts from the Kings of Edom) range from manipulations of the mind, to the equally deadly hellfire, to the ability to summon demonlings. (More experienced and powerful Morbanes can Summon more powerful infernal beings, and have more Active Points in their Multipower reserves and slots.) Each Morbane carries, as his

SENATOR PHILLIP GLASSMAN

8 STR 10 DEX
10 CON 8 BODY
18 INT 14 EGO
20 PRE 14 COM
2 PD 2 ED
2 SPD 4 REC
20 END 17 STUN

Abilities: AK: Wyoming 13-, CK: Washington, D.C. 13-, KS: American History 11-, KS: American Politics 11-, KS: The Mutant Menace 11-, KS: The Superhuman World 11-, KS: World Politics 11-, Oratory 13-, Persuasion 13-, PS: Politician 13-, PS: Senator 14-, numerous Contacts (in politics, the IHA, the military, and other organizations), Fringe Benefit: Concealed Weapon Permit, Fringe Benefit: Membership: U.S. Senator, Fringe Benefit: Passport, Fringe Benefit: Security Clearance

Disadvantages: Age: 40+, Hunted: the media (Watching), Psychological Limitation: Hatred Of Superhumans

Notes: Following the death of his beloved daughter Anelle in a New York City super-battle in 1997, Senator Glassman became a tireless crusader against superhumans in general, and mutant superhumans in particular. A four-term senator from Wyoming, Glassman has a lot of clout in Washington, and is skilled at manipulating the media to get out the messages he wants to convey.

badge of office, a deadly enchanted mace which weakens its targets with every strike (and some Morbanes have improved their weapons, substituting a Transfer CON to CON for the simple Drain CON!).

Campaign Use: Because every Morbane is an individual, the GM should tailor each one that appears in the game to represent that character's personality, preferred courses of study in the black arts, and so forth. Each Morbane should be unique and intriguing, not simply a cookie-cutter foe to be grouped with DEMON agents. Remember, Morbanes are built on as many points as starting superheroes!

If you need to tone the Morbanes down for your campaign, reduce their Multipowers to 40-point reserves, cut their defenses by about one-third, and reduce their Combat Skill Levels to +1. Strengthening the Morbane is usually a matter of increasing his SPD and defenses, but sometimes you should increase the size of his Multipower as well.

Appearance: Each Morbane differs; some are male, some female... and some seemingly not of human stock anymore. Though they dress according to personal preference in civilian life, and sometimes use disguises for missions, when performing rituals and functioning in their role as captains of DEMON, Morbanes usually wear the following. First, a black, hooded cloak, with the hood drawn up over his head. The cloak is unusual, with long, thin panels hanging down in front down each side of the body. Second, he conceals his face with a black, bat-shaped domino mask. Third, beneath the cloak he wears blood-red robes that reach down to his ankles, but with a knee-length slit up the front and back for easier running. Embroidered on the chest of the robe in gold is the stylized goat-horned demon's head symbol of DEMON. The robe's sleeves are tight, fitting into the wearer's black gloves (he also wears black boots). Fourth, a Morbane carries one obvious and visible weapon: an enchanted mace with a long, almost cylindrical head and several spikes placed symmetrically and evenly on each side. The pommel of the mace is often shaped like a skull.

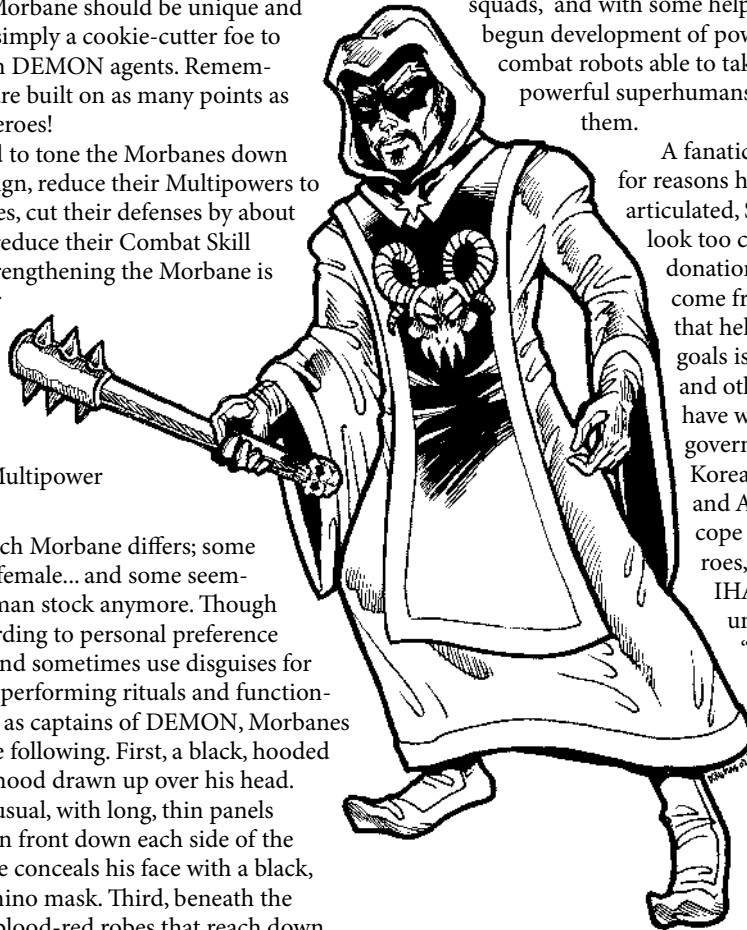
PAGE 111 — THE INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN ADVANCEMENT

The IHA is more than just a lobbying organization — since Archer Samuels took over in 1994 after murdering Annette Berkelheimer because she wasn't hardline enough for his taste, the IHA has been gearing up for all-out war on mutantkind. Using the influx of cash Samuels has generated, it has equipped a small army, trained "mutant hit squads," and with some help from ARGENT begun development of powerful Minuteman combat robots able to take on the most powerful superhumans and destroy them.

A fanatic mutant-hater for reasons he's never clearly articulated, Samuels doesn't look too closely at where donations to the IHA come from — anything that helps him pursue his goals is worth taking. He and other IHA leaders have worked with rogue governments like North Korea, Chiquador, Iraq, and Awad to help them cope with superheroes, for which the IHA received lavish under-the-table "consulting fees." Additionally, a number of wealthy supervillains have secretly filled the Institute's coffers. Both the Warlord and Dr. Destroyer, among others, have con-

tributed large amounts of cash through proxies, since they think the IHA weakens their enemies. On the other hand, mutant supervillains like Gravitator and Menton abhor the Institute and take every opportunity to attack it and cause it as much trouble as they can — and the Institute holds those incidents up as proof that it's right.

A standard IHA "agent" (the organization refers to them as "soldiers") is a Skilled Normal (*HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, page 346) equipped with an assault rifle, body armor, and similar gear (pages 332-34). As the Institute strengthens both its finances and its ties with ARGENT, it may switch to high-tech equipment like blaster rifles and force field belts, but for now ordinary guns and gear work just fine.



MINUTEMAN ROBOT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 [4]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
10	CON	0	11-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
0	EGO	0	—	ECV: N/A
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
10	PD	21		Total: 10 PD (10 rPD)
10	ED	27		Total: 10 ED (10 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	0		
0	END	-10		
—	STUN	—		Total Characteristics Cost: 161

Movement: Running: 12"/24"
Leaping: 8"/16"
Flight: 25"/50"

Cost	Powers	END
105	<i>Onboard Weaponry:</i> Multipower, 105-point reserve	
10u	1) <i>Weapon Suite I:</i> EB 12d6, Variable Special Effects (any weapon; +¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
8u	2) <i>Weapon Suite II:</i> RKA 3d6, Variable Special Effects (any weapon; +¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
10u	3) <i>Multicannon I:</i> EB 8d6, Variable Advantage (+½ Advantages; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
10u	4) <i>Multicannon II:</i> RKA 2½d6, Variable Advantage (+½ Advantages; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
10u	5) <i>Electrified Net:</i> Entangle 7d6, 7 DEF, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
10u	6) <i>Paste Projectors:</i> Entangle 5d6, 5 DEF, Area Of Effect (5" Radius; +1); 16 Charges (-0)	[16]
15	<i>Robot Body:</i> Does Not Bleed	0
45	<i>Robot Body:</i> Takes No STUN	0
20	<i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on 40 STR	0
12	<i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on Running	0
4	<i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on Leaping	0
1	<i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on Swimming	0
30	<i>Robot Body:</i> Damage Resistance (10 PD/10 ED)	0
45	<i>Robot Body:</i> Life Support: Total	0
75	<i>Boot Jets:</i> Flight 25", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
12	<i>Robot Legs:</i> Running +6" (12" total)	0
34	<i>Visual Sensors:</i> Infrared Perception, Ultraviolet Perception, x1000 Microscopic, Telescopic (+6 versus Range Modifier) (all for Sight Group)	0
15	<i>Auditory Sensors:</i> Active Sonar (Hearing Group)	0
3	<i>Auditory Sensors:</i> Ultrasonic Perception	

	(Hearing Group)	0
12	<i>Radio Sensors:</i> HRRP (Radio Group)	0
15	<i>Radar Array:</i> Radar (Radio Group)	0
3	<i>Sensor Enhancements:</i> +1 PER with all Sense Groups	0

Talents

32	<i>Onboard Computer Systems:</i> Absolute Range Sense, Absolute Time Sense, Bump Of Direction, Lightning Calculator, Universal Translator 13-
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Skills

16	+2 with All Combat
3	Computer Programming 13-
3	Electronics 13-
3	KS: IHA Doctrine 13-
3	KS: The Superhuman World 13-
3	KS: Superpowers 13-
3	Tactics 13-
3	Teamwork 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 573

Total Cost: 734

200+ Disadvantages

25	<i>Distinctive Features:</i> Minuteman Robot (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Causes Fear)
15	<i>Hunted:</i> UNTIL 8- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)
15	<i>Physical Limitation:</i> Machine Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
20	<i>Physical Limitation:</i> Ten Feet Tall And Weighs 10,000 Kilograms (All The Time, Greatly Impairing)
5	<i>Physical Limitation:</i> Affected By Cybermancy (has EGO 25 for purposes of cybermantic powers, and can be affected by cybermancy-based Presence Attacks) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
25	<i>Psychological Limitation:</i> Devoted To The Philosophies And Goals Of The IHA (Very Common, Total)
429	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 734

Background/History: This character sheet represents a typical Minuteman robot used by the Institute for Human Advancement circa 2002. It is the seventh generation of such robots (though none of the first six ever appeared in public), and represents the pinnacle of the IHA's researches into robotics.

Personality/Motivation: Although artificially intelligent, the Minuteman has no personality to speak of. It approaches all situations through the application of machine logic, using subroutines so advanced it almost seems like a living human. The only non-logical aspect of its programming is its devotion to the cause of the IHA; its masters have programmed it with their own hatred of mutants and other "human deviants."

Quote: "Surrender At Once Human Deviant Or We Will Use Force To Capture You."

IHA PLOT SEEDS

To gain political support, the IHA hires prostitutes to seduce married Congressmen, so it can blackmail them into favoring the Institute's anti-mutant agenda. The PCs have to find out about this and figure out a way to resolve the problem without attracting *any* media attention.

The IHA hires assassins, equips them with VIPER technology, and sends them after the PCs. If the assassins fail, the IHA intends for the VIPER technology to deflect suspicion from the Institute, which rarely uses such high-tech gear.

The IHA offers to equip any police force that requests it with \$10 million worth of anti-superhuman weaponry. Where is the Institute getting the money to afford this — what's going on behind the scenes?

VIPER TECHNOLOGY

Here are a few choice items from VIPER's arsenal.

V-12 "Destructor" Blaster Cannon: The heaviest weapon in VIPER's standard arsenal is the V-12 cannon. It breaks out this tripod-mounted weapon, which requires a crew of two for proper operation, when it expects major opposition from superheroes or the likes of UNTIL.

EB 20d6, 30 Boostable Charges (+½) (150 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½), Crew-Served (2 agents; -¼). Total cost: 54 points

VB-S1A "Shorty" Blaster Pistol Variant: VIPER's most popular sidearm has been tinkered with and adapted to many different situations. The S1A is one of the most common variants; it increases the weapon's ability to penetrate armor.

EB 7d6, Armor Piercing (+½) (52 Active Points); OAF (-1), 12 Charges (-¼). Total cost: 23 points

VE-A1 "Trapper" Trapweb Launcher: VIPER agents often use this rifle to immobilize superheroes. However, if damaged, the Trapper is dangerously prone to rupturing (on an 11- whenever the weapon takes BODY damage), which can prove fatal to the user.

Entangle 8d6 BODY, 5 DEF (65 Active Points); OAF (-1), 16 Charges (-0), Limited Power (weapon subject to dangerous rupture; -¼). Total cost: 29 points.

VG-1 Frag Grenade: VIPER frequently issues grenades to its agents, finding them a cheap way to really boost a squad's firepower. This is the most common type of grenade used.

RKA 2d6+1, Explosion (+½) (52 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼). Total cost: 16 points.

Powers/Tactics: In addition to standard robotic abilities (such as Life Support), the Minuteman is equipped with a wide variety of weapons, ranging from standard energy blasters, to freeze rays, to sonic attacks, to two different methods of capturing enemies alive. The GM can use the robot's Variable Advantage and Variable Special Effects attacks to simulate just about any sort of weapon needed. Minutemen tasked to a particular mission often have additional programming or weapons specifically related to that mission.

Campaign Use: The Minutemen robots are the IHA's most formidable weapons. Due to their power, they should only be encountered in small numbers; large groups of them tend to overwhelm most superhero teams — particularly when the robots, through their KSs or previous encounters, know about the heroes' weaknesses.

If you find the Minuteman *too* powerful, reduce its SPD to 4 and the reserve and slots of its Multipower to 90 points. If it's too weak, boost the Multipower reserve and slots until its attacks have enough DCs to worry the PCs, and perhaps increase its defenses as well.

The Minutemen do not Hunt heroes of their own initiative, but of course are often used against PCs Hunted by the IHA itself.

Appearance: The Minuteman is a humanoid robot standing ten feet tall (and sometimes a little taller, depending on options and upgrades), typically with a green body and gold-colored limbs and head. Panels on its hands, arms, and body reveal the presence of various weapons, and the ports in the soles of its feet are obviously boot-jets.

PAGE 111 — PSI

PSI's relationship with ARGENT came to an abrupt and bloody end eighteen months ago when Psimon, the group's combat leader, discovered ARGENT was really just stringing PSI along to learn as much as it could about psionic abilities in the hope of developing psi-tech on its own. Since then the two groups have been at war, striking at each other whenever the opportunity presents itself.

PAGE 112 — VIPER

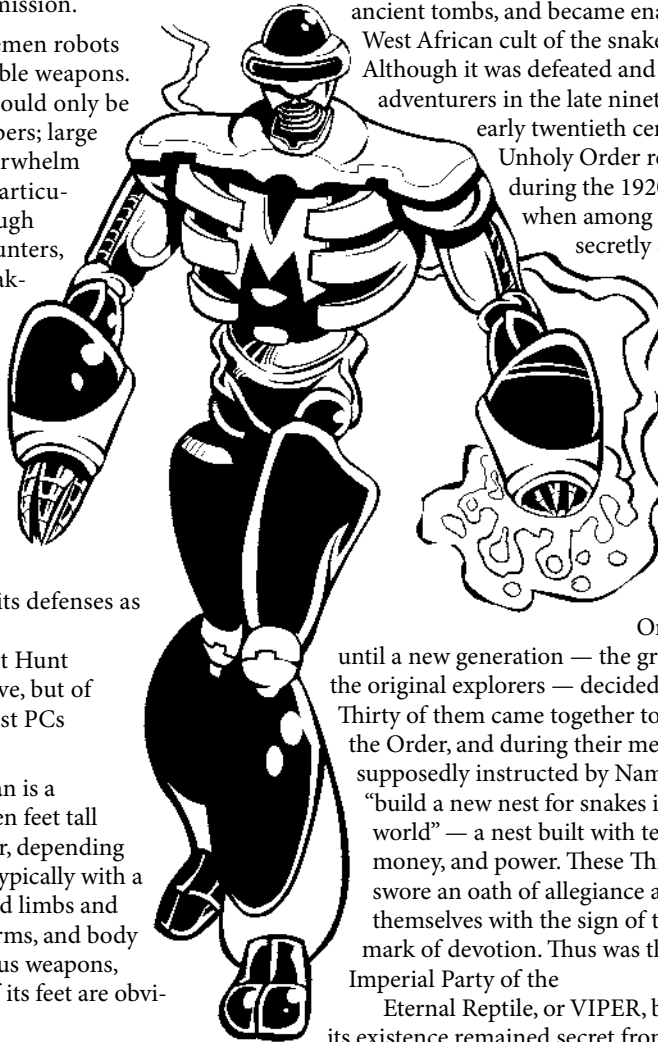
According to VIPER's "official history," its origins can be traced back to certain serpent-cults of the mythic Valdorian Age that predates Atlantis. While that may be true (stranger things have certainly occurred in the Champions Universe), the first solid historical antecedent for the agency is the Unholy Order of the Grand Reptile, a society of explorers in the mid-nineteenth century who sponsored expeditions into Africa to plunder ancient tombs, and became enamored of the West African cult of the snake-god Nama. Although it was defeated and dispersed by adventurers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Unholy Order resurfaced during the 1920s and '30s, when among other things it secretly assisted fascist governments and their agents (often as part of pursuing even more secret agendas of its own).

After World War II, the Unholy Order lay fallow, until a new generation — the grandchildren of the original explorers — decided to resurrect it. Thirty of them came together to re-establish the Order, and during their meeting were supposedly instructed by Nama himself to "build a new nest for snakes in the modern world" — a nest built with technology, money, and power. These Thirty Founders swore an oath of allegiance and tattooed themselves with the sign of the serpent as a mark of devotion. Thus was the Venomous Imperial Party of the

Eternal Reptile, or VIPER, born — though its existence remained secret from the world at large until the 1960s, when its activities became more high-profile and spectacular.

The Thirty Founders ran the organization through the 1960s and '70s, and proved a powerful danger to society, but as they aged gradually lost control to powerful Nest Leaders. By the early 1980s, the organization was in danger of fragmenting completely. To keep this from happening, and to preserve some measure of their own power, the Thirty reorganized the leadership, creating a Supreme Serpent to head the entire organization. To this day the identity and nature of the Supreme Serpent remain a mystery, and some within VIPER doubt he even exists at all — though no one questions that over the past twenty years VIPER has become more efficient, powerful, and dangerous than ever.

VIPER's secret World Headquarters, the base of operations for the Supreme Serpent and true seat



of power for the organization, is not on the Moon (VIPER has no space facilities... yet), but where the organization's roots lie: West Africa. Deep beneath the Mbang Mountains, in an isolated part of the nation of Cameroon, the Supreme Serpent weaves his webs of intrigue and power to ensnare the world. VIPER also has major bases, outside the usual Nest structure, hidden in the Alps, India, and the Arctic.

VIPER AGENT (BASIC)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
4	PD	1		Total: 10 PD (6 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 10 ED (6 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
30	STUN	3		Total Characteristics Cost: 41

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
32	VB-A1 "Striker" Blaster Rifle: Multipower, 52-point reserve, 32 Charges for entire reserve (+¼); all OAF (-1)	[32]
2u	1) Basic Setting: EB 8d6; OAF (-1)	
3u	2) Autofire Setting: EB 7d6, Autofire (5 shots, +½); OAF (-1)	
6	Gun-butt Club: HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	
17	VB-S1 "Shorty" Blaster Pistol: EB 7d6 OAF (-1), 2 clips of 12 Charges each (-0)	[12]
12	VIPER Fang: HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼) plus Ranged (+½) for HKA 1d6; OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼), Range Based On STR (-¼), Lockout (cannot use HKA until Charge is recovered; -½)	0
	Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling	
	Maneuver	OCV DCV Notes
4	Block	+2 +2 Block, Abort
4	Dodge	— +5 Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4	Punch	+0 +2 5d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0 +1 3d6 + v/5; Target Falls
9	VIPER BCU (Basic): Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (-½)	0
2	VIPER Helmet (Basic): Armor (2 PD/2 ED); OIF (-½), Only Protects The Head (-1)	
7	VIPER Helmet (Basic) Communications System: Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group); OIF (-½)	0

Perks

- 1 Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER)

Skills

- 6 +2 with VIPER Blasters
- 2 KS: The Local Underworld 11-
1 KS: The Superhuman World 8-
2 KS: VIPER 11-
2 PS: VIPER Agent 11-
3 Stealth 12-
3 Streetwise 12-
3 WF: Small Arms, Blades
9 Choose three of the following: Bugging, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Computer Programming, Concealment, Conversation, Deduction, Demolitions, Electronics, Fast Draw, Forgery (3 points' worth), Gambling



DR. PHILLIPPE MOREAU

5	STR	12	DEX
10	CON	8	BODY
20	INT	20	EGO
20	PRE	8	COM
3	PD	3	ED
2	SPD	4	REC
20	END	16	STUN

Abilities: Electronics 13, KS: The Superhuman World 13-, KS: VIPER 11-, Paramedics 15-, SS: Anatomy 13-, SS: Biology 13-, SS: Chemistry 13-, SS: Cybernetics 13-, SS: Medicine 14-, SS: Surgery 14-, numerous Contacts in VIPER and throughout the underworld

Disadvantages: Age (40+), Hunted: PRIMUS, Psychological Limitation: Amoral

Notes: The grandson of the noted Victorian physician whose experiments with vivisection scandalized England and eventually led to his death, Dr. Phillippe Moreau is a valued associate of VIPER. Following his capture by the New Knights of the Round Table after he created an army of human-animal hybrids to take over Europe, VIPER broke him out of prison and put him to work on its behalf. As such he had the opportunity to create, or assist in the creation of, several VIPER supervillains, including Oculon, Halfjack, and Ripper. No doubt VIPER will call upon his services again in the future....

VIPER PLOT SEEDS

VIPER invades and takes over a Millennium City skyscraper, daring heroes to try to get them out. What's going on inside — why did VIPER pick *this* building? What special weapons do they have to fend off superheroes?

VIPER funds the creation of a new national newspaper, *The American Times*, which will use slanted coverage, biased editorials, and subliminal advertising to generate support (and new recruits) for the Venomous Empire. Can the PCs figure out what's going on and put a stop to it?

A squad of VIPER agents goes rogue, "defecting" to the PCs to help with the war on crime. Is the offer legitimate?

(3 points' worth), Interrogation, Lockpicking, Paramedics, Persuasion, Security Systems, Shadowing, Systems Operation, Tactics, 3 points' worth of KSs/Languages/SSs/TFs/WFs, 1 3-point Combat Skill Level

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 137

Total Cost: 178

50+ Disadvantages

- 5 Distinctive Features: VIPER uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 10 Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Amoral And Greedy (Common, Strong)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 78 Experience Points or Disadvantages specific to the individual agent

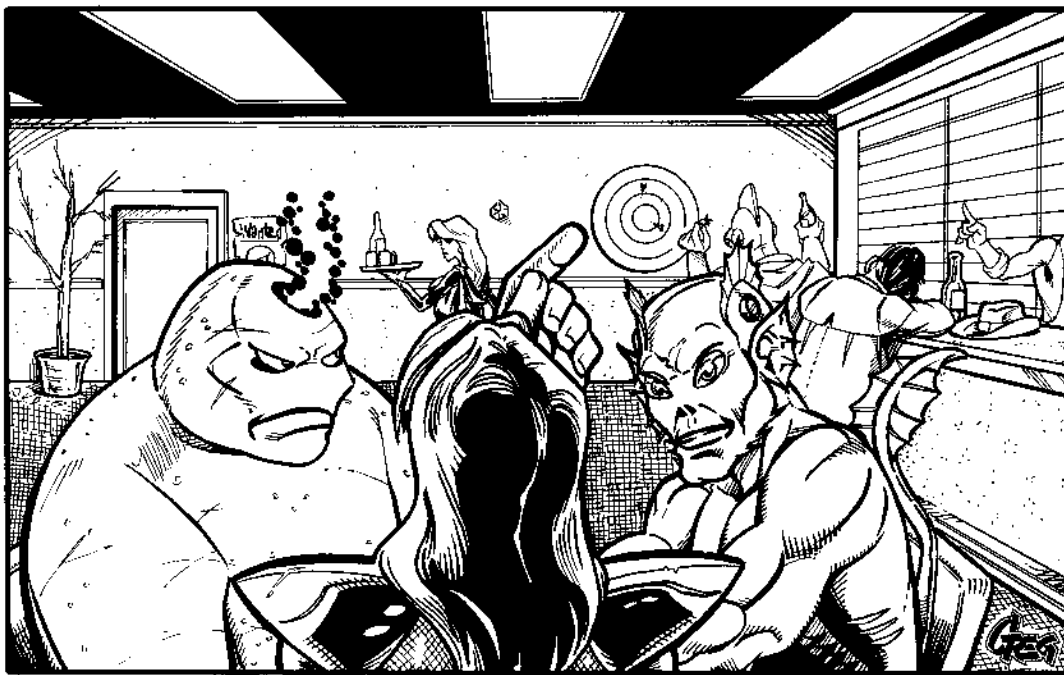
Total Disadvantage Points: 178

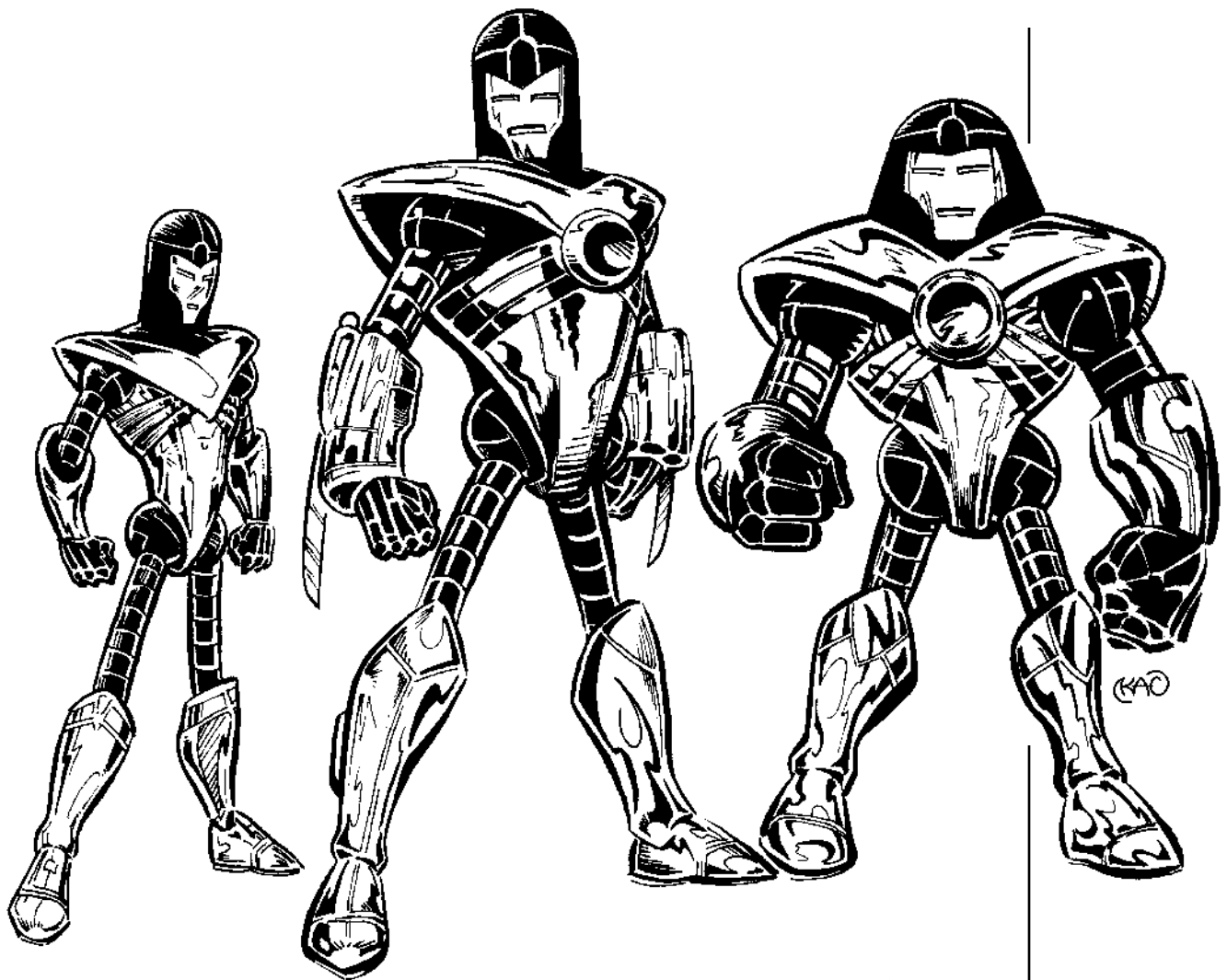
Description: The typical VIPER agent — the lowest-ranking and least powerful member of the organization — wears a standard Basic Combat Uniform ("BCU") in green and yellow. It consists of a tight-fitting green pants and tunic, with yellow

non-laced boots, belt, gauntlets, and piping. The VIPER symbol appears on the left breast and both upper arms, in various colors denoting rank. (Elite VIPER agents, and all VIPER officers, have the insignia symbol on the right breast; some officers have different coloration patterns for their tunics.) The BCU is made of a sophisticated armored cloth to protect the wearer, and includes varying pockets and pouches for carrying gear and supplies.

Attached to the VIPER agent's belt, and also colored yellow, are a holster for the agent's VB-S1 Blaster Pistol and a sheath for his VIPER Fang combat knife. The VB-S1, nicknamed "Shorty" because it looks like a cut-off, stumpy version of the VB-A1 Blaster Rifle, has a fairly heavy body tapering down to a narrower muzzle, and a roughly triangular-shaped guard extending from the bottom of the grip and attaching to the middle bottom of the barrel. The weapon's power cell fits into the grip.

In the field, a VIPER agent wears a distinctive helmet, green with a one-way gold-colored faceplate that hides the wearer's identity; the wearer's rank insignia is painted on each side of the helmet. In addition to protecting the head, the helmet contains communications gear, and other systems can be installed as well.





RETURN OF THE DESTROYER

Ten years ago he destroyed the city of Detroit, choosing to commit suicide rather than let the heroes of the world defeat and capture him. For a decade the world has considered itself safe from his evil, and free from the threat he posed to world secu-

rity. But Destroyer lives, and he intends for the world to tremble at the sound of his name once more. He has chosen the site of his greatest defeat — Detroit, now known as Millennium City — to launch the scheme that will reveal his continued existence to all of humanity.

Scenario Summary

Nature And Purpose Of The Scenario

This short scenario — which you can easily expand or incorporate into another storyline in your campaign — is intended to bring Dr. Destroyer back into the Champions Universe following a decade of his supposed “death.” As such it also provides a good way for you to introduce your players to the new Champions Universe, or convert your campaign from another setting.

Doctor Destroyer’s goal in this particular scenario is not to conquer the world in one fell swoop. Instead, he wants to do two things: first, cripple one of his opponents’ technological capabilities; second, announce his presence to the world, thereby hopefully causing a lot of panic and meaningless activity he can exploit for his own purposes. Keep this in mind as you run the game and determine how best to integrate it into your campaign.

Summary Of Events

Return Of The Destroyer begins when the PCs receive a report about an unusual armored car robbery. When they investigate, they discover a connection with the U.S. military, but are unable to find out any specifics. However, some clues gathered at the scene of the crime allow them to continue to track the perpetrators down.

The clues and their other investigative work lead the PCs to a manufacturing facility near Millennium City just as super-powered robots working for Destroyer attack the place! A titanic battle ensues. While the PCs aren’t able to prevent the robbery completely, they do succeed in defeating some of their foes, giving them more clues to work with.

With new information in hand, the PCs are able to uncover the location of one of Destroyer’s secret bases near Millennium City. After smashing their way in, they discover more of Destroyer’s robots conducting some sort of strange broadcast. After the dust clears, the PCs think they’ve won — only to have the viewscreens flicker to life to reveal the face of Dr. Destroyer!

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

Page 70 recounts the story of Destroyer’s final battle, in which he (and the heroes who opposed him) destroyed the city of Detroit, Michigan. Facing capture for the first time in his supervillainous career, Destroyer seemingly chose death over defeat. He activated an orbital weapon device he had previously launched, causing it to fire an immense energy beam of massive destructive capability. The beam killed him, dozens of heroes, and tens of thousands of people, and reduced most of the urban center of Detroit to rubble. So thorough was the devastation that all the authorities ever found of Destroyer were a few fragments of his helmet (which remain locked in an ultra-secure PRIMUS vault near Washington, D.C. to this day).

Or so Destroyer wanted his foes to believe. Recognizing that victory in this situation was impos-

sible, Destroyer activated his orbital weapon — which fired, together with its devastating energy beam, an undetectable teleportation beam that whisked him to safety (he left his helmet behind as a ruse). Safely ensconced in one of his many secret headquarters, Destroyer began to re-evaluate his methods and stratagems. He concluded he’d wasted too much time in meaningless battles with costumed superhumans — battles which, while often personally satisfying, did little to promote his agenda of world conquest and rulership. There were better ways to advance his goals.

For ten years, Destroyer remained in seclusion, conducting research and improving his already sophisticated technology. New bases were built, new robots and weapons developed, and his armor redesigned, streamlined, and made even more powerful than it was before. So carefully did he conceal his activities during this time that not even a whisper of a rumor that he still lived reached the ears of any authorities or superheroes.

But megalomania cannot forever be denied. Now, ten years later, mightier than ever, Destroyer can no longer resist the need to make a grand gesture to announce his survival — in itself a great triumph over his enemies — and resume his overt push toward world conquest. The day has come to humble his enemies, force all mankind to bow down before him, and begin the Time of the Destroyer.

ACT ONE: THE SCENIC ROUTE

Scene One: At The Scene Of The Crime

The day dawns bright and cheerful, like so many others in Millennium City. During the morning, the PCs receive word of an unusual armored car robbery that’s just taken place. If any of the PCs has Contacts in the military or government, the information should come from them in the form of an “under the table” tip — the Contact makes it clear that the information must not be traced back to him, that he’d get in trouble for talking to the heroes about it (even if they have federal government sanction). If the PCs have no appropriate Contacts, they can learn from a DNPC who witnessed the attack, or even from an “unconfirmed report” on the local news.

The crime took place on the interstate leading north from Millennium City. According to the information the PCs can gather, several superhumans swooped down on the armored car, killed the drivers with energy beams, stopped the car, ripped the back open with sheer strength, took the contents, and flew away.

The scene, which has been cordoned off by local authorities, seems to bear out this report. The armored car’s windshield has been blasted in, and both drivers are dead with horrific burns. The car skidded out of control for a long way down the highway, and eventually tipped over. The back

doors have been ripped apart as casually as a normal man would tear up a sheet of paper. The interior of the car is empty.

A close inspection of the car reveals the following, based on the Skill Rolls the characters make:

1. **PER Roll (made exactly or better):** The vehicle has a special interior compartment that's refrigerated — very odd for an armored car. Only the contents of the refrigerated compartment were stolen; several boxes of documents were left behind. The documents are all stamped "Classified" and seem to be Department of Defense data and reports relating to acquisition of special battlefield computers by the military.
2. **Criminology (made by -2 or better):** Embedded in part of the ripped doors, where the attacker's hands would have been, are some extremely tiny metal fragments. If analyzed, these fragments are of a previously unknown alloy, much stronger (but no heavier) than steel. It's an advanced metal — like something Mechanon might use, but unlike any alloys associated with that robotic menace previously.
3. **Criminology (made exactly or better):** The energy bolts that killed the drivers were apparently some form of plasma blast. A KS: Superhuman World or KS: Superpowers roll made by -2 or more turns up no supervillain with similar powers anywhere near Millennium City at this time.
4. **Criminology (made exactly or better):** There are no fingerprints anywhere in the armored car, except those of the drivers. The attackers must have worn gloves, but there are no cloth smudges or fiber fragments, either (and there normally would be in this situation).

The PCs don't have too much time to give the car a going-over — as soon as they gather those clues, the feds arrive. Agents of the FBI and Department of Defense, accompanied by numerous soldiers, show up, invoke federal authority, and make everyone leave. The local cops are glad to be rid of the matter. The PCs may feel differently, but impress upon them the force of federal authority and the *incredible* amount of trouble they're going to get themselves in if they don't do what they're told. The feds *will* use lethal force if the PCs refuse to leave.

Scene Two: Poking Around

With clues in hand, the PCs can now begin investigating this mysterious crime further. Some avenues of inquiry prove fruitless, while others yield results.

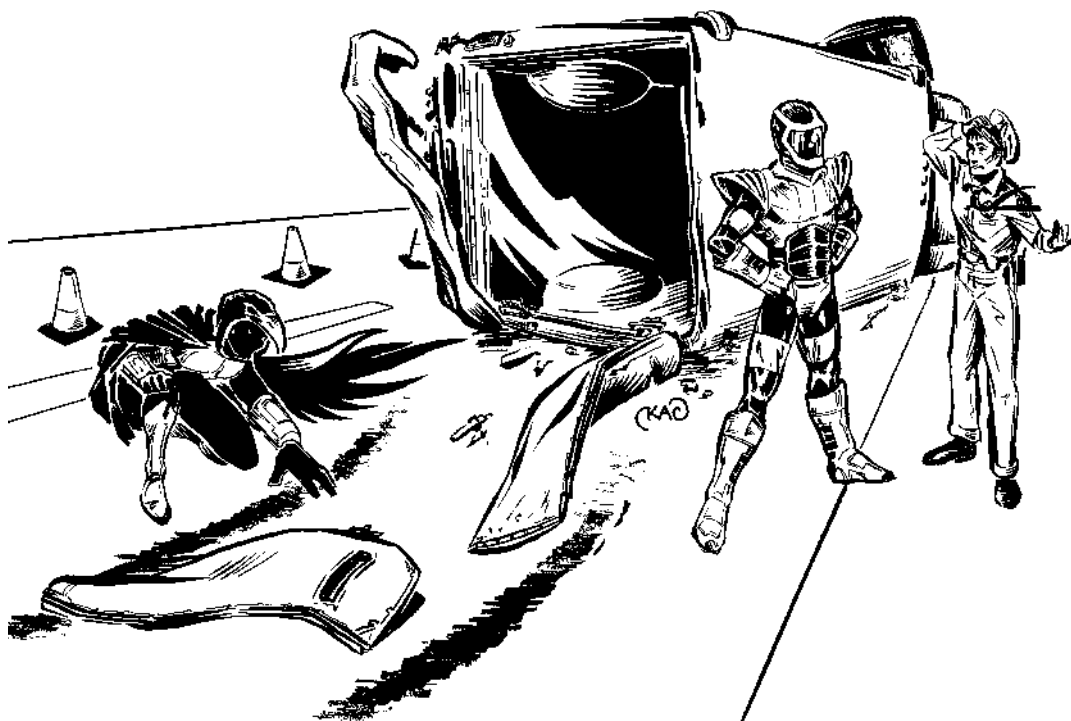
What was stolen from the armored car were several sample computer chips intended for use in America's new generation of spy satellites. The chips, which have to be kept cool to function properly, are manufactured by the Unitron Corporation at a plant north of Millennium City. The satellites, several of which were recently secretly launched, improve America's image intelligence capabilities tremendously, and their existence and specifications are highly classified. Doctor Destroyer, having learned of them, is concerned about the United States's capacity to spy on his doings, and so has determined to get rid of them before embarking on the rest of his plan.

Discussed below are several of the most likely courses of investigation. If the players think of something else, you can easily adapt a response based on your knowledge of what's really going on.

TROUBLESHOOTING: MISSED CLUES

If the PCs somehow miss *all* the clues, you may have difficulty getting them involved in the rest of the adventure. If necessary, have an NPC police detective help them out, or a friendly federal agent covertly slip them a copy of his report from the crime scene.

Alternately, you can go with the flow and make the characters struggle. Have Destroyer's Wardroids commit several other robberies to obtain more parts or data. They'll leave clues behind at each crime scene (or maybe the PCs can intercept them and have a battle). Eventually the PCs will find enough clues to let them continue the adventure.



The Government Connection

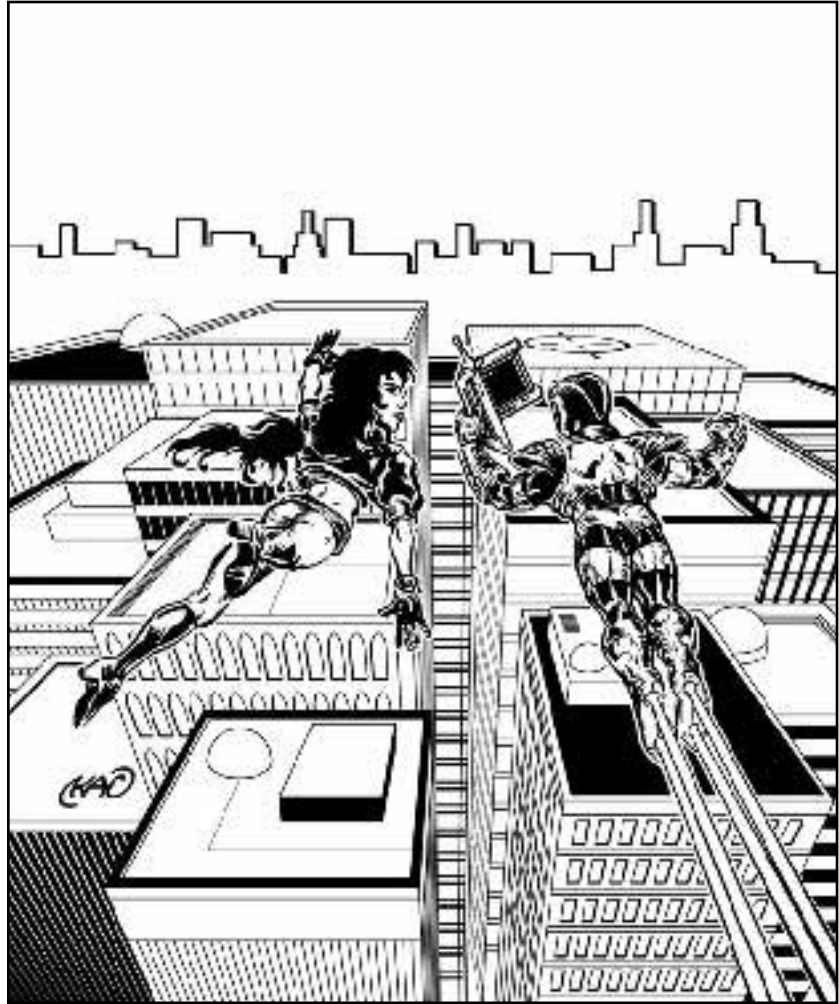
Player characters with government Contacts or jobs may want to use them to try to find out more about what's going on. However, unless at least one PC has a Fringe Benefit: Security Clearance (US government) of 7 or higher, or a Contact in the uppermost echelons of the Department of Defense, their efforts in this regard get them nowhere. No matter how much they make a Contact roll or Skill Roll by, no one they talk to has any information... or if they do have some, they're being unusually quiet. Feel free to give the players' most sinister suspicions free rein for a while.

The Mysterious Alloy; The Strange Energy

If the PCs recovered samples of the strange metal fragments embedded in the armored car's doors (and kept them secret so the government didn't seize them), analyzing them yields some interesting results. The metal appears to be an alloy of titanium, osmium, and at least one other metal unknown to conventional science. It does not resemble anything in any database the PCs can access. It's similar in some ways to super-alloys developed by Mechanon that are approximately as strong and effective... which should raise the question of why Mechanon would bother to develop another super-alloy, leading the PCs to suspect Mechanon might not be the villain behind this whole event.

If one of the PCs is technologically-inclined, he could (with an appropriate Skill Roll) build a sensor that can detect this unique metal. Unless the character can afford to devote Character Points to this device (such as from a "Gadget Pool" Variable Power Pool), it won't have much of a range — the PCs will have to get fairly close to the metal to detect it (though the exact distance depends on the mass of the metal object they're near to).

The energy bolt (or bolts) that killed the armored car drivers was also unusual, and the PCs can try to track it as well using a similar sort of sensor set to detect its "energy signature." (A PC



with an appropriate Detect or other Enhanced Sense might be able to do this naturally.) It works the same as the metal detector, but only registers the energy signature if the energy itself is in use.

If none of the PCs are capable of building one (or both) of these sensors, perhaps a friendly NPC can help them out — otherwise, they're stuck. Or, perhaps a "friend" in the government slips them the appropriate technology in secret, without offering any explanation.

Streetwise

Characters with the *Streetwise* Skill may try to dig up information about the armored car robbery. Unfortunately, this approach won't do them any good. Destroyer hasn't made any contact with the local underworld or hired anyone to help him, so no one has any information — no matter how much a character makes his roll by. However, the *absence* of information should itself tell the PCs this is no ordinary heist.

ACT TWO: BATTLE IS JOINED

Scene One: Fight In The Factory

Equipped with the sensors mentioned above, the PCs can start scanning the city and nearby locales for the metal and/or energy. Searching to the north of the city — the direction the armored car was going — is the best way to start, but you can have the PCs find what they're looking for whenever you want. As so often happens in adventure stories, they end up in just the right place at just the right time.

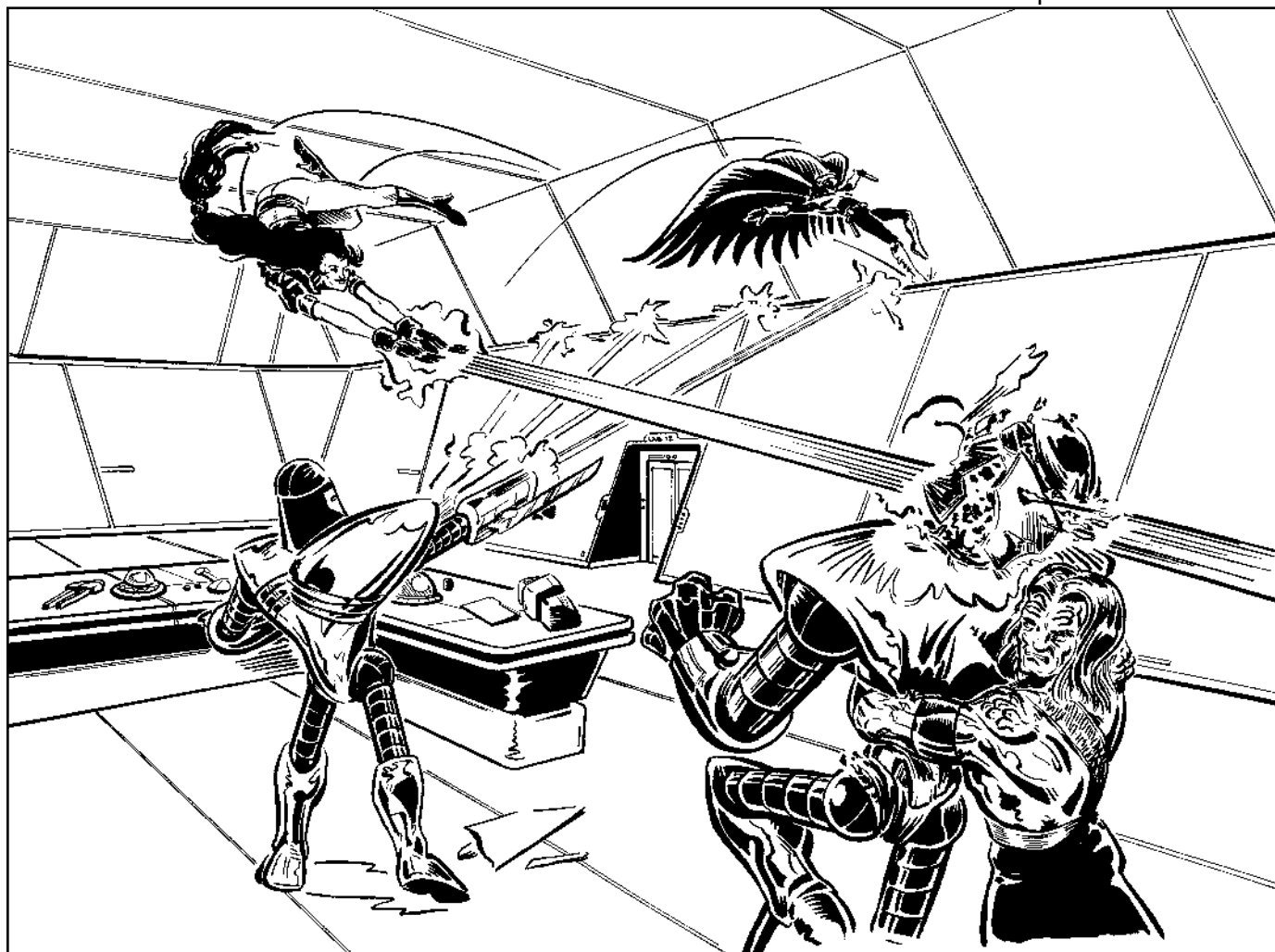
As the PCs search northward, they come close to a business called the Unitron Corporation. If you like, you can have them roll CK: Millennium City or any other appropriate Skill to remember that Unitron manufactures high-tech computer chips and related items of advanced technology. As they get a little closer to Unitron, their sensors spike — what they're looking for is in the Unitron facility! At about that moment, they hear a muffled explosion from within the building.

Once the PCs get inside (which shouldn't be too hard) they find that most of the building is devoted to manufacturing and storing computer

chips and similar technology. Someone has just smashed or blown his way into a specially secured wing of the facility. If the PCs pursue, they'll discover the entire wing is refrigerated to slightly below freezing (consider it Temperature Level -3). They soon come to a large manufacturing laboratory where they discover several foes.

For the lab, use the "warehouse" map from the *HERO System Resource Kit* (if you have it), and just replace boxes and other warehouse equipment with laboratory equipment. Otherwise just draw a map 22 hexes long by 17 hexes wide and fill it with appropriate tables, presses, and the like.

The foes are humanoid, but obviously robots — they have streamlined metallic bodies, almost featureless faces, and mechanical voices when they speak. There are three types of these *Wardroids*, as Destroyer calls them. The first, and slenderest, is the Type A; use Pulsar's character sheet for it. The second, and bulkiest, is the Type B; use Devastator's character sheet for it. The third, in between the other two in terms of bulkiness, is the Type C; use Tachyon's character sheet for it, but increase its STR to 60 and replace all its Teleportation-based powers with one MegaScaled Teleportation power. Give all three Wardroids Life Support (Total). (You can find character sheets for these three villains in *Champions*, pages 196-211.) The number of Wardroids, and number of each type, depends on what you need



TROUBLESHOOTING: NO ESCAPE

Because the Type C Wardroid doesn't Teleport away from the Unitron labs until he gets his first Action, it's possible the PCs will disable or destroy it first, thus preventing its escape. Now what will Destroyer do? He'll have to shift gears and try to steal the placement data for the new spy satellites. If he has precise coordinates, he can destroy them with orbital weapons or planet-based railguns. This requires a little work on your part, but you can continue the scenario with changes in focus; simply have the Wardroids start committing robberies to gather the data and parts Destroyer needs, gradually leaving clues until the PCs can track them down.



to offer a combat challenge to your PCs, but there should be at least one Type C.

When the PCs arrive, the Wardroids all have containers in their hands. One Type C will Teleport away as its Action. The others drop their containers and remain to battle the PCs. You should have enough Wardroids there to give the PCs a good fight, but not so many the PCs have little or no hope of victory. Any Wardroid Knocked Out to -10 STUN or below is out of the fight completely; its self-destruct circuits activate, causing it to flash-fry itself from the inside out (this has no effect on anyone else, but does make the outer shell of the Wardroid become uncomfortably hot). Wardroids also activate their self-destruct if inescapably restrained or captured. If the PCs are all Knocked Out or killed, the remaining Wardroids pick up their containers and leave the scene.

Scene Two: Tracking The Wardroids

After the battle ends, Unitron employees will come running to thank the PCs, offer medical attention if necessary, and so forth. A high-ranking company official, Victor Dumont, will, if he trusts the PCs, offer a brief explanation before the federal authorities arrive. He'll tell the PCs that the company is manufacturing computer chips vital to the new generation of American spy satellites, and that

what the teleporting robot stole were the company's primary supply of prototype chips. The others were stealing various plans and data pertaining to the chips. If Dumont doesn't trust the PCs — if they have shady reputations or conduct themselves inappropriately — he won't reveal any of this. (The PCs could still get the information by threatening him, using Telepathy, or the like, but that probably won't help their reputations any.)

Assuming the PCs aren't all killed, and manage to defeat at least one Wardroid, they can examine it for clues. Its internal workings, including all computer files in its "brain," are completely ruined by the self-destruct, but even a casual examination of the ruined parts shows how sophisticated the robot is.

With a Criminology roll at -3 or better, a PC can find on one of the captured Wardroids, or on the floor after the fight if necessary, a tiny piece of vegetable matter. Analysis of the clue shows that it is a needle from the Michigan long-needled blue pine, a rare species of coniferous tree that only grows in a small national park about 100 miles from Millennium City.

If the PCs fail to find the pine needle, they can use their energy sensor (if they built one) to follow any fleeing Type A or B Wardroids. The metal sensor won't work, since metal particles don't flake off in-flight — but the Wardroids' energy signatures last for a while.

ACT THREE: DESTROYER LIVES!

Scene One: A Walk In The Woods

With the coniferous clue in hand, the PCs can travel to the national park and begin using their sensors to comb the area to find where the robots are hiding. (Alternately, depending on how the battle went, they may have followed fleeing Wardroids.)

Destroyer has established a small outpost in what appears to be a cabin in the woods. It actually conceals a small underground complex. Finding a way in — either sneaking in through ventilation shafts, smashing through the floor of the cabin, or something similar — shouldn't slow the PCs down too long.

The underground complex consists mainly of one large room. Advanced computers and other electronic devices line the walls, with large monitors above every bank of equipment. You can adapt the "starship bridge" map from the *HERO System Resource Kit* to represent the room if you have it, or quickly sketch another 22" x 17" map.

The Wardroids — as many as you need to give the PCs another good fight — are here, furiously working with the machinery. At least one is a Type C (the one who escaped with the chips earlier). They stop working when the PCs enter, and immediately attack.

Scene Two: The Past Revived

How you handle the rest of the scenario depends on two facts.

First, do the PCs win the battle with the Wardroids, or are they defeated? Typically they'll win, and the scenario proceeds normally. But if they're defeated, they'll awaken in some hidden headquarters of Destroyer's, far from Michigan. Destroyer plans to use them for experiments. You'll have to continue the scenario from there on your own.

Second, you have to gauge how your players will react to a confrontation with Destroyer. If they won't get frustrated just talking to him via the monitor screens, there's no need to have him physically "present" at all. If they'd find that horribly anti-climactic, you can have a hidden door open to reveal "Destroyer" himself. It's actually just a Type B Wardroid with all its primary powers and abilities increased to about 150% of normal.

In either case, whether he appears on the monitor screens or "in the flesh," Destroyer opens with a soliloquy:

"Greetings, you who call yourselves 'heroes.' Consider yourselves privileged, for I have allowed you to be present at the beginning of a course of events that will soon come to be regarded as the most important in world history — the events

that lead to the reign of Dr. Destroyer over all mankind!

"The first step on the path to my inevitable dominion over Earth is a simple one. I cannot tolerate the eavesdropping of the United States; Destroyer must be free to work his will without the interference of any nation! So, using the chips retrieved by my agents earlier today, I have taken steps to remove its ability to "spy" upon me. Observe:"

Destroyer's picture is replaced by a scene in outer space, showing several of the new U.S. spy satellites orbiting Earth (or, if he is there "in person," he gestures imperiously at the monitors, and they come on). As the PCs watch, the satellites blow up, one by one. Destroyer continues:

"The Americans are now as blind as all the other petty kingdoms of the Earth. Like their brethren, they must tremble in ignorance, unaware of the next stroke of my master plan. And I assure you, neither they, nor you gaudily-costumed fools, will have to wait long."

With that the monitors fade to black, or the Destroyer-bot attacks the PCs, as appropriate.

After the speech ends, or the PCs defeat the Destroyer-bot, the complex begins to self-destruct — computer banks explode, the ground shakes, the ceiling starts to collapse, and so forth. The PCs should barely get out in time, and then have to spend a little while helping to prevent a forest fire that might kill off the rare Michigan long-needed blue pine.

TUNE IN NEXT WEEK...

So ends *Return Of The Destroyer...* but the evil Doctor's scheme is far from completed. What does he have in mind? What will happen next? That's up to you, the GM, based on how you want things to work in your campaign. In some games, Destroyer might commence his plan immediately, which means this scenario is just the first part of a long story arc. In other games, Destroyer's scheme might be the focus of several scenarios scattered amidst other game events. Only one thing is for sure: Destroyer intends to rule the world, and he will brook no interference with his plans.

After you run this adventure, you should work its consequences into the ongoing tapestry of the campaign. Deprived of much of its imaging intelligence capability, the United States must scramble to launch several new satellites. It may call on the PCs for help getting them into space as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, America's enemies — rogue nations such as Awad, terrorists, and the like — will do their best to take advantage of her temporary "blindness."

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