EVIL GENIUS

Issue 2: Crime & Punishment

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Introduction

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Evil Genius #2: Crime & Punishment is a collection of four scenarios of robbery, extortion, kidnapping, and general mayhem, plus the price you pay for doing all of the above.

Crime does not pay, but there's always someone who didn't get the memo:

Deep Runs the Dreadnaut–The armored Dreadnaut plants mines in the city's harbor, holding the seas hostage until his demands are met.

Great Armored Car Robbery–Armor-plated battle-wagons stage daring daylight bank robberies. They're not robberies of armored cars, they're robberies using armored cars!

Doing Time–After thirty years trapped in a moment of frozen time, an innocent man blames the heroes for his unfair imprisonment. Now it's their turn.

Fame is Fleeting–In a bid for fame and fortune, Speed Demon sets out to rob more banks in a single day than any criminal before.

Each adventure outlines the main action, but you can expand or compress the pacing as you see fit. A single scenario could be drawn out across multiple game sessions or finished all in one sitting. They are also peppered with new Action Shticks (Sinking Ships, Hit by a Car, etc.) that you can lift and use in your other games, and each scenario has Variants to give you alternate ways to run them.

If you have other Lame Mage adventures (like Zodiac Ring, the Dr Null series, or Evil Genius #1) there are places where you can use Action Shticks from those releases, but they are not necessary for play.

Later issues of Evil Genius will feature other collections all designed to give you, the GM, tools to put the game on the table. Because the real evil genius isn't the criminal mastermind, it's the person behind the screen. Just don't do the crime if you can't do the time.

Running Crime Games

Crimes are a supervillain staple. Bank robbery, arson, kidnapping, and the ever-popular holding the city for ransom–it's what villains do.

But in games there are really only two kinds of crimes: those where the specific crime matters (plot), and those where the crime is just a setting for the action (premise).

A classic bank robbery scenario is just an excuse to let the heroes go after the villains. You could easily substitute a jewelry store robbery, a scheme to steal mint plates, a kidnapping, etc. Either way, the bad guys are trying to do something and that brings the heroes running: trouble ensues. The crime is a premise for the action.

On the other hand, the specifics of the crime are important if they affect future events. It matters that the villains are trying to steal a prototype laser if they are going to use it to knock out a satellite in the next scene. Heroes still rush to the scene of the crime and pound the villains, but whether the heroes know it or not, the crime is a key point of the plot, not just an excuse for the action.

- Robbing a bank for money? Premise for action. Robbing a bank because there is something hidden in a safe deposit box you want? Plot.

- Kidnapping the mayor and holding him for ransom? Premise for action. Kidnapping the mayor because you want to replace him with a synthoid replicant? Plot.

- Setting fire to the tenements so you can watch this city burn, burn! Premise for action. Setting fire to the tenements to create a fiery gateway for your demonic overlord? Plot.

Here's a simple test: in a later scene, will there be a moment when the heroes should look back and say, "a ha! That's why they did that crime! It all makes sense now"? If yes, it's plot. If not, it's a premise for action.

Just committing a crime to get money is not specific enough to be plot. There are lots of different crimes that result in profit but are basically interchangeable, even if the heroes later realize the villains wanted all that cash to put a down payment on a really big group house.

A crime that's a premise for the action is not better or worse than one that is part of the plot. They're just different building blocks of a scenario, but it is important to understand which you are using when you are running a game.

Dead End Detective Work

A common breakdown in games is when the players are convinced the details of a particular event are important and get sidetracked trying to understand how it fits into the plot. Why did the Metalmorph tear apart this particular armored car? What was he after? The players have already dismissed or never considered the idea that he was just looking for cash because they think the crime means something. They are mistaking an action premise for part of the plot.

This happens most often when the players have hit a dead end and don't know what to do next. Planning out your Revelations helps you avoid these kind of "what now?" gaps. Players are less likely to hunt for a non-existent plot if they can find the real one.

If for some reason your players are already entrenched in dead end detective work, you can ease them out of it by introducing simple roleplaying interruptions, like a significant other waiting for a dinner date ("Oh, no, I completely forgot Anne Marie!") or the grizzled police chief coming to check on their progress.

When players become fixated on deciphering the (perhaps non-existent) plot, they often stop roleplaying entirely. They have taken a step back and are analyzing the game instead of experiencing it. Gently putting them back in a roleplaying mode by putting them into a concrete situation gets them back to playing the game in-character. Talking to NPCs also forces them to explain their theories in a game context. Players talking to each other can theorize that "this bank robbery means something!" all day without any basis, but once a hero is talking to the police chief it may be hard to explain why he thinks that. Wild speculation gets grounded in reality (well, the reality of the fictitious game world anyway).

If roleplaying doesn't work, the brute force approach is the wandering monster of the superhero world: you are in the middle of hunting down more meaningless clues when you hear the wailing sirens. The villains have struck again! Now you have something concrete to do. Not subtle, but sometimes it's your best option.

Enter the Heroes–First Hand Involvement

The standard superhero model is trouble starts, and then the heroes show up and stop it. But how do the heroes find out that something is going on?

One approach is just to have the authorities call the heroes in–the red phone rings, the Danger Signal lights up the sky, the Shades of Oggattu sense a disturbance from beyond the etheric veil, etc. and then the heroes come running. This requires the least work on the part of the GM, but it is also the least interesting option. There is a tendency for heroes who are "called in" to be a little detached from the situation, to stop and take a look and try to gather information before getting involved.

The alternative is to have the hero spot the trouble and get involved first hand. It's more dramatic, and on a subtle level it makes the hero identify with the innocent bystanders–just like the bystanders, the hero gets to see the surprising moment when the ground shakes and the giant drilling machines erupt from the earth. Compare that to showing up fifteen minutes later *after* the villain's dramatic entrance.

First hand involvement also lets you throw in classic superhero secret identity complications. Lunch with your fiance was already going poorly, and now you have to

figure out how to sneak off, change into costume, and stop that mob of animals that escaped from the zoo. Looking out the window in the middle of a relationship discussion and seeing a hippo charging down the street is *much* more interesting then just getting a phone call to come save downtown.

If the heroes are soloists, you can have each of them nearby in but in different situations, all conveniently in the right place at the right time to join forces. If they are a team, you only need one or two heroes involved first hand, and then they can call in the reinforcements.

GM Craft

Game Breakers

Adventures are built around the assumption that particular situations will be challenging to the heroes, but for each situation there are powers that can eliminate or bypass the challenge and let the heroes win too easily. If the challenge is a raging fire, a character with heat immunity can walk right through it. If the challenge is figuring out that the villainous Gemini is really Senator Ikemann, a mind reader can solve the mystery round one. A particular power may just make it easy for one hero or it might eliminate the challenge for the whole group, such as using X-ray vision to lead all the heroes out of a labyrinth.

Superheroes can have a variety of fantastic powers, and by definition they can do all sorts of things that would be impossible for normal people. You don't want to just nullify or take away their powers all the time. After all they are *supposed* to be superhuman–that's the whole point of the game.

There is also the opposite situation, where there is some ability the heroes must have in order for the scenario to work. If the adventure requires the heroes to save a crippled passenger jet, it helps if some of the heroes can fly.

When preparing to play any published adventure, double-check the challenges of the scenario and make sure they work for your heroes. After all, the publisher doesn't know what superheroes are in your group, you do. Some of these adventures note specific "Game Breakers" that can prevent the scenario from working, along with ideas of how to deal with them.

Revelations

Key plot revelations are outlined in each adventure to make it easier for you to emphasize them during play. They are listed in the order they will probably occur.

Each revelation is a critical point in the game, changing how players see the situation. Outlining the revelations helps you keep track of what the players need to find out to understand what is going on.

Action Shticks

Action Shticks are classic challenges or situations that go with a particular environment. They are dramatic moments or events that work regardless of the specific plot. Another way to look at an Action Shtick is as a mini-encounter within the main encounter, a smaller challenge for the heroes to overcome before they tackle the main challenge.

A good Action Shtick reinforces the genre and lets the heroes really act like heroes from a comic book. Action Shticks are interactive situations, not just combat maneuvers, and should give the heroes a chance to make choices.

All Action Shticks are optional and can be inserted in the adventure as you see fit. Because Action Shticks are intentionally generic, you can easily transplant them to other adventures, or even use them time and again–even if the heroes don't have to rescue an airplane in distress in one game, you can use that same Action Shtick to spice up some other adventure.

Bad News Comes In Bunches

Who says these adventures have to happen one at a time? What if the heroes are in the middle of trying to break the Dreadnaut's stranglehold on the harbor when Speed Demon starts robbing every bank in town?

Players may settle into a comfortable yet predictable "identify threat, track down threat, bludgeon threat, celebrate" pattern. Mix things up by throwing in more than one plot at a time, then make them scramble to be two places at once. A second hazard can also draw them away at the worst possible time, letting an adversary they have on the ropes make an escape. Sure Dreadnaut is battered and on the run, but how can you take the time to chase him down when armored cars are smashing through police barricades in the heart of downtown?

Avoid running simultaneous adventures that are too similar in concept or too different in tone. Contrast is good, extreme contrast is not. Running the **Great Armored Car Robbery** right in the middle of Speed Demon's crime spree might be too much of the same thing (unless you play it up by having both sides compete for the spoils). On the other hand, mixing the arcane mystery of **Luck Be A Lady** (from **Evil Genius #1: World Domination**) with the sinking ships of **Deep Runs the Dreadnaught** is probably too much contrast in tone.

Deep Runs the Dreadnaut

The armored Dreadnaut plants mines in the city's harbor, holding the seas hostage until his demands are met.

Karl Grotton spent five years in prison for technical espionage, smuggling research secrets out of a lab where he worked and selling them to the highest bidder.

Prison did not reform him. After his release he wormed his way in to become the personal lab assistant of the eccentric **Dr. Reginald Arthur**, an expert in oceanography and innovator of deep sea exploration technology, specifically to steal some secrets from under the old scientist's nose, un-patented prototypes he could turn around and sell for a tidy profit. In other words, exactly the kind of thing that landed him in jail the last time.

But while prison had not reformed Grotton, it had changed him. It had deepened the already sharp resentment he felt towards the world. Stealing a technological secret here or there would make him some money, but it would not make up for the bitterness he felt, the grudge he harbored against the world that had locked him up. Industrial espionage was never going to get him what he really wanted, and that was power: power to terrify those that had thought so little of him, power to take his proper place in the world.

So Grotton stewed and pondered and resentfully did the scientist's grunt work. Then came Dr. Arthur's newest brain child, the **Nautilus** deep sea diving suit. With it, man could survive at unimaginable depths, exploring the darkest reaches of the sea. Arthur envisioned crews of workers in Nautilus suits building science stations and whole habitats on the ocean's floor. It would open the door to undersea research, and it would open man's eyes to the vast unexplored potential of the world's oceans.

It opened Grotton's eyes too, but in quite a different way. It was exactly what he had been waiting for, a golden opportunity laid at his feet. He would take the old fool's work and adapt it to his own purposes. The suit was already heavily armored to withstand the incredible pressures of the deep ocean, and it did not take a genius to retrofit it with customized weapons systems.

More maneuverable and harder to detect than any submarine, the fully-armed suit would give him supremacy in the seas. Inside his new **Dreadnaut** armor he would be unstoppable.

Grotton is a grim, dour, tightly wound figure. Outside his armor he is tight-lipped, glowering with suppressed foul temper, eyes filled with undisguised hate. As a lab assistant, he goes about his duties with sullen reticence. Safely inside the armor he becomes more talkative, ominous ultimatums booming from his suit's speakers.

Grotton is still using Dr. Arthur's sea-side lab as his base of operations. He keeps the old professor locked up, a prisoner in his own home, coercing technical help out of him whenever he gets stumped, which is often: Grotton is a much better thief than engineer.

Dreadnaut Armor

The rechristened Dreadnaut suit is nearly twice the height of a man to accommodate the heavy armor needed to protect against deep sea pressures and hold the instrumentation and life support systems. The operator's arms and legs only extend partway into the mechanized limbs of the suit. The name is a play on dread naut (feared sailor) and dreadnaught (fearless war ship).

Grotton used space intended for construction or data gathering tools to build in weapon systems. Micro-torpedoes packed with high explosives can be launched from the forearms. They are designed for underwater use (of course), but the launch system can lob them for short distances through the air. The suit can also drop small mines (which are different from the large mines Grotton has planted in the harbor).

Revelations

1) Dreadnaut has mined the harbor.

2) Dreadnaut can selectively remote detonate mines.

3) Dr. Arthur created the Nautilus suit for exploration, and his assistant Grotton stole it for criminal purposes.

4) (optional) Nautilus suit has a fatal flaw.

Action

Part 1–Going Down With the Ship

As a ruthless demonstration of his power, the Dreadnaut torpedoes a ship bound for the city's harbor. The cargo ship *Finlander*, still several miles out from port, is rocked by a massive explosion on her lower hull. The crippled vessel takes on water and begins to sink under the waves as the crew frantically issues distress calls and tries to put out the fire.

The captain is prepared to abandon ship, but several deck hands are trapped in a lower cargo compartment, cut off by the fire-collapsed sections of the hull. Rather than leave their comrades, several sailors stay aboard in a futile rescue attempt.

Heroes have to intervene and save the crew (and possibly the whole ship) before it sinks beneath the waves. Use the **Sinking Ships** and **Man Overboard** Action Shticks.

Enter the Heroes

Heroes can respond to the crisis of the sinking ship, but for greater involvement you could find ways for one of the heroes to be onboard as a passenger in secret identity, or on a nearby vessel that witnesses the crisis (see **Enter the Heroes–First Hand Involvement**).

Part 2–Seas Held Hostage

As harbor authorities are investigating the incident, the Dreadnaut issues his ultimatum. A booming voice seems to echo from the hulls of every ship in the harbor and the sea itself, the product of an experimental hydrophone address system.

"THIS IS THE DREADNAUT. ALL THE SEAS ARE MY DOMAIN. I WILL SINK ANY SHIP THAT SAILS UNLESS MY RANSOM DEMANDS ARE MET."

Unfair Advantage, or "But, I can't swim!" (GM Craft)

Aquatic heroes capable of operating underwater have a distinct advantage against the Dreadnaut, but that does not mean other heroes cannot try to adapt to the situation (it's not a Game Breaker). Heroes can easily acquire scuba gear or just hold their breath and free dive for short jaunts underwater. Non-aquatic heroes may be sitting ducks underwater, but stepping up to a challenge is part of being a hero.

It is important to emphasize that this unfair advantage is not just a hurdle put there by the GM, it is part of the Dreadnaut's plan: he knows that beneath the waves he has the edge. If the heroes are hesitant to dive in and face the Dreadnaut on his "home turf" they are doing exactly what he wants.

Even if the heroes are trounced underwater (and they probably will be), it shows them that they must drive the Dreadnaut to the surface to beat him–they've lost but learned something in the process.

(Talk into a glass or your cupped hands to get the echoing armored suit voice.)

He goes on to demand ten million dollars, wired to a foreign account, and sends a radio message on the police band with account details, etc.

Almost immediately a tug looking for a fouled cable reports a strange object floating beneath the surface: it's a proximity mine, one of dozens that the Dreadnaut has planted along the major waterways of the port.

The harbor authority orders all shipping traffic halted. Coast Guard cutters take up stations outside the harbor, but they lack the specialized mine sweeping vessels to clear the explosive charges, so they can do little more than wait and watch until Navy vessels arrive.

The Mayor's office holds emergency meetings to analyze the threat, and cordons are set up on the waterfront to keep spectators and gawkers from crowding the scene.

Brush with the Dreadnaut

Heroes can wait until the Navy mine sweepers arrive, or they can take matters into their own hands. Even if they don't have a plan to dispose of the mines, heroes are likely to at least "take a look around" and see if they can find anything suspicious in the harbor.

The Dreadnaut patrols the waters, gloating over the now paralyzed harbor. Heroes on the surface may spot a dark shape moving deep beneath the water but not be able to make out more details. Heroes who venture underwater get a first good look at the Dreadnaut.

If the heroes start to disable the mines themselves, they certainly draw the Dreadnaut's attention. Controls in his power armor enable the Dreadnaut to selectively remote detonate any of the mines, which may come as a rude surprise to heroes.

> Proximity Mines–Blast 11 explosion, progression 1 (loses 1 rank every 25 feet)
>
> Disable Device or Craft (mechanical) DC 21 to disarm a mine. A character without Environmental Adaptation (underwater) or 5 or more ranks of Swim takes a -2 on the check. Failure by 5 or more detonates the mine.

Grotton is confident of his superiority underwater, coldly mocking the heroes for being so foolish as to face him in his element. If the fight goes badly for him, he launches a torpedo at a random ship before retreating into the depths, forcing the heroes to choose whether to capture him or to save lives. He may also lure heroes near a mine and then remotely detonate it.

> Use the **Intercept the Missile** Action Shtick from **Evil Genius #1: World Domination**. The torpedo is a Small missile with Swimming 5, Defense 21 as a moving target. It explodes if destroyed, which may injure heroes or nearby vessels.

Mine Sweeper

When the Navy mine sweeper starts to dismantle his carefully laid charges, the Dreadnaut attacks to stop it. The submerged Dreadnaut fires torpedoes at the mine sweeper, partially crippling the vessel and forcing it to limp away.

The mine sweeper has sonar and magnetic sensors capable of detecting the Dreadnaut, but it does not have the weapons to hold him off. Normally it would be escorted by other warships, but against a small target in the close confines of the civilian harbor, the Navy simply does not have the tools to fight back.

Man Overboard (Action Shtick)

An accident on a ship at sea, a crash on a bridge, or an explosion on an oil rig–any of these situations can wind up with people in the water who need to be rescued.

A normal person can usually stay afloat for a while, but injured or unconscious people are in immediate danger. Someone tangled up in debris or trapped in a car that went off a bridge may sink like a stone unless heroes intervene quickly.

Rescuing people in calm seas is fairly easy. For more excitement throw in some stormy weather or freezing water, or add flaming fuel or oil spills floating on the surface.

> Rough seas increases Swim DCs as described in M&M Chapter 3. Freezing water is described in M&M Chapter 8.
>
> Flaming oil pools inflict Damage 2 to those nearby (radiant heat) and Damage 5 to those who enter them.

Sinking Ships (Action Shtick)

A ship hits an iceberg, another vessel, or takes an torpedo to its hull. Either way, it's going down with all hands on board unless the heroes do something.

A sinking ship can be run as an **Evacuation Montage** Action Shtick (from **Evil Genius #1: World Domination**)– some heroes search the vessel for trapped passengers, others carry people to shore or help them get to lifeboats, etc.

Heroes can also try to save the ship instead of evacuating it. Depending on the damage, the easiest solution may be to patch the hole in the hull. The ship may still be in danger because of the water it has already taken on, but patching the hull will certainly slow down the threat.

> DC 25 Strength or Power Check to bend iron closed, weld it shut with heat beams, etc. Include Super-Strength for Strength checks.
>
> Other powers like Create Object or Transform can be used to patch a hole automatically if they can affect the necessary area.

Powerful heroes may be able to raise the ship to the surface, or even lift it in the air and carry it to safety. Holding a ship on the surface or moving it underwater is easier than lifting it in the air because the water displaces some of the weight.

> Strength required to lift a ship in the air (heavy load):
>
> 110 Str–Battleship
> 105 Str–Ocean liner
> 100 Str–Cargo ship
> 90 Str–Submarine
> 85 Str–Destroyer
> 70 Str–Fishing trawler
>
> If the ship is still mostly on the surface (still floating), it takes 20 Strength less to prevent it from sinking farther. If the ship is completely or mostly submerged, it takes 10 Strength less to move it underwater or carry it to the surface.

Gasping for Air (Action Shtick)

Whether you are wrestling a crocodile or getting zapped by an Atlantean power-glaive, fighting underwater is a little more challenging than just holding your breath. Can you hold on just a little longer and keep from blacking out?

A hero who gets hit can have the wind knocked out of them in a rush of bubbles. How can you catch your breath and get back in the fight when there is no air to breath?

> A person holding their breath who is Stunned by a damaging attack must save versus Fatigue 8 (Fort DC 18) on the following round.

Strenuous activity burns up your held air very quickly.

> Normal suffocation rules in M&M Chapter 8 still apply, but count any round of combat, lifting heavy weights, etc. as two rounds instead of one.
>
> Performing Extra Effort while holding your breath requires a save versus Fatigue 8 on the following round. This is in addition to the normal fatigue from Extra Effort.

The heroes may get caught up trying to find a way to tackle the Dreadnaut on their own, without thinking to look for outside assistance.

Letting the players come up with clever schemes to beat the Dreadnaut is good, but if the players start to spin their wheels or get frustrated you need to move things along and introduce Dr. Arthur as a possible resource.

Part 3—Man Behind the Dreadnaut

With the situation in the harbor stalemated, the authorities start looking at the possibility of having to pay the ransom. It's a bitter pill to swallow.

If the heroes talk to Dr. Arthur he can give them more information about the Dreadnaut, but how do they know to look for him?

• Something about that Dreadnaut armor looks strangely familiar. One of the heroes with a scientific or journalistic background remembers a press conference with Dr. Arthur a few months ago where he showed an earlier prototype of the Nautilus armor. Could he be involved somehow?

• Dr. Arthur is a leading authority on submersible technology, so his name could come up as a useful resource even if there is no suspicion that he is connected with the Dreadnaut. Maybe he can help find a weakness?

He isn't answering his phone, and he lives on a remote stretch of coastline. The city authorities could send someone to go speak with him (or bring him in for questioning), but time is of the essence and the heroes can probably get there faster.

Sea-side Lab

Dr. Arthur's home is on the coast, miles out of town. The residence is connected to a complete oceanographic lab, a small but very advanced facility, allowing Dr. Arthur to putter around and work on his latest inventions in complete privacy. The lab is in a sheltered cove, and there are external docks and a small boat. Pools in the main chamber of the lab connect directly to the sea providing direct underwater access regardless of weather conditions outside.

Grotton is using Dr. Arthur's facility as a base of operations. He keeps the old doctor locked up in the lab, and returns regularly to make adjustments, gather additional equipment, gloat over his old boss, or just to get out of the suit for a while.

Ka-boom!

Grotton suspected that someone might connect the Dreadnaut back to Dr. Arthur, so he rigged the lab with high explosives to cover his tracks. Anyone breaking into the locked lab or passing the electric eyes that watch the underwater pools without sending the proper coded radio signal will trigger the countdown.

Heroes may just have a moment or two to spot a frazzled Dr. Arthur puttering around his lab before they see a tell-tale red light wink on in the rafters—it's a digital timer counting down, and there are only a few seconds before the time is up.

Dr. Arthur does not know about the bomb, and he has no way to get to safety before it goes off. It's up to the heroes to save him.

Blast 12 explosion

The same trap also sends a radio signal to the Dreadnaut, warning him that his lair has been compromised. He stays away rather than risk walking into an ambush.

The heroes should have the "Oh hell, it's a bomb" moment and get a chance to flee for their lives, grab the bomb and throw it into space, block the blast with their invulnerable force field, etc. before it goes off. It may still wreck most of the lab, but they should get a chance to take action and certainly to save Dr. Arthur.

If the players don't recognize it as an immediate threat, you can just say "it looks like a bomb, and it looks like it's about to go off."

Absent-Minded Professor

"Please, call me Reg. All my friends call me Reg. At least I think they do. You never know what they call you when you aren't around, eh? Now who were you again?"

Dr. Reginald "Reg" Arthur is a classic absent-minded professor, a distracted genius with equal parts jovial and cantankerous. He'll boyishly invite visitors in to show off his latest invention and then grumble about how he can't get anything done with all these people tromping around his lab.

"This is science you know. Some people go to school for this."

Getting his lab blown up just makes him even more irate with his errant lab assistant.

"This is coming out of his pay!"

Dr. Arthur can tell the heroes about Grotton stealing the Nautilus prototype and retrofitting it for combat, but he

tends to mix up important and unimportant issues–he takes as much offense for Grotton failing to clean the test tubes last week as for stealing his invention and holding him prisoner in his own lab.

"Worst assistant I've ever had! Simply impossible nowadays to find a punctual assistant who can still tell a diode from dimethyl triphosphate. Which reminds me, I need to pick up some dimethyl triphosphate. Or was it diodes..?"

Fatal Flaw

Dr. Arthur goes on about how perfect his Nautilus suit was, a really elegant design that would revolutionize deep sea exploration, and now that hack Grotton has gone and mucked it all up with his modifications.

"Why, in just a few more weeks I would have worked out the problem with the connector valves and it would have been ready for a go at the Cayman Trench. Could have set a record..."

"What's that? What problem? Oh nothing really, just a glitch in the synthetic rubber used in the valves. Supposed to stay flexible even under extreme pressure, but under certain conditions the stuff would start to break down, don't you know. No laughing matter, taking on water that far down, let me tell you! Can't really bail it out like a rowboat, now can you?"

What erodes the valves? Take your pick. It could be unusually high heat (higher than any normal ocean temperatures), a static electric charge, or exposure to a chemical compound in the water.

"Ah yes, that's what I wanted the dimethyl triphosphate for!"

Make sure it's not something the heroes would have already exposed the Dreadnaut to. For example, do not make the fatal flaw an electrical charge if your heroes normally use electrical attacks. Not much point discovering a fatal flaw if you have unwittingly been exploiting it already.

Grotton of course knows nothing of the flaw. He was too busy plotting his takeover to catch this technical detail when he was Dr. Arthur's assistant.

> This weakness is not on Dreadnaut's character sheet because it is a plot device for this scenario only. It is assumed that when Dreadnaut returns in later adventures, Grotton will have eliminated this design flaw.

Finale

Armed with the technical information from Dr. Arthur, the heroes can return to the harbor and craft a plan to force the Dreadnaught to the surface.

Exploiting the fatal flaw should require the heroes to get close to the Dreadnaut–instead of flooding the entire bay with chemicals, they have to find the Dreadnaut and hit him with the chemical capsule.

With Dr. Arthur's help (or their own scientific knowledge) and information gleaned from the lab, the heroes could also create a jammer to turn off the mines, or at least prevent Grotton from triggering them remotely.

Brawl on the Waterfront

With his suit rapidly losing pressure, the Dreadnaut is forced to surface or drown, but Grotton is not about to go down without a fight. Hauling his massive metal form up onto the docks, he unleashes a barrage of high explosive torpedoes at the police cordon and the crowds of curious spectators.

Despite the indignity of being driven to the surface, Grotton is confident his armor and weaponry is a match for anything the heroes or police can throw at him. If he has to lumber through the city, leveling it block by block, so be it.

Once he starts to really take a beating, he may remote detonate *all* the mines in a moment of spite.

> If the heroes built a jammer to block remote control of the mines, it's their chance to gloat, as the baffled Grotton curses and weeps.
>
> If they didn't, either have the entire harbor blow sky-high (pretty!), or give them one last chance to take him out before his can trigger the device.

Aftermath

Depending on how the action unfolded, the harbor may be relatively unharmed or a total mess. Sunken ships may block critical waterways for weeks unless heroes use their powers to accelerate the clean-up process.

Grotton is hauled off to jail. Taciturn without his loudspeakers, he only glowers hatefully as he is led away. Dr. Arthur tells him not to bother asking for his old job back when he gets out of jail, or a reference for that matter, then goes back to fretting over the damage done to his invention.

"Reg" could return as a recurring character, a source of expert advice or the wellspring of scientific or ocean-themed plots. Who better to test your latest experimental

submarine for leaks than a superhero who can survive the crushing pressure (well, probably survive)? Who better than a superhero to go find your latest experimental submarine after it goes off course and gets lost?

Variants

"I speak for the seas!"–Man's careless polluting of the oceans has driven the conscientious Grotton to desperate measures. His goal is to stop man's intrusion on the seas entirely. If they don't stop, he'll keep destroying ships until they give up.

Mecha Dreadnaut or **I, Rowboat**–Knowing the difficulties of sustaining human life at extreme depths and pressures, Dr. Arthur designed the Dreadnaut as a durable robot worker to explore the ocean floors for him. A flaw in its code caused it to run amuck, using its excavation charges to destroy ships instead of uncovering mineral samples. Is it merely a rampaging machine or has it really gained some measure of sentience, a new life form that deserves a chance to survive?

Mecha Dreadnaut is a Construct so remove Con, Int and Cha. For an "awakened" robot add Int and Cha scores.

Dreadnaut   villain / PL 11

STR	DEX	CON
36/+13	10/--	24/+7

INT	WIS	CHA
16/+3	12/+1	8/-1

ATTACK	+9 strike 13 +9 torpedo 13 (area 8)

DEF	16 (13 flat)
TOUGH	+16 (9 impervious)

FORT	REF	WILL
+11	+3	+10

INIT	GRAP	SIZE
+0	+27	Large

POWERS

Dreadnaut Armor (Device 28, hard to lose)
  torpedo (Blast 13, homing 2, area burst 8, drawback: out of water range increments are 25 ft, 1/5 total range and no homing)
  micro-mines (Blast 10 area cloud, triggered, range touch)
  ink cloud (Obscure 5 all visual, 250 ft radius, range touch, independent, limited: underwater only)
  Enhanced Ability Constitution 8
  Enhanced Ability Strength 12
  Growth 6 permanent
  Immunity 5 (suffocation, cold, high pressure, vacuum)
  Protection 9 Impervious
  Sensory Shield 4 (all senses)
  Super-Senses 9 (blindsight extended sonar, low-light vision, infravision, ultra-hearing, radio)
  Swimming 4 (25 mph)

FEATS

environmental adaptation (underwater)
equipment 8 (lair, mines)
startle

SKILLS

concentration 4 (+5)
craft-electronic 3 (+6)
craft-mechanical 3 (+6)
disable device 5 (+8)
intimidate 9 (+10)
notice 5 (+6)
search 5 (+8)
sense motive 4 (+5)
stealth 6 (+2)
swim 4 (+11)

abilities 8 + skills 12 + feats 10 + powers 112 + combat 34 + saves 16 + drawbacks 0 = 192 pp

Great Armored Car Robbery

Armor-plated battlewagons stage daring daylight bank robberies. They're not robberies of armored cars, they're robberies using armored cars!

A criminal gang has gotten their hands on a trio of military-grade armored cars. Their plan is simple–a daring daylight crime spree using the raw force of the cars and the element of surprise to overwhelm law enforcement and literally crash into banks, jewelry stores, and other high profit targets. Jump out, grab the goods, and then scurry back into the cars for the getaway. The thick armor should be impregnable to anything the police can throw at it, and with the heavy weapons on board they can deter any pursuit. It's smash-and-grab robbery on a bold scale.

On the surface, this crime spree is a very bad plan. Why commit such high profile crimes, careening through downtown and drawing the attention of every cop and superhero in the city? Well, to draw the attention of every cop and superhero in the city away from something else, of course. The whole thing is a diversion from the real crime which is going on at the same time but much, much more quietly.

The armored cars are boxy vehicles, shaped like a short heavily-armored bus. They run on massive knobby tires, each made of solid rubber (rather than inflated) so they cannot be flattened.

The windshield has been reduced to narrow slits to protect the driver. Various small turrets and gun ports cover the sides, rear and roof. There are small side doors, and the rear can be lowered as a ramp.

Revelations

1) It's not <u>armored car</u> robberies, it's armored car <u>robberies</u>! (repeat it to yourself a couple times with different inflections, you'll get it). The misunderstanding is a brief Red Herring.

2) There are three armored cars, not one.

3) It's all a diversion for the real crime.

4) Criminals plan to rendezvous on a yacht and casually sail away.

Enter the Heroes

Heroes already in costume can respond to the obvious signs of trouble (sirens, alerts of "armored car robberies" on the police band), or they could coincidentally be nearby in secret ID when the police cruisers start racing past (see **Enter the Heroes–First Hand Involvement**).

Action

Part 1–Smash-and-Grab

Garbled transmissions are cluttering the police bands, frantic reports of a spree of "armored car robberies" all across downtown. Someone must be knocking over armored cars!

With sirens blaring in the distance, the heroes spot three police cars hastily skid to a halt in the middle of the street. Police officers shout for people to clear the scene and wave traffic off the streets while others hunker down behind their cruisers with shotguns leveled. One officer is on the radio getting word that the suspects are headed this way.

> Heroes should overhear the police talking about "armored car robberies" if they have not already.

The police are glad to see the superheroes, but before they can explain the situation:

An ominous rumble fills the air, the windows of nearby buildings rattling in their frames. "Here they come!" an officer shouts, and the others crouch behind their cruisers, guns leveled.

There is the throaty roar of an engine as a mammoth tank-like car comes barreling around a corner. It's plated with thick armor, bristling with weapon turrets, and it as big as a bus. A fast, dangerous bus. It thunders towards the police blockade, eight massive tires chewing up asphalt as it goes.

It's not <u>armored car</u> robberies… it's armored car <u>robberies</u>!

The armored car rushes straight towards its objective: a major bank right down the street. Instead of slowing, the it crashes right into the front of a bank, showering the lobby with broken glass and shards of masonry. The front end of the car is in the bank lobby and the rear is still sticking out into the street. Gunmen spring out of the front to handle the robbery while the gunners in the tail of the car pin down any police (or heroes) coming to intervene.

The gunmen in the bank head straight for the cash. There is no resistance from the stunned bank patrons or security guards, but if heroes enter the bank some gunmen try to hold them off while others get the cash.

> The whole scene in the bank should only take a few rounds. Heroes are likely to make short work of the gunmen outside the armored car, and may even take out the armored car now that it is not moving.

When the loot has been brought back inside (or the driver decides the plan has failed and it's time to make a run for it), the hatches are battened down and the powerful engine shifts into reverse, shaking itself free of rubble and backing out into the street.

Part 2–Chaos in the Streets

If the heroes take out the car and its crew during the robbery, they are likely to think their job is done and it's time to take a bow. Go team! As more police arrive on the scene they find out the bad news: reports of trouble are still pouring in from other parts of downtown. It turns out there is more than one armored car on the loose. This explains some conflicting reports the police were getting earlier: confused sightings at different places at the same time.

Fighting Vehicles (GM Craft)

It can be hard to make fighting vehicles as dramatic as fighting people. Because they are objects, not people, some players may think they can just grab them and pick them up without any resistance.

Emphasize the size, weight and speed of vehicles to keep things dramatic. The armored cars are very, very heavy (50 tons). A Strength 60 character could pick one up, but that's assuming the car is just sitting still. Grabbing a car racing down the street is another thing.

Even if a vehicle can't wrestle free the way a person could, an armed vehicle usually has some way to fight back. Some weapons may not be able to aim at a hero at such close range, but that hero will be the primary target for weapons that can. It is a little harder to lift an armored car when you are getting blasted in the face by a flame thrower. Swooping down and grabbing a vehicle and flying away with it is completely heroic and very cool, but it should not be too easy.

If the armored car gets away from the bank, the heroes are probably in hot pursuit, and may notice police setting up roadblocks on intersections on parallel streets, and may even see a twin armored car in the distance.

The other armored cars have already smashed into banks, so from here it's a running battle to stop them before they make their escape, and prevent them from trashing most of downtown in the process. Each armored car has several police cars chasing after it, unable to do anything to stop it, and probably a police helicopter shadowing it as well. Gunners in the armored cars may take out police vehicles if they get too close or just to make more of a mess of things. The more chaos, the better their plan is working.

Keeping it Moving (GM Craft)

A toe-to-toe fight with an armored car could be pretty boring. To keep the scenario interesting, you have to keep the action moving. The armored cars are not sitting still: they are rushing down busy streets, sideswiping some cars and clipping others, sending them spinning across lanes of traffic.

> Simple rule of thumb: at full speed, an armored car crosses a city block in two rounds. So every other round the car crashes through an intersection (honking cars and near collisions), and on the rounds in between it is in the middle of a block.
>
> If the car is running slowly for some reason, have it cross an intersection every three rounds or more instead.

Even if the heroes could easily beat the armored cars, they are hampered by constantly having to save innocent people caught up in the action. Slaloming an armored vehicle through traffic isn't easy for the crooks either, but the criminals losing control of their vehicle can make things even more difficult for the heroes.

Here are specific vignettes you can sprinkle in to keep things interested:

• The armored car runs half-way up onto the curb and races along parallel to the street, shearing off parking meters every half-second ("whang-whang-whang") and sending pedestrians scattering for shelter.

• As it careens through a busy intersection an armored car clips the tail of a crossing sedan. The sedan's windows explode, and it spins like a top into the path of an oncoming bus, which slams on its brakes but cannot stop in time.

• An armored car tries for a short cut but swerves too wide, plowing straight into a plaza crowded with lounging office workers, pigeons, and a string quartet playing to the lunchtime crowd.

• Stopped cars block the street ahead, so the armored car swings into the oncoming lane… right into the path of a rumbling delivery truck. Cars on both sides prevent the truck from swerving, so the panicked driver leaps from the cab as the vehicles race towards a head-on collision.

  If the armored car rams the delivery truck, it flattens the front-end like an accordion and shoves it down the street while barely slowing down. Unfortunately having a delivery truck stuck on the windshield means the armored car is racing through downtown blind…

Take Out the Guns! (Action Shtick)

Can't penetrate the tank's heavy armor? Take out the guns instead! An exposed weapon is harder to hit, but because it is less protected by the vehicle's armor it is easier to damage.

> Determine the size of the weapon (usually Small or Tiny). Apply the difference in the size defense modifier for the vehicle, and then reduce the Toughness and Impervious of the weapon by that amount.
>
> For example, a Huge vehicle has a -2 size modifier, so a Tiny weapon with a +2 size modifier has a Defense 4 higher than the vehicle, but a 4 lower Toughness and Impervious Toughness.
>
> If the weapon is positioned so that it might easily shift out of the attacker's view as the vehicle maneuvers, apply a +2 cover bonus to defense. An attack that misses because of the difference in size modifier or the cover bonus still strikes the vehicle.
>
> An attack that strikes a weapon can only destroy the weapon, not damage the rest of the vehicle.

You can apply the same rules to other targeted attacks against vehicles, such as shooting a car's tires, or crippling the ankle joint of a robotic juggernaut.

> The turrets on the cars are Small weapons on a Gargantuan vehicle (+5 Defense / -5 Toughness).

Hit by a Car (Action Shtick)

An out-of-control car speeds towards a startled jaywalker. A truck barrels down on a bus stalled in an intersection, its brakes shuddering and its horn blaring uselessly. Some villain tied your fiance to the railroad tracks, and the train is coming…

A hero can save the day by either stopping the vehicle in its tracks or whisking the victim out of the way before impact.

Grabbing the Victim:

DC 20 Reflex save. Assumes the hero has a high enough speed to reach the car or person as a Move action. A hero with twice the necessary speed or more gets a +4 bonus on the save. Failure means the hero and victim are still there when the vehicle hits–proceed to the Stopping the Car rules. Success means hero and victim get out of the way.

Extras:

Heavy Victims–When saving larger objects (like shoving a whole bus out of the way), a hero can grab up to his Medium load without penalty. Heavy load imposes a -5 on the Reflex save, and Maximum load imposes a -10. The hero can use Extra Effort if necessary.

Trapped Victims–A bound or trapped victim may require an additional check to free them in time, such as a Strength check or attack to destroy the object holding the victim. For tough bonds, create suspense by giving the hero multiple rounds to try and break them before the vehicle hits. If the hero breaks the bonds on the last round, they have to make the Reflex save then to get away before the impact.

Grabbing one person out of harms way does not prevent the vehicle from crashing into other things or people, so there are times when it is better for the hero to stop the car instead. This could involve getting in the way and bracing to take the hit, or yanking the speeding car into the air with your energy pincers.

Stopping the Car:

DC 15 Reflex save to get between the car and the victim. Same speed modifiers and requirements as above. Failure means the hero cannot reach the car in time.

Hero makes a Strength check to stop the car (including Super-Strength). Failure by 5 or more means the hero is hit and takes damage from the impact, half damage for failure less than 5. If there is no Knockback, the hero stopped the car the hard way.

> average (car, motorcycle)–Strength DC 25, Damage 8
>
> big (truck, bus)–Strength DC 30, Damage 12
>
> really big (train, passenger jet)– Strength DC 35, Damage 16

The hero must have sufficient Strength to lift the vehicle as a Heavy load, or else he has no chance of stopping it (either by grabbing it or absorbing the damage).

Ranged grabs such as Telekinesis require an attack roll against the vehicle instead of a Reflex save, and the hero cannot take the damage to stop the vehicle.

You can also use this Action Shtick any time an innocent victim is in the path of a large fast-moving object, such a hurled boulder or a falling piano. If there are a bunch of falling pianos, use the **Falling Debris** Action Shtick from **Day of Dr Null** instead.

- An out-of-control (or desperate) armored car smashes right through the wall of a major department store. It crashes through perfume, men's wear, and lady's casuals before punching out the other side of the department store and back on to the street, trailing severed manikin limbs and the latest fashions.

Part 3–The Real Crime

While every cop in the city is chasing the armored cars and dealing with the mess they are making, the real crime is quietly being carried out.

A small team of gunmen dressed in plainclothes and carry out the operation while keeping a very low profile. They know exactly where their target will be and go about their business like clockwork, using a precise degree of force and a minimum of fuss. If everything goes as they plan, the covert team is in and out while everyone is still distracted by the armored car robberies.

So how do the heroes find out about the real caper and get a chance to intervene or at least catch up afterwards?

Question the Thugs–Once the heroes take out one armored car and apprehend its crew, a scared thug who overheard more than he was supposed to might spill the beans hoping to get the heroes to go easy on him. Most of the armored car crews do not know the details of the real crime, but they all know about the rendezvous at the yacht.

Needle in the Haystack–The alert from the real crime scene is buried in the chaos of the crime spree. The police miss it (as intended) but by chance a hero notices it. The radio is blaring with alerts about armored cars, auto accidents, traffic pile-ups, but in the middle of it all is one unnoticed report of the real crime. A hero might be standing next to a police radio and overhear the call. Something about it stands out and gets the hero's attention–maybe because it's the one report that *isn't* about armored cars.

It Just Doesn't Make Sense–Cagey heroes (or players) might just make a mental leap and realize that there's something fishy about this very bold and obvious plan. Once they suspect something, it's an easy matter to double-check and look for reports of lower profile incidents that the police are too overwhelmed to handle.

Trouble Alert–Depending on the nature of the real crime, the heroes might get a direct call for help. If the mayor is getting kidnapped, he might have a concealed signal device to call the heroes, unbeknownst to his abductors. It depends on the heroes and their relationship to the target.

Finding out about the real crime does not make the armored cars less of a threat. Heroes may have to decide what is more important, stopping the cars and preventing a lot of innocent bystanders from getting hurt, or abandoning the chase to foil the criminals' real plan.

Part 4–The Getaway

Massive armored cars are hard for the police to stop, but they are not exactly hard to follow. After staging daring daylight bank robberies, how do the criminals hope to make their escape?

Rather than try to escape in the armored cars, the crews ditch them at pre-arranged locations and flee into utility tunnels beneath the city. These connect to secondary subway tunnels where utility trains are waiting to whisk them away. They are counting on the chaos to stretch police resources so thin that any organized search of the tunnels will be delayed until they are long gone.

The escape plan varies slightly for each armored car:

1) One armored car comes to a halt in the middle of the street, but it is actually parked over a manhole cover.

Danger: Flammable (Action Shtick)

A wrecked car is leaking gasoline and the driver is slumped over the steering wheel, knocked unconscious by the crash. A hurled dumpster shears off the pumps at a gas station, and fuel is spraying up from the severed pipes. If you can even see a tanker truck, an explosion is probably imminent.

A dripping pool of gasoline is very tangible threat. At any moment a spark or fire from another source could touch it off. The pause between dripping and explosion lets the heroes leap in to save the day or maybe just dive for cover.

With an obvious fire hazard like a tanker truck (stuck in the middle of an intersection that an armored car is racing towards) the explosion might occur right after the impact, but the heroes can intervene before the crash and try to intervene and prevent it.

> Car Blast 8 area explosion, tanker Blast 12 area explosion

The Real Crime

The meat of this scenario is the running battle versus the armored cars, but part of the premise is that this is just a diversion for another crime occurring behind the scenes. What the "real crime" is and who is behind it is completely flexible, so you can easily drop the action into a larger plot.

What's the real crime? Take your pick:

Robbery–Stealing bundles of cash from banks is just a front for a more unique theft. It could be exotic jewels, a new technological prototype, mint plates, art treasures or even something immaterial like financial records.

Kidnapping–The criminals could be out to abduct a visiting political dignitary, a wealthy CEO, the mayor or his daughter, a brilliant scientist, or a key witness for federal prosecutors.

Prisoner Escape–This crime spree has been carefully timed to correspond with a prisoner transfer. The criminals ambush the transport vehicle en route to break the prisoner free. It could be a powerful figure in organized crime, the deadbeat son of a very influential family, a brilliant (yet mad) scientist, or any supervillain whose particular skills are desperately needed for another job.

Who's behind the scheme? It could be any mid-level criminal mastermind, mob boss, or shadowy criminal organization. Any non-powered supervillain who uses plots or minions to carry out his schemes is also a good fit. Put the two together, and you have your back story. Here are two ready-made options to choose from:

- **Lucius D'Onastin Giropolis**, a wealthy recluse with his fingers in a variety of questionable pies. The rumors that he has connections to **interLOCK**, the international criminal cartel, are entirely true, and he has mounted this operation to kidnap / break free an accountant deeply involved in interLOCK business who was arrested and may turn state's evidence. interLOCK needs him alive since there are access codes only he knows.

- There is nothing the criminal puzzler known as **the Peeper** hates more than secrets, at least secrets he is kept out of. It's an obsession, really. He wants his henchmen to steal a top secret code-breaking super chip from the lab where it is being developed, and introduce a worm into their system to destroy the designs while they are in there so that only he will be the only one to have it. No encryption will be able to stop him, no secret will be safe!

The real crime and the brains behind the operation could just be a background detail to explain the action (a MacGuffin) or it could lead into a whole other plot (why *did* interLOCK want to spring that supervillain with the radiation powers?). Whatever it is, the real crime should be important enough to warrant all this effort.

Hidden from view, the crew sneaks into the tunnel through a hatch in the underbelly. The armored car's weapons are set on automatic and fire randomly to make it appear like the crew is still manning them and delay pursuit.

2) Another armored car drives into a short tunnel underpass but does not emerge on the other side. Police think they have it trapped and swarm both ends. The armored car crew lays down a foam barricade blocking both ends of the tunnel then escapes unobserved into a utility door in the middle of the tunnel.

3) The last armored car crashes through the wall of a warehouse but does not emerge again. The crew turns their flamethrowers on the building around them, setting it on fire to slow pursuit before they flee into a basement and into the tunnels.

The crews emerge from a utility tunnel near the waterfront where they board a private yacht. Once everyone is accounted for (or given up on), the innocent-looking yacht simply sails out of the harbor and makes for the open seas with no one the wiser.

Finale

If the heroes track the escaped armored car crews down into the subway tunnels, they should be able to bring them to justice fairly easily–without their armored cars and heavy weapons, the crooks are no match for the heroes.

If the heroes do not figure out the real crime until late in the game, the covert team has done the job is already making its getaway. Even if the armored cars are stopped, the bad guys win if they get away with their main plan.

For a dramatic finish, the heroes could learn about the escape plan from a captured thug. They catch up with the escaping yacht as the jubilant criminals are popping champagne corks and toasting a job well done, confident

that they have made a clean getaway. After a moment of shock, the criminals go for their guns. They only have submachine guns and pistols, having ditched their heavier equipment in the tunnels to keep a low profile.

Use Yacht stats from M&M Chapter 7. If the yacht is seriously damaged, use the **Sinking Ship** Action Shtick.

> This is likely to be an easy fight for the heroes, more of a victory lap than a real challenge. The challenge is uncovering the crime and tracking down the perpetrators before they escape, not beating them in a fight. Heroes will savor the look of surprise on the crooks' faces as their clean escape is ruined. Play it up.

Aftermath

This scenario can be a romping action interlude, or it could turn into a more plot-heavy investigation as the heroes try to track down the gang or mastermind behind the rampaging armored cars. The "real crime" could be the starting point for a whole further adventure.

Variants

We've Been Expecting You–If there are well-known superheroes in the area, the criminals could prepare for them with tailored weapons, including easy exploits of known weaknesses (Phoenix fears cold).

…and We Brought Supervillains–Instead of just armed thugs inside each armored car, add a hired supervillain or two for muscle and to spice things up. The villain remains hidden inside the car until the time is right.

> If the game is going slowly or the heroes are not having enough fun taking out the armored cars, you can add a supervillain to the crew on the fly.

Remote Control Cars–The armored cars have no crews at all, and are remote controlled from a hidden location. Once inside a bank, mechanical arms extend from the side to grab the cash and deposit it inside the hull. If they are captured, the operators trigger a self-destruct bomb to destroy the evidence. If this field test goes well, who knows how many armored cars they will build next?

Armored Car — vehicle / PL 9

STR	SIZE	MOVE
50/+20	Garg	100 mph

ATTACK	+8 blast 8 autofire (shape) snare 9 (line) blast 8
DEF	6 (14 w/speed)
TOUGH	+14 (8 impervious)

(combat stats and PL as crewed by gunmen–most rounds 2-3 gunners will be able to fire at targets)

POWERS

foam cannon (Snare 9 area shapeable, contagious)
flame throwers (Blast 8 area line 200 ft, progression, range touch)
machine gun turrets (damage 8 autofire, accurate)
smoke grenade launcher (Obscure 5 visual, 100 ft radius, independent)
Impervious Toughness 8
Speed 4 (100 mph)

• Weighs 50 tons (Strength 60 heavy load)
• Using the Take Out the Guns! Action Shtick, the weapons are +5 Defense / -5 Toughness.

FEATURES

remote control

abilities 2 + features 1 + powers 100 + size 3 + saves 3 + drawbacks 0 = 109 pp / 22 eq

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Armored Car Gunman — minion / PL 5

STR	DEX	CON
12/+1	12/+1	12/+1

INT	WIS	CHA
10/--	10/--	10/--

ATTACK	(shape) snare 5 +6 machine gun 4 auto +6 pistol 4
DEF	16 (13 flat)
TOUGH	+4

FORT	REF	WILL
+6	+5	+4

INIT	GRAP	SIZE
+1	+7	Med

EQUIPMENT

foam gun (Snare 5 area shapeable, contagious)
submachine gun (damage 4 autofire)
   (each gunman carries one or the other)

heavy pistol (damage 4)
body armor (Protection 3)

FEATS

equipment 7
teamwork

SKILLS

bluff 4 (+4)
drive 6 (+7)
gather info 3 (+3)
intimidate 6 (+6)
knowledge-streetwise 5 (+5)
knowledge-tactics 4 (+4)
notice 4 (+4)
search 4 (+4)
stealth 4 (+5)

abilities 6 + skills 10 + feats 8 + powers 0 + combat 24 + saves 13 + drawbacks 0 = 61 pp

Doing Time

After thirty years trapped in a moment of frozen time, an innocent man blames the heroes for his unfair imprisonment. Now it's their turn.

The **Time Key** is an alien artifact that can change the flow of time around people and objects, making them experience time at an incredibly fast rate. From the point of view of someone in this accelerated time stream, the rest of the world seems to stand still while they wander the silent streets, the one living creature in a frozen world.

Time can change a man. How much time does it take to warp a sane man, a man whose life has been committed to law and order? How about a whole lifetime, a lifetime spent unjustly trapped in a nightmare world, a hands-breadth away from the normal world but isolated from all human contact and company?

After the heroes capture the artifact and turn it over as evidence, **District Attorney Michael Mathers** accidentally becomes trapped in frozen time. Tortured by decades alone as a **Prisoner of Time**, he comes to blame the heroes for the accident that destroyed his life.

Origin of the Time Key

Decades ago, archaeologists exploring Mayan ruins unearthed a sealed crypt hidden beneath a jungle temple. The pictures and symbols in the chamber were unusual, giving rise to wild speculation of "ancient astronauts" visiting primitive peoples, theories that were eventually stamped out by the more sensible establishment. But the most remarkable artifact in the chamber defied any explanation. Its shape and style did not match any known culture of the day, and the metallurgical tests performed gave conflicting results. The shape was somewhat evocative of an enlarged skeleton key, and the name stuck.

The key was briefly a great anthropological curiosity in its day, but after years where one theory after another shed no more light on its origins or purpose, it was largely forgotten, and relegated to that corner of history where embarrassing oddities are confined lest they interfere with the orderly progress of science.

The credibility of the key was not helped by the rumors of a curse that surrounded it. Across the years, it was

whispered, several people who had been close to the key had simply disappeared, never to be seen again. These stories were in fact true, unfortunate victims who accidentally activated the key and were trapped in time, aging and then dying and crumbling into dust before a minute passed in "real" time.

Waking Up From the Nightmare

Just a few minutes ago, a young caretaker, charged with cleaning up and reorganizing the dusty "exotic" collection in the archives of the Museum of Antiquities, accidentally activated the key and became locked in time. For the next forty years (subjectively) he wandered the frozen world, looking for a means to escape the strange fate that had befallen him, going progressively more insane as the lonely decades went by.

He proved luckier than those who had been trapped before him–he did finally find a way to return to normal time, even if it was really far too late. He was an old man now, driven completely mad by his ordeal, but for the rest of the world not even a minute had passed.

Revelations

1) Strange artifact gives old man powers.

2) Time is standing still.

3) (optional) Time isn't really frozen, it's just moving really, really slowly.

4) (optional) Is time moving slowly for the world, or quickly for the heroes? Is there even a difference?

5) The second old man is not the same old man, it's a different old man.

6) District Attorney Mathers is really old now. He trapped the heroes because he blames them for him getting trapped in time.

Action

Part 1–Crazy Old Man, Take 1

After forty years of silence and stillness, the bustling city is more than the museum caretaker's fragile sanity can take. He is convinced that it is just another delusion, another trick his mind is playing on him, and in a psychotic rampage he lashes out at everything around him.

He looks like some kind of castaway, dressed in rags and with scraggly hair and beard. He is surrounded by a field of brilliant energy, and holds a strange metal rod.

You can start the action *in media res*, with the heroes already toe-to-toe with the deranged madman trying to level the city with blasts from the strange artifact he carries. There is no complicated lead-in, just obvious destruction that brings the heroes running.

It's a straight-forward fight with the old man ranting and trying to destroy anything he sees.

> *"You're not real! None of you are real!"*

Heroes are likely to guess that the strange artifact he holds gives him his powers (and they would be right). If the key is snatched away from him, the old man loses his powers but also collapses in despair, having lost what he still believes to be his only means of escape.

> The powers of the Key that the old man uses are raw energy, not "time-based" attacks. There should be no clue at this point that the Key is connected to time, since that would ruin the surprise.

Part 2–Meet the D.A.

The police take the old man and the artifact into custody. If the heroes want to examine the artifact first, let them do so, but they will not find out anything conclusive, and very shortly thereafter (the same or the next day) the

---

The Time Key

The alien artifact is a shiny metal rod a little over two feet long with flat flanges of different widths projecting from opposite sides. It bears some resemblance to an artist's interpretation of a skeleton key, except the flanges run along the entire length with some gaps instead of appearing at just one end.

Time control is the artifact's primary function, but the tremendous power it produces can also be used in more mundane ways, like generating energy fields and destructive blasts.

Without familiarity with the key, it is impossible to control its abilities. What triggered the key those times when an individual touched the key and became trapped in time? Did they accidentally stumble on the gesture to activate its powers, or was it just a matter of timing? Who knows.

> The ability to freeze time is a plot device, an "X" power, so it is not included with the powers of the key.

District Attorney's office will ask them to bring it in. It's evidence, after all.

D.A. Mike Mathers wants to meet with the heroes to see if they can shed any light on the situation. The police have been unable to establish the identity of the old man–he's obviously deranged, but his profile matches no known supervillains and so far his fingerprints have turned up no matches (because he has no criminal record).

"The Mayor is concerned about super-powered crime in the city. He wants results, and I think between us we can get the job done."

There is very little to say about this latest crazed rampage so Mathers takes the opportunity to compare notes with heroes about other cases, suspicions they may have about other supervillains or criminal organizations who could be operating in the area, etc. It should be a chance for the heroes and the man who will prosecute the criminals they capture to talk shop, trade information, and generally get to know each other better.

> This roleplaying interlude with the D.A. should establish his character as a serious prosecutor who wants to work with the heroes to bring law and order to the city. If you play up the details of other cases, even tying in other recent adventures, the players may think the encounter with the crazed old man was just an in-game excuse to introduce them to D.A. Mathers. Then the other shoe drops…

Vanishing Act

Throughout the discussion the strange artifact the old man was carrying sits on the table now with an evidence tag. The heroes have been carrying it around, and Mathers and other police have touched it, so there is no warning that handling it is dangerous.

"It's exactly this kind of thing the Mayor wants off the streets…"

In the middle of the conversation he taps the key to emphasize some point, and in a blink both he and it disappear. Poof.

What Just Happened?

Mathers touches the key and traps himself in time. He frantically waves and yells in front of the heroes' faces to get their attention, but of course they do not respond. He runs around the building looking for help, then runs out into the city.

After he calms down, it is clear the key is the source of the problem. He goes back and gets it, but all his efforts to make it do something prove useless. Time passes by, thirty fruitless years of wandering, wondering, and ranting. More than once he throws the key into the ocean

in despair, or tries to smash it with a hammer. Nothing he does seems to damage it, and no matter how many times he gets rid of the key, eventually he comes back for it. It is his only hope.

In the meantime, only a few seconds pass for the heroes and the rest of the world.

Time and again he returns to the room where it all started, the room where the superheroes are still standing, those chiseled jaws mocking him. He spends hours talking to them, but no matter how many times he asks for help they never answer him. He comes to hate them and blame them for his imprisonment. They brought the key to him. They meant for this to happen. His ingrained commitment to punish the guilty from his legal career remains, and he becomes more and more fixated with finding a way to make them pay for what they have done.

Are these sane or even logical conclusions? No, but decades alone in a world gone mad will do that to you.

After decades of obsessed examination, he finally unlocks the secrets of the key. A sane man would escape frozen time while he had the chance, but Mathers has become more obsessed with punishing the heroes than freeing himself. With the Time Key's power now under his control, he returns to the superheroes and traps them in time.

> It takes only a moment for the Time Key to trap them, but a moment in the normal time flow takes weeks in Mather's fast time flow. He zaps the heroes, then departs before they become "unfrozen" from his perspective, which is why they do not see him the moment they become trapped.

Part 3–Trapped In Time

The heroes should be alarmed by the Mathers' sudden disappearance, search the room for clues, call for help, and so on. Let them run around like monkeys for a bit and come up with their next move. Only once they leave the office and go back into the rest of the building do they discover the truth: everyone around them is frozen in time.

Revelation & Expanding Scope (GM Craft)

The dead silence, the rising feeling of something wrong, the fact that the police guard in the hallway is standing very, very still at attention and doesn't respond to, well, anything–let these clues unfold the revelation in its own time.

Even once they realize everyone in the nearby offices are frozen, they may still think it's just something local, but then they search the building, and then they run out into the street, and then all across the city… sooner or

later the shock will set in, and they will realize that it is the whole world (the whole universe in fact) that has been affected. Let it dawn on them that they are the only people still moving on the whole planet.

Moments in Time

There are a thousand stories in the naked city, and now each one of them is frozen at a single moment, a still-life portrait. Everywhere the heroes look, there are slices of life, and some slices of danger. Heroes might be in a hurry to unravel this strange phenomena, but they should also be tempted to do some good while they have this chance:

- Fires lick up the side of a tenement, the flames frozen in place like sculptures of solid light. Terrified people lean out the windows, silent cries for help on their lips, while bystanders look on in horror. A fire engine is a block away, caught in mid-rush towards the scene.

- A young executive is digging through her bag, her cell phone wedged against her ear as she dashes across the intersection. There is the first hint of surprise in her eyes as she see the car that is going to hit her. Two joggers yell to get her attention and run towards the scene, but they will arrive too late.

- A girder on a construction site has just come loose, pitching a worker into the air for a ten story express flight straight down. He hangs in mid air, a cloud of rivets frozen next to him. Days on the job without an accident: zero.

- Slowest car chase ever. Plumes of smoke hang frozen in the air where tires burned rubber sliding around the corner. Pedestrians crossing up ahead are just starting to scatter. Two police cruisers are in hot pursuit, dome lights perpetually still.

- A five-year old's sense of balance has failed to keep the top scoop of strawberry ripple on top of that bottom scoop of vanilla chunk. It's about to slide off and splatter her nice new dress. All it would take is
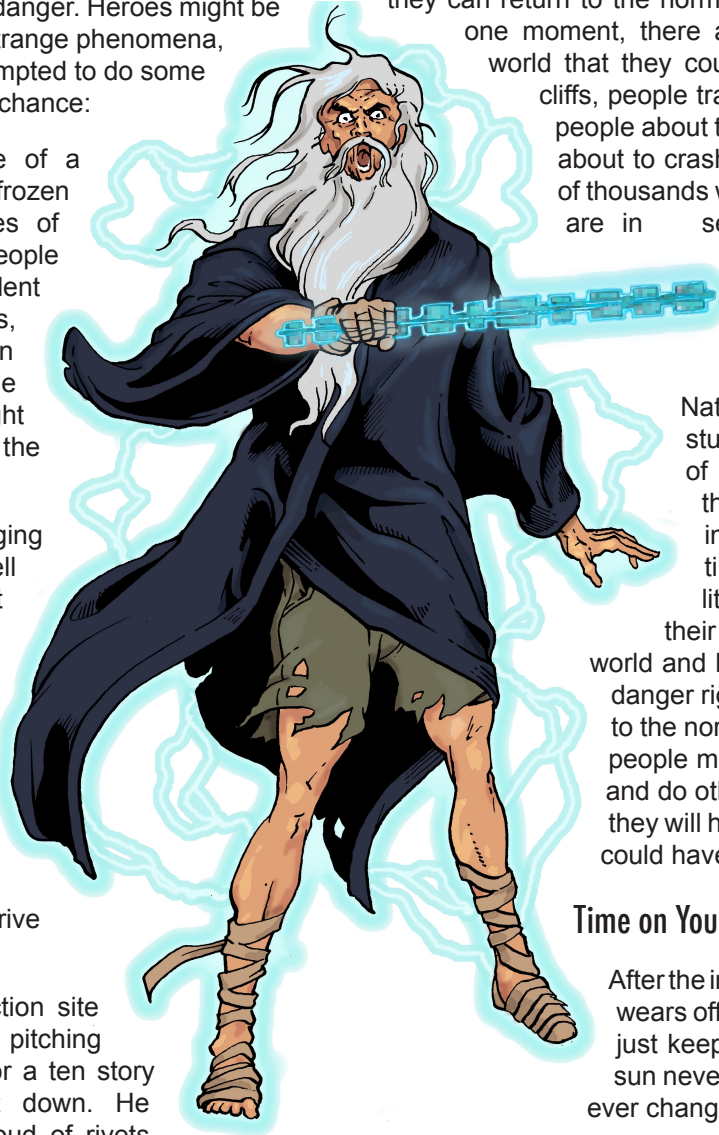
one slight nudge to put it back in balance and save a little girl's day at the park.

How many more are there? It's endless. The heroes certainly are not going to run out of things to do.

"But I Can Save Them All!" (Optional)

Want a serious moral dilemma? The heroes are frozen in one moment of time, and are trying to escape so they can return to the normal flow of time. But in that one moment, there are people all around the world that they could help: people falling off cliffs, people trapped in burning buildings, people about to be shot, people in planes about to crash. Thousands or even tens of thousands who are going to die or who are in serious danger, danger that the heroes could save them from if they just spent the time to do something about it.

Naturally when the heroes stumble across frozen scenes of trouble in the city around them, they will stop and intervene, but that's just the tip of the iceberg. They could literally spend the rest of their lives wandering the frozen world and helping everyone who is in danger right now. Or they can return to the normal time flow and let those people meet their fate. They'll go on and do other heroic deeds, sure, but they will have left behind people they could have helped. It's a tough one.

Time on Your Hands

After the initial shock and amazement wears off, boredom may set in. Time just keeps passing, sort of, but the sun never moves in the sky. Nothing ever changes.

It certainly looks like the heroes have all the time in the world to wander the frozen city (or world). They can look around, explore, search for clues, fly to the moon, whatever. Diligent heroes may try researching the strange artifact or their situation in general, a process made more difficult without things like computers (see the **Physics of Frozen Time**).

Weeks could go by this way. Months. Ask the players to summarize what their heroes do in this strange new world. It's a roleplaying question. Do they stick together? Probably not for weeks on end. Once the sense of danger wears off they may split up and wander around

Physics of Frozen Time

These guidelines describe how things behave in frozen time. The rules of frozen time are comic book physics, not real physics, so there are some logical grey areas. Don't sweat it too much–it's just a superhero game.

Slow Time–Time is not really frozen, just proceeding at an incredibly slow rate (several years of "frozen" time pass for each second of normal time). Or looking at it the other way, the unfrozen people are moving so fast relative to the frozen people that they can't even be seen. An unfrozen person would have to stand dead still in front of a frozen person for a year to even be noticed.

Breaking Things–Damaging objects or people frozen in time practically impossible. Since time is not moving, matter that makes up the object cannot even react to the forces try to change it before the stimulus goes away. The only way to harm frozen things is to subject them to a damaging force over a very long time, so that the attack "registers" on the matter. Constantly blasting someone for about ten years would do the trick.

Frozen Energy–Energy needs time to cause damage, so frozen flames are extraordinarily beautiful but completely harmless to unfrozen people. Most frozen energy is effectively solid, so you can tap a bonfire with your finger and it won't hurt.

Moving Things–People and objects are frozen in whatever position they are in just like statues. A person cannot be posed or adjusted (again unless force is applied constantly for about ten years). People and objects can be moved, carried around, etc. with no difficulty. You can walk on water without sinking, or slowly push it aside to tunnel underwater.

No Falling–Gravity needs time to work. Frozen things hang in the air (but can be moved by unfrozen people). Unfrozen people like the heroes are still affected by gravity and can fall and hurt themselves–their mass is not frozen, so gravity works on them. Likewise if an unfrozen hero puts a frozen object in mid-air and lets it go, it will just hang there. A cruel person could place an anvil right over some frozen person's head–when time unfreezes, that person is in trouble.

Magical Momentum–When an unfrozen person moves a frozen thing, it loses whatever momentum it had before time froze. So if a person was falling off a building and is then frozen in time, and an unfrozen hero flies up and puts the person on the ground, when time unfreezes that person is stationary, not smashing into the ground at the speed she was falling. [Doing it the other way is messy and prevents heroes from doing anything useful.]

Tool Users–Frozen computers, cars, and any other tools that use a power source are useless, since electricity or power only flows in time. This could make research or investigation tricky. A wrench still works, and you can still read a book.

Nothing Changes State–Frozen people and things remain frozen. Unfrozen people and things remain unfrozen. If an unfrozen hero shoots an energy blast, that energy is unfrozen and behaves normally. If an unfrozen hero takes off his cape, the cape is still unfrozen. If a hero picks up a frozen dime and puts it in his pocket, the dime is still frozen.

Living in Frozen Time

Unfrozen people stuck in frozen time age normally while the world around them sits still–as noted before, time is really just passing for them more quickly than for the rest of the world. Heroes get tired, need sleep, etc., though it is probably best to just gloss over that as you would in a comic book.

Just Leave a Message

Why doesn't someone trapped in frozen time just spell out a message where someone can see it? It wouldn't help since no one frozen could intervene, but it is the kind of thing someone would try.

Unless you're very clever (like the player characters) it can take decades to even recognize that things around you are actually moving, just incredibly slowly, and understand that a message could actually be read. By the time Mathers figured it out, he had mastered the Time Key and could escape.

just for a change of pace. Do any of the heroes start to lose it a little? Let the players decide. It's a rare situation, so let them have fun with it.

Remember, the idea is for the characters to get bored or go crazy, not the players. Run scenes from **Moments in Time** and encourage the heroes to roleplay their dilemma, but if things start to get dull just summarize the passage of time and move on.

Finale

After the heroes have been stuck in frozen time for a while (days? weeks? months?), Mathers returns to insure that they recognize their situation.

He has dressed himself in a black judge's robe, and is surrounded by the powerful energies of the Time Key. At first glance the heroes may think it is the same supervillain from part one–from a distance they look the same, an old man holding that strange metallic rod. He floats in the air over the heroes, pronouncing judgment with a cold vengeance.

> *"This is punishment for your crimes, a jail without walls, a cell without bars, just as I was your prisoner long, long ago."*

> *"The endless days, the loneliness–all the torments you inflicted on me are now being revisited upon you. I was your Prisoner, but now I am your judge."*

What do the heroes do now? Do they try to reason with Mathers or protest their innocence? Or do they just rush him and try to grab the key, hoping to use it to escape? Has the time they spent in the frozen city made them more sympathetic to Mathers' madness or more desperate to escape?

Don't hurry to tell the heroes that it is Mathers. His speech and what they have already figured out about frozen time should give them enough clues to put it together.

Time to Escape

Sooner or later you are probably going to want your heroes to escape being trapped in time:

Overload–Mathers draws on too much of the key's power to destroy the heroes and short-circuits it. He collapses in exhaustion (or is blown backwards by the released energy) and everyone reverts back to normal time, much to the surprise of all bystanders nearby.

Atonement–Can the heroes bring Mathers back to his senses, at least long enough to return them to normal time? Does he then surprise the heroes by condemning himself to imprisonment back in frozen time until he dies, taking the key with him?

Decipher the Key–A super-intelligent hero could decipher the shapes on the key and deduce how to return to normal time. It should not be easy–it took Mathers decades to figure out how to use the key, and others who had just as long were not so lucky.

If you want to keep the Time Key from being too easy to use but still want to save it as a plot device for later, you can decide that figuring out how to revert back to normal time is much easier than activating the key to freeze time.

Prisoner of Time — villain / PL 10

STR	DEX	CON
8/-1	8/-1	6/-2

INT	WIS	CHA
14/+2	18/+4	10/--

ATTACK	+8 blast 12 (cone) blast 10 +4 strike -1
DEF	20 (10 flat)
TOUGH	+10

FORT	REF	WILL
+7	+4	+14

INIT	GRAP	SIZE
-1	+3	Med

POWERS

Time Key (Device 12, easy to lose, restricted, indestructible)
  Blast 10 area cone
    (alt) Blast 12 accurate 2
  Flight 3 (50 mph)
  Force Field 12
  Shield 10

• Mathers and first Prisoner have the same stats, except the first prisoner does not have Flight or Mathers' lawyer skills.
• Time trapping is an "X power" plot device. If necessary, treat it as a rank 25, 8 pp/rank power, 200 pp total.

FEATS

fearless
master plan

SKILLS

concentration 12 (+16)
investigate 4 (+6)
knowledge-civics 5 (+7)
notice 3 (+7)
profession (lawyer) 6 (+10)
sense motive 10 (+14)

abilities 4 + skills 10 + feats 2 + powers 38 + combat 8 + saves 24 + drawbacks 0 = 86 pp

Aftermath

The Time Key can be a returning plot device–this may not be the last time the heroes find themselves trapped in time. On the other hand if you want to remove it from play, it could easily just stop working. It is strange alien technology, so who knows if it is broken or just being operated incorrectly.

Variants

Stolen Time–This scenario may only be the beginning. After the key is locked up for study a supervillain gang hears about it and steals it. They use it to commit crimes, stepping into frozen time and robbing the city blind. Heroes catch up with them in normal time and are sucked in when the villains activate the key, drawing all of them into frozen time for a battle royale across the silent city. If the heroes don't get the key back from the villains they may be left behind in frozen time forever!

They Walk Among Us–The heroes are not the only ones wandering the frozen city. The aliens that fashioned the key exist in this time frame all the time, observing the breathing museum of Earth. They are near immortal, but they engineered this method to live in slow time to maximize their time before entropy eventually brings all existence to an end.

   "We are immortal, but the universe is not."

Are they friendly, detached, or irritated that primitives are mucking around with their Time Key? Do they bring wisdom or anal probes?

City That Time Forgot–Mad scientist creates a device he thinks will permit time travel, but instead it encases the city in a bubble of frozen time. Everything in a hundred mile radius is frozen in time, except the people who were near the device when it was activated (the heroes, the scientist, and maybe other supervillains who were about to steal the device). Until the effect is reversed, the rest of the world goes on but there is no way to enter or leave the frozen time bubble. As an added variant, the time the heroes experience inside the bubble is actually much faster than outside time, so when they finally break it, the entire city awakens in the world of the late 25th century…

Fame is Fleeting

In a bid for fame and fortune, Speed Demon sets out to rob more banks in a single day than any criminal before.

The life of a famous superhero celebrity isn't easy. Particularly when you aren't famous yet, and even more-so when you aren't even close to being a superhero.

Jackson Tanner was a small-time bank robber, at least until he gained the ability to move at superhuman speeds. Go Tanner! Sure he could use his new powers to just rob more banks faster, but that seemed like a sucker play. He would still be working hard, day in day out. Running from the law (albeit faster).

Now fame–that's the ticket to easy street! With a little careful public exposure and the right agent, he could parlay his new talents into instant stardom. All he needed was a catchy new name (like, um, **Speed Demon**) and a splashy entrance. He could leave his past behind him and become a whatchamacallit, a superhero. Behind the mask, who would know what he had done before?

Things did not go as he planned. His first TV appearance as Speed Demon (on the *Late Night Variety Cavalcade with Jasmine Kincaid*) was interrupted by police detectives coming to arrest Tanner for two bank robberies from before he gained his powers. Apparently he had not covered his tracks as carefully as he had thought. His escape, at least the parts visible to the naked eye, was broadcast live to the living rooms of millions of families, giving the show the highest ratings in its time slot.

Tanner's celebrity career ended before it even started. He was a wanted criminal again, and he had only gotten a few minutes of his 15 minutes of fame–he wanted the rest. If he couldn't be a famous superhero (or a super celebrity anyway), he would just have to become a famous supervillain instead.

This scenario is unusual because Speed Demon does not stop to fight the heroes. Instead he uses his super-speed to maximum advantage, running circles around the heroes while he commits more and more robberies.

If the heroes want to stop the Speed Demon, they are going to have to out-smart him or force him to confront them on their terms, not his.

Revelations

1) Speed Demon is very, very fast. Just trying to punch him as he runs past at Mach 2 is not going to work.

2) Speed Demon is trying to set a new record for the number of banks robbed in one day.

3) Speed Demon is more interested in fame than just fortune. He wants attention and publicity.

Action

Part 1–Don't Touch That Dial

You can run Speed Demon's television appearance as a introductory scene, or you can just use it as background information and go straight to the bank robberies.

If you play out the scene, there are several ways heroes could be involved:

• Sitting in the studio audience in secret identity.

• Appearing on the same show, either in heroic or secret identity (if the character has a secret identity worthy of a television appearance). The show's producers could even have set up a "battle of the capes," inviting a well-known hero and then surprising him with the new kid on the block, challenging both to show off their powers and upstage each other (something Speed Demon is more than happy to do).

• In the network building for other reasons, such as touching base with a friendly reporter on the news floor when the reporter suggests they peek into the studio to watch a few minutes of the famous live show ("I heard a rumor they have a special guest tonight!"). Or the hero might be startled by a whizzing blur that whips down the hallway (Speed Demon showing off) and follow the commotion back to the studio.

Speed Demon cockily answers questions from the host (the fabulous Jasmine Kincaid) and shows off his fantastic speed:

• Playing catch with himself by hurling a baseball towards the far side of the studio and then (*whoosh!*) catching it and throwing it back. The last time, he appears with both a baseball cap and glove (grabbed from backstage), a little joke he plays up by mugging for the camera.

"Think there's room for me on the team, Jasmine?" (cue audience chuckles)

• Zipping down to the "man on the street" remote camera crew and then back again between sentences.

• "Juggling" a dozen balls by throwing each in the air from different places on the stage and then running to catch and throw each in the air again.

• Outrunning a speeding bullet. Speed Demon stands next to a marksman who fires a rifle at a glass of water across the studio. Before the bullet strikes he races across the room and grabs it out of harms way, reappearing next to Jasmine with the glass in his hand.

"All this running is making me thirsty!" (drinks, cue audience laughter, cue audience applause)

These are not exactly classy stunts, but Tanner is so excited by the attention that it does not bother him in the least. He loves the attention. He loves the applause. It is even more fun than he expected.

Police detectives arrive part way through the show and get in an initially whispered argument with the producers in the wings who do not want the show interrupted. Tanner is preparing for his big finish (outrunning the speeding bullet), when the detectives finally burst on to the set and declare Tanner under arrest for bank robbery.

All hell breaks loose in the studio. Tanner is frustrated and outraged. He uses his super-speed to fend off the police (possibly using maneuvers described in Part 2) but soon realizes he has to make a break for it. The police have officers covering every exit from the studio, but they cannot react fast enough to stop Speed Demon from just running by them. Even if the doors are locked,

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How Fast is Fast?

How fast is the Speed Demon? He can run 50,000 miles per hour, or double that for short sprints. He can get from the East Coast to the West Coast in about 3 minutes (depending on traffic) and he could circle the Earth in half an hour without breaking a sweat if it wasn't for those pesky oceans.

Is the hand quicker than the eye? He can perform tasks 5,000 times faster than an ordinary person, so it takes him one second to do something that would normally take an hour and a half. That's an eight hour work day in one round (six seconds). No wonder he works up an appetite!

Speed Demon's move action is 25,000 mph or 250,000 feet (about 50 miles). Double for accelerated move, quadruple for moving all out.

Speed Demon can race up, pluck the key from an officer's fingers, unlock the door and race off before any of them can react.

Speed Demon is gone, the studio is in chaos, and a stunned *Late Night Variety Cavalcade with Jasmine Kincaid* goes to commercial.

> If the heroes luck out and do catch Speed Demon, he later escapes police custody by pressing thousands of possible combinations on a security keypad in an interrogation cell in seconds flat.

If you do not run the television appearance as an action scene, you can summarize the events of the night before as background. Heroes may have watched the show live, seen news re-runs, or just overhear others talking about the excitement.

Part 2–World Record Bank Robberies

On the heels of his disastrous television debut, Speed Demon sets out to claim his fame by setting a new world's record for banks robbed in one day. He races from bank to bank, a streaking blur zipping in and out in seconds, stray dollars fluttering to the ground behind him like leaves. If he can't be a superhero, he'll fall back on what he knows and be a super criminal instead.

Instead of keeping a low profile and avoiding the police, Speed Demon wants as much attention as possible. His brief taste of fame has left him wanting more, and he is determined to be the name on everybody's lips. It is

a desperate stunt, a cry for attention, but that does not make him any less capable of pulling it off.

Once it becomes clear that a major crime spree is underway, the Mayor declares a state of emergency. Banks around the city close their doors, police officers standing at the ready on their doorsteps.

Enter the Heroes

Heroes can easily respond to reports of the Speed Demon's ongoing crime spree, but it is more interesting to have them get involved by witnessing the situation first-hand (see **Enter the Heroes–First Person Involvement**): a hero is in the middle of conversation with a significant other at street cafe when the tablecloths are blown off by the passing jet stream of the Speed Demon. Cue sirens.

Express Withdrawal

The action breaks down into multiple short encounters with the Speed Demon. He does not stick around to fight, he just grabs the cash and moves on, forcing the heroes to play catch-up.

No matter their numbers, the police are no match for the Speed Demon. He literally runs circles around them:

- Stealing the keys out of moving police cruisers that are chasing him. The cars slowly drift to a halt.

- Zipping around and handcuffing police to each other with their own cuffs.

Stopping the Speedster

Stop & Go–In the combat rules, characters take turns acting in their initiative order: one character runs and attacks, and then stops and does nothing until his action comes up again. Taken literally, it looks like Speed Demon makes a move and winds up at a certain spot on his action, but then is technically stationary until his turn comes up again. Obviously this is not the case, and the speedster (or any other moving character) is not standing still between actions. It is just a convenient way to simplify action and run a combat.

Make it clear to the players that the Speed Demon does not "stop" when it is not his action. Ranged attacks can still take shots at him, but a normal speed melee hero cannot come to grips with him without a Readied Action to attack when the Speed Demon passes nearby.

Ready an Action–Players may try to use the Ready action, and just declare that they hit Speed Demon when he comes near them. By the rules it seems to makes sense, but the rules also assume a character has perfect reflexes. A speedster moves so fast that he is hard to follow with the naked eye, and he can race around a character and attack from any direction in the blink of an eye. To reflect this in game terms, Speed Demon is Invisible any round he moves. A hero has to successfully Notice him to get the Readied action. Unless the hero has a targeting sense other than sight, total concealment (50% miss chance) still applies.

Mental Powers–If the heroes have Mental or other Perception-range powers that hit automatically, they could have a very easy time stopping Speed Demon, eliminating the challenge (see **Game Breakers**). Perception powers do require the attacker to be able to perceive the target clearly, so Speed Demon's "Invisibility while moving" power may mean an attacker cannot keep him in sight long enough to use the power.

- After police chain and padlock bank doors, picking the lock in under a second and racing inside right under the officers' noses.

These maneuvers let you show the heroes just how fast Speed Demon is so they recognize that just trying to grab him is not likely to work.

Of course all work and no play makes Tanner a dull boy, and there are times when Speed Demon stops of his own accord:

- All this robbery is hungry work. Speed Demon stops to eat, ransacking a hot dog cart after the terrified owner scampers away.

- An on-the-scene news crew is covering the crime spree, so he stops to gloat and give an impromptu interview. He taunts and mocks the police or any heroes that have tried to stop him. Gossip reporters might get into the spirit of the whole thing and promote

Speed Demon, criticize the heroes, etc.–good television is good television.

- Coverage of his crime spree is playing on the news, so he stops at a store window to watch himself. He has no objection to being demonized (so to speak) since that just bolsters his reputation, but lax or disinterested coverage may spur him to race into the news studio and set the record straight. He disappears from the store front and reappears in the studio, on television, a few seconds later.

- He can't really run around carrying all this money. Speed Demon stashes the cash in some easily accessible location like a dumpster in a back alley that he can swing by after each robbery. He figures he'll be back to pick it up before anyone finds it, but the money has really become a lower priority to him than the fame and attention. If a garbage truck empties the dumpster before he does, Speed Demon could wind up chasing it through downtown to get his loot back.

Playing In Traffic (Action Shtick)

A crook dashes across a busy street to give the cops the slip. A hero tackles a monster and both sprawl onto the freeway. A nimble villain springs from roof to roof of moving cars and dares her nemesis to follow. Your mother told you to always look both ways before you cross, but sometimes you just don't have the time.

You can use the **Playing In Traffic** Action Shtick when characters are trying to dash across a busy street, when they get thrown into traffic, or when gutsy combatants decide that the speeding cars on the highway won't stop them from finishing their martial arts showdown. Lots of honking is mandatory, with fast cars exhibiting the peculiar physics of the Doppler Effect.

> DC 15 Reflex save to avoid cars on city streets, DC 20 for highways. Failing by less than 5 means the person has *barely* dodged out the way and is now prone and Dazed for one round. A prone person has to make another save at a 5 higher DC the next round, even if there would not normally be a save that round.
>
> Save each round in dense traffic or if moving through multiple lanes, or every other round or less for lighter traffic.
>
> Damage 6 for being hit by a car on the city streets, Damage 8 on the highway. Increase damage by 2 for a heavier vehicle like a truck or bus. The vehicle takes half that damage.
>
> A tough character can opt to not make a Reflex save, avoiding risk the chance of falling on his face and just taking the impact instead. Check for knockback even if no damage is inflicted.

Depending on how solid the person getting hit by a car is, they might endanger the vehicle and driver in addition to just taking damage themselves.

> If the character hit has a knockback bonus greater than the impact damage, the vehicle also takes the full damage instead of only half.

At night the rushing headlights can be blinding (the "deer in the headlights" factor).

> Dazzle 3 (visual) just before any Reflex save to dodge cars

You can also use the **Hit by a Car** Action Shtick if one character tries to save another from traffic.

Finale

If the heroes want to catch Speed Demon, they are going to have to make him play by their rules instead of his:

Trap Him–Lure him into area where he can be trapped and forced to fight, such as ambushing him in a bank he hasn't robbed yet where the exits can be sealed.

Taunt Him–Convince him to stay put with insults or some other challenge.

If the heroes have been paying attention, they should notice that Speed Demon is particularly interested in fame and media attention. If they can engineer some bad press, they could make him show up in person to set the record straight.

Variants

Time Bandits–A criminal organization with access to advanced prototype technology equips gunmen with "time compression" vests, granting them subjective super-speed. They zip around a bank gathering loot or fire off entire clips of ammo in one stuttering burst (oops). The vests only operate within range of a warp coil power source concealed in a nearby van. The bank robbery is just a field test, so they are hoping for police or superhero intervention to test things out.

Speed Demon			villain / PL 10

STR	DEX	CON
10/--	34/+12	10/--

INT	WIS	CHA
14/+2	10/--	14/+2

ATTACK	+14 strike 0 +14 rapid attack +4 ranged (sneak 3)
DEF	30 (16 flat) (defensive attack)
TOUGH	+0

FORT	REF	WILL
+5	+15	+6

INIT	GRAP	SIZE
+56	+14	Med

POWERS

Super-Speed 11 (25k mph) Rapid Attack [22 pp array]
    (alt) Deflect 4 (thrown, fast projectiles) free action, ranged
    (alt) Spinning 11
Enhanced Ability Dexterity 20
faster than the human eye (Invisibility (all vision) limited: only on rounds he moves)

FEATS

acrobatic bluff
attack focus
    (melee) 10
defensive attack
distract (bluff)
dodge focus 8
elusive target
evasion 2
improved trip
instant up

move-by action
quick change
redirect
sneak attack 2
    (+3 damage)
takedown attack 2
taunt
uncanny dodge
    (visual, auditory)

SKILLS

acrobatics 2 (+14)
bluff 6 (+8)
disable device 4 (+6)
escape artist 3 (+15)
search 4 (+6)
sleight of hand 5 (+17)

abilities 12 + skills 6 + feats 36 + powers 81 + combat 32 + saves 14 + drawbacks 0 = 181 pp

Player Handout Illustrations
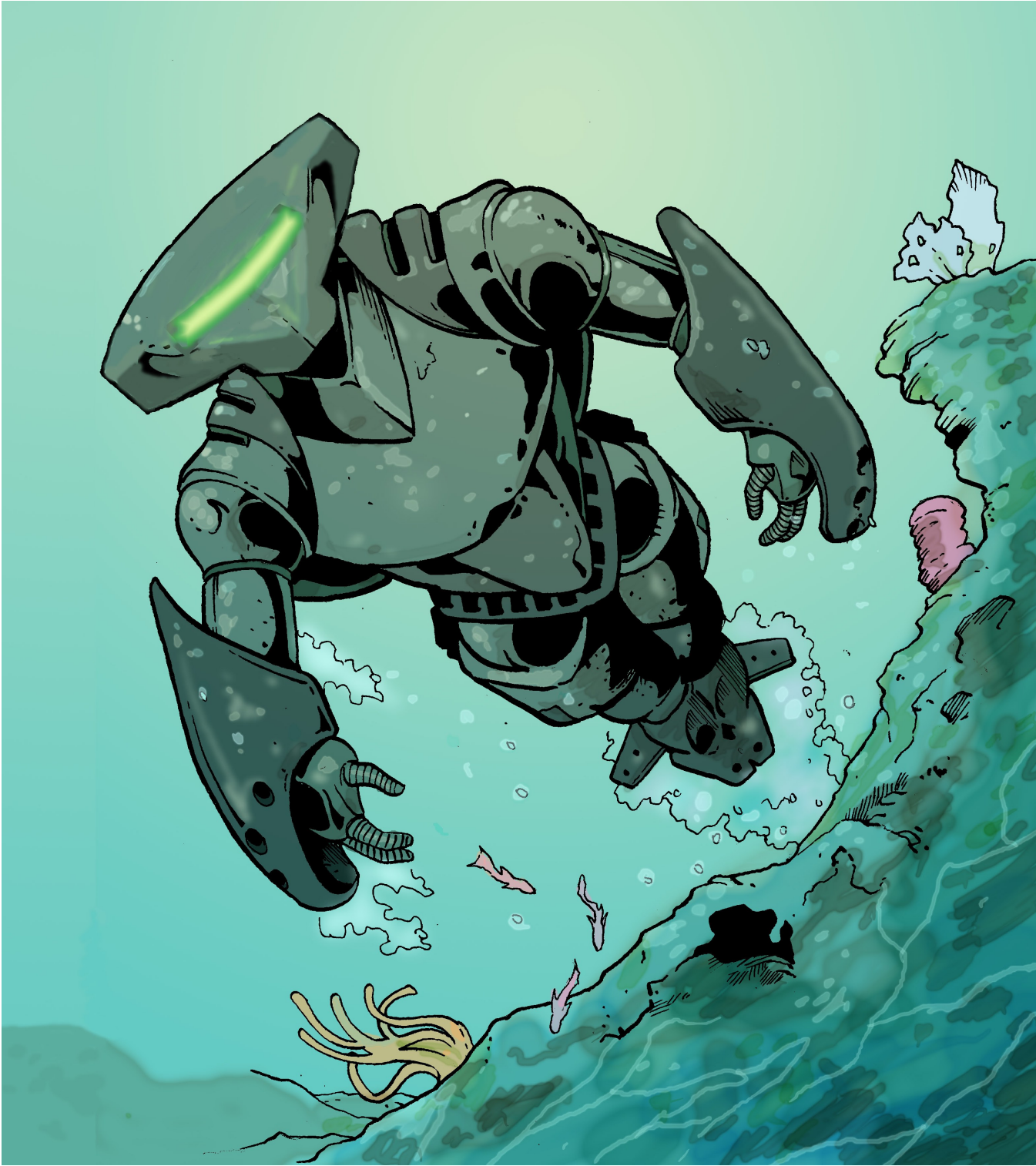
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