



EVIL GENIUS

Issue 1: World Domination

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a Lame Mage Production
www.lamemage.com

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Special thanks to Ching-Ping Lin, Stephen Scholz and Jem Lewis.

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Introduction

Evil Genius #1: World Domination is a collection of five adventures, each with a different mastermind plot to conquer the world. Or just destroy it. Sometimes with these evil geniuses it's hard to tell the difference.

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. And we love you for it.

The five scenarios in this issue are:

High Noon—Beams of light focused by orbiting crystal clouds cut massive trenches across the countryside.

The Cornfields—Genetically altered seeds spawn towering mutant plant-giants, striding out of the farmlands and towards the cities.

The Brain-Taker—Disgraced scientist Gordon Bockhurst builds a device to drain the mental energy from whole cities and take it for himself, giving him superhuman intelligence and deadly telepathic powers.

Luck Be A Lady—The infamous Crimson Claw uses Shang-gong mysticism to steal luck from gamblers to give himself the power of the celestial gods.

Ice Age—In a final stroke of revenge, Dr Null uses the Earth's own gravity to push the planet out of orbit, sending it farther from the Sun and plunging the whole world into a new ice age.

Even though these scenarios are written using a particular villain (Dr Null, the Crimson Claw, Gorbok the Overmind, etc.), the crux is really the mastermind's plot. You can take these scenarios and easily swap in any mastermind you prefer. Don't want to use Dr Null? Replace him with any other scientific supervillain, or even a non-scientific villain who has kidnapped the world's foremost scientists and secretly put them to work.

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. The scenarios are also peppered with new Action Shticks (Crowd Control, Evacuation Montage, etc.) that you can lift and use in your other games, and there are also Variants to give you alternate ways to run each one.

If you have **Day of Dr Null**, **Death of Dr Null** or **Zodiac Ring**, there are places where you can use Action Shticks or other material from those adventures in these scenarios, but they are not necessary for play.

Dr Null is described in **Dr Null: Battle on the Bay Bridge**, a free download adventure from Lame Mage Productions.

Running Mastermind Games

In many superhero games, the heroes win by beating the villains—often directly, with fists. In the Mastermind Game, the heroes have to defeat the plan, not the villain himself. They may never even get to confront the cackling fiend melting the polar ice caps, just see him shake his fist across the video link as they destroy his devices. If they do get a chance to beat up the mastermind, it will probably be anticlimactic: the villain's forte is his plan, not his physical prowess.

The basic stages of the Mastermind Game are:

1) First signs of trouble—Heroes encounter symptoms of the master plan before they know there is a larger pattern at work.

"Well that takes care of that. Strange... I've never seen a creature like this before. I'll have to take it to the lab and run some tests."

2) Mastermind takes credit & Revelation of the full scope—These can happen in either order, letting heroes learn about the mastermind before or after they learn the real threat. Heroes may discover the full scope on their own (or through allies) or the mastermind can proclaim it as part of his message.

"I don't get it. Professor Hydra's helmet is on too tight if he thinks a handful of aqua-zombies is going to stop the Metro Bay Crusaders..."

A frantic scientist bursts into the room. "We just got the analysis from the lab! The zombie virus is contagious! If our calculations are correct, it will spread across the whole coast by morning!"

3) Fighting the symptoms (aka "holding back the tide")—Heroes fight the effects of the master plan. They may be successful for now, but the situation gets worse and worse. Either creatures become too numerous for the heroes to fight or the threat is spread too wide for the heroes to be everywhere at once. It becomes clear the plan has to be stopped at the source.

"We keep hitting them, but they just keep coming!"

"Hang in there team! Doc Fielding will turn up something! But until he does it's us to up to protect these people!"

4) Finding and stopping the source—Having found the fatal flaw of the plan or the hidden base the threat is coming from, the heroes move in to stop it before it is too

late. It may be a race against the clock to strike before the final effects of the plan wreak total destruction. Investigation leading to this discovery is usually going on in the background of part 3 (fighting the symptoms). Heroes may be able to just smash the source, or might have to make careful adjustments to save the day instead.

"There's the device—it's hooked up to the broadcast tower from Channel 5! We've got to reprogram it to send the self-destruct signal to the drones!"

Expanding Scope

An important part of any scenario is the scope of the threat. Will the death ray melt this one building, or is it going to destroy the entire Eastern Seaboard?

In a Mastermind Game, the scope often appears small at first, but then as the full implications of the nefarious scheme are uncovered, the heroes realize it is much larger. At first it looks like the death ray will only melt one building, and then a scientist makes a calculation and realizes that it could destroy the *entire* Eastern Seaboard ("Dum Dum Dum!").

A small but sincere threat can be as good as a large one (there is nothing trivial about even a few civilians being put in danger), but it is the revelation that things are much worse than you thought that makes the expanding scope dramatic. Done correctly, it may even be a moment where the heroes (and the players) wonder if the challenge is too much for them, if they are actually out of their league.

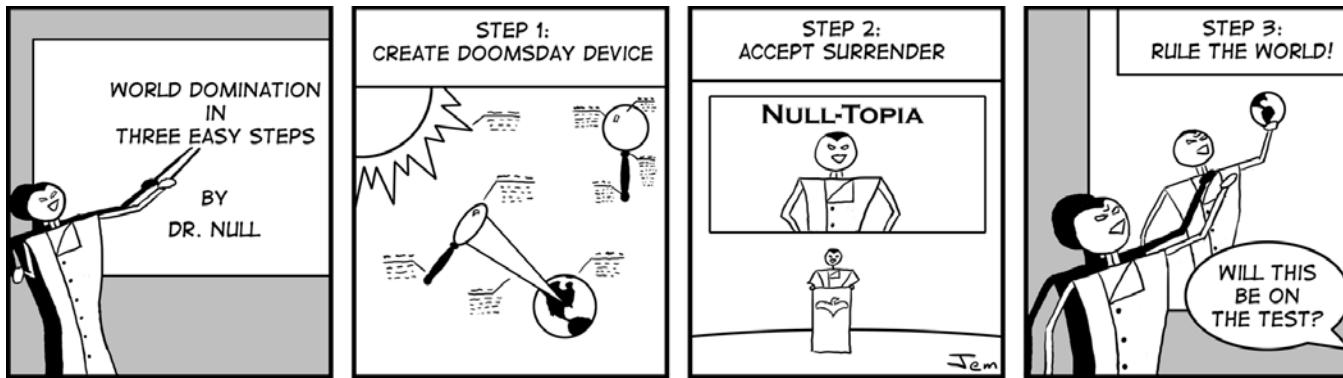
The "Dum Dum Dum!" moment is a critical revelation. Emphasize it.

Inventing Solutions

Mastermind Games usually hinge on some invention. There may be obvious physical ways to stop the plan (smash the thing with the blinking lights) or the heroes might have to come up with a more imaginative solution, such as countering one invention with another.

Any situation where the heroes use science to solve a problem is a blend of rules and dramatic plot device, so do not get too hung up on details. Some of these scenarios include ideas on how the heroes or their lab-coated allies could invent devices to save the day, but these are only examples, not the only possible solutions. Once a flaw is revealed, the players may come up with any number of creative ways to exploit it. It is pseudo-science, so if it sounds good, go with it and let them make a roll.

A failed roll does not have to mean there is no hope. It might mean the players have to go to greater lengths to make the plan work, preferably with more danger and



more drama. The new pesticide might only destroy the mutant plants if it is injected into the monsters directly, not just sprayed across the fields.

Magic, on the other hand, requires a lot less explanation. If you make a spell to block out the sun, you do not need a logical explanation of how it works, just a nice description—it's magic, it just happens.

GM Craft

Making Your Heroes Fit

Some of these scenarios require the heroes to cross the globe, go into outer space, or race through the sky chasing down missiles. If they don't have the powers or resources to do this, they may need a little help. Friendly organizations or governments can lend the heroes vehicles to get them where they need to go.

Some characters may not look like a conceptual fit. How does the Nightfalcon, an obsessed street vigilante with no powers, chase down a missile? In a borrowed experimental supersonic jet, of course, hastily dubbed “the Nightfalcon Flyer” (and which coincidentally comes in colors that match his costume). That’s what the masked crusaders in the comics do.

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 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.

Stay Flexible

A written adventure is static and a little overly optimistic. It describes the premise and assumes things will go a certain way, but it’s really just an educated guess at what the future holds. At the game table you, the GM, have to be flexible. You have to go with input from the players and keep up with them when they do the totally unexpected. That’s why you make the big bucks.

In these adventures we do our best to prepare you for the unexpected, to point out where players might make a hard left turn when you are expecting a right. But once play starts, you have to be ready to ditch the game plan when it has outlived its usefulness. Does it turn out you need to jettison the entire finale sequence because the players figured out a different way to save the day? If it makes the game more fun, do it. We’ll understand.

High Noon

Dr Null's death has set in motion a doomsday plan to launch clouds of prismatic dust into orbit, each cloud focusing the light of the sun into a deadly searing beam, raining destruction on the cities below.

Who: Dr Null (from beyond the grave)
Goal: Recognition & Revenge
Method: Science
Scope: Regional

With the death of Dr Null, the world breathes a collective sigh of relief, but death alone is not enough to stop a criminal genius like Dr Null from exacting his revenge.

Sometime yesterday, US Strategic Air Command picked up an unidentified missile launch from deep in the Pacific Ocean. The missile left the Earth's atmosphere and self-destructed high over US air space. Observers picked up no signs of radiation or substantial debris, or any other indication of an immediate threat.

What they do not know is that the missile released a payload of billions of tiny crystal particles, a fine dust spreading out to form a drifting orbital cloud miles across. The particles are too small to see with the naked eye, but light passing through the cloud is distorted by the microscopic prisms, making the cloud detectable through careful observation. When the sun is directly overhead and its rays strike the cloud squarely, the countless

crystals act like a single massive lens, concentrating the sunlight into a beam of incredible destructive power. Like a magnifying glass held over an ant hill, the beam cuts a path of devastation across the countryside below, fading away again as the sun moves past the cloud.

Because the cloud drifts in orbit, the beam does not fall in the same place from day to day. Each high noon the crystal cloud burns another city-destroying trench across the countryside, while scientists calculate feverishly to plot the movement of the cloud and predict where it will strike the next.

The beam snaps into existence with little warning: from the ground the only sign is a blurry glow as the sun moves behind the orbiting crystal cloud, followed by an enormous pillar of light and the destruction it brings. The sky for miles around is dim, like an overcast day, since the normal sunlight that would shine elsewhere has been concentrated into the beam.

This destruction is Dr Null's last scornful laugh from beyond the grave, and that's only the first rocket...

Crystal Cloud Beam

Each beam lasts for one hour each day, starting at high noon. The beam moves because the sun is moving in the sky, changing the angle of the light that passes through the cloud. Because the sun moves west, the beam sweeps the opposite direction due east, traveling at 100 miles an hour before the sun shifts far enough that the beam dissipates entirely, at least until the next day.

Blast 20 area burst (progression 2, 600 feet wide), sustained (damage inflicted every round), perception range (no Reflex save), 122 pp

Beam is 200 yards across and moves 1,000 feet per round (100 mph), so each round the affected area is 600 feet by 1,000 feet.

Heroes with the ability to see or travel into space may take matters into their own hands and go straight for the source of the attack. The microscopic dust of the cloud is practically invisible and unremarkable even if detected. Perceptive heroes might wind up with a sample of the crystal particles for examination, which will not stop the crisis but may speed up determining the nature of the threat (see **Investigating the Cloud**).

Spotting the Cloud

Government and military authorities are at full alert after the attack. They welcome the assistance of superheroes and escort them to the crisis command center (at Strategic Air Command, NASA, etc. as you prefer), briefing them on what they know so far:

- The source of the attack is unknown. There is no sign of a space-based weapon or laser platform.
- Technical details of the beam: appeared at noon local time, traveled due east, etc.

During the briefing, numerous photos of the air space above the devastated area flash on the huge overhead screens. Observers are searching for some kind of satellite weapon, and because of that preconception they overlook the unremarkable dust cloud that appears in several of the spectrographic images.

While the scientists are droning on about minute technical details and all the things they do not know, give a hero a chance to notice the cloud and bring their attention to it. Scientists may brush it off at first, but then rapidly recognize its unusual characteristics (subtle distortion of light waves passing through it, etc.)

Having a hero spot the critical detail that the scientists overlooked involves the heroes in solving the problem, instead of having them sit back and wait for orders from NPCs.

Investigating the Cloud

Once the cloud is identified as the source of the attack, the scientists turn their full attention to it. Observatories across the country track its every moment.

If heroes have space flight capabilities, they may be asked to investigate the cloud immediately. Otherwise a space shuttle that was preparing to launch on another mission is commandeered to go. Heroes may put on space suits and join the crew or just wait for results, as preferred.

Scientists ask the heroes or the shuttle crew to bring back a sample of the dust for examination. Heroes will almost certainly want to destroy the cloud, but that is not as easy as it sounds. How do you destroy a ten mile wide cloud of microscopic dust? Most superpowers are

Revelations

- 1) Cloud strikes a different random location at noon each day.
- 2) Doomsday plot of Dr Null from beyond the grave.
- 3) More missiles launch to create more clouds.
- 4) Submarine is launching missiles.
- 5) (optional) Cloud aligned by Earth's magnetic field.

Action

Part 1-First Contact

The first beam strikes with no warning. The massive column of energy burns its way across hills and fields, a few amazed onlookers watching from a distance. It destroys one end of a bridge and sheers through railroad tracks, but fortunately never comes close to populated areas.

If the heroes can reach the scene quickly, let them get a good look at the beam before it abruptly fades out of existence one hour after its appearance, the line of destruction halted as suddenly as it began. The heroes may be left wondering whether the crisis has ended without them, just as hordes of news choppers, military trucks, etc. rush to the one hundred mile long disaster area.

Reporters pepper heroes with questions if they stand still long enough. Is the danger over? How did they stop it? The beam came from space—is it an alien attack? The authorities try to keep matters calm, but they have just as many questions for the heroes, and no answers.

not built for that. A windstorm would move the dust, but there is no air in space. Magnetic powers can influence the cloud (as described below) but there is no visible reaction—it takes a large force at a specific frequency to disperse the cloud, so without scientific analysis ahead of time this will not be an obvious solution.

DC 35 power check to disperse the cloud, using appropriate powers.

Stopping the Beam

At some point a hero may try to stop the beam directly. Given the raw energy involved, the effort is probably futile and may endanger the hero, but it does establish the fact that for now the heroes have to get people out of the way and find a smarter way to stop the attacks, not confront it directly.

Part 2-Revenge of Dr Null

Heroes may still be in space when noon arrives the next day. If they are near the cloud they may need to race away before the beam coalesces (warned away at the last minute by a frantic ground control as scientists realize what is about to happen).

The heroes have a breathtaking view of the beam as it lances Earthward, boiling its way through cloud cover and cutting a perfectly straight line across the ground two hundred miles below. The cloud has moved since the last attack, so it strikes hundreds of miles away, destroying the airfield of a military base and a civilian power station, cutting power to nearby communities.

Fortunately there has been no loss of life so far, but if the attacks continue, it is only a matter of time before some densely populated area is struck.

Second Missile

Scientists are in the middle of reporting their preliminary findings from the returned samples when a pirate broadcast washes over the airwaves showing an all-too familiar face. It is a pre-recorded message from the dead Dr Null.

"You hoped to forget me, didn't you? Oh, but I won't be put aside so easily."

"What do you think of my prismatic cloud? Have no doubt, one cloud is just the start, just a taste of things to come. There shall be more, so many more that they shall cover the sky, but instead of darkness these clouds will bring a terrible light, a burning purity from which there is no escape."

At this point in the broadcast Strategic Air Command picks up another missile, also launched from somewhere in the Pacific.

"There is no shelter from the destruction I will rain down upon you. Your cities will burn, your nations will crumble, until the very oceans boil from my wrath."

"You won't be so quick to forget me."

Heroes might try to intercept the missile but it has too much of a lead: it was already accelerating to escape velocity when it was detected so they are unlikely to reach it before it detonates. Permit heroes to race after it if they want, but probably all they will see is the distant flash as it explodes in orbit. Heroes will get their chance to intercept more missiles later on.

Part 3-Rain of Destruction

Dr Null's systems launch new missiles at random intervals, approximately one a day. Depending on how long the scenario goes on, there could be several clouds raining destruction down upon the world at noon each day. The more clouds there are, and the longer it goes on, the more likely it is that a beam will wind up cutting right through the middle of a major metropolitan area, wreaking untold devastation.

Detailed Devastation

As the scenario unfolds there are likely to be multiple beams hitting different areas at noon. Remember that noon is always local time, so clouds farther east or west will strike at different times.

Even if they do not hit an inhabited area, take care to describe the devastation inflicted by the beams, including the one hundred mile long smoking trench left behind:

- Near the coast it turns a stretch of beach to glass before blazing out to sea, vaporizing sea water into a rising plume of mist.
- Burns through a wilderness area, touching off a raging forest fire.
- Cuts through rural power lines or a lonely interstate.
- Passenger airliner swerves to avoid the path of the beam, avoiding incineration but taking collateral damage and requiring an aerial rescue from the heroes (use **Airplane Mayday** Action Shtick from **Ice Age**).

Crisis at Orchard Falls

Authorities and the heroes are busy searching for the missile launch site to prevent more clouds from launching when there is an emergency alert: NASA has been tracking the clouds' movements and alerting local authorities to evacuate areas where the next noon laser-shower will hit, but they just spotted an error in one of

their calculations. Instead of destroying miles of farm land, one cloud is going cut right through the small city of Orchard Falls, and noon is only an hour away! The heroes have to rush to help the evacuation effort if there is going to be any chance to save the unsuspecting citizens.

Use the **Evacuation Montage** Action Shtick from **The Cornfields**. This may just be one of many such scenes, but you are better off playing one in detail and then just summarizing the others instead of playing them all out.

Part 4-Sub Hunt

Using the limited trajectory information gathered from the previous launches, Naval groups and Air Force observer planes comb the ocean, searching for the island or vessel firing the missiles. Depending on their powers, heroes can aid in the search or wait for their chance to strike from the bridge of an aircraft carrier.

Heroes may split up based on their powers, some heroes hunting the missile base while others search for scientific solutions to the clouds or help coordinate evacuations back home. As with any player split, make sure things move fast and you do not stay focused on any one player for too long. Everyone should participate, even if just to roleplay how helpless they feel in the face of the crisis.

Trajectory information gathered from previous missile launches points to a general area, but it is clear the rockets have some radar jamming capability, making precise tracking impossible. It also limits the use of interceptor aircraft or anti-missile systems: superheroes are the only ones capable of stopping the missiles before they reach orbit.

An observation plane or a flying hero searching part of the target area catches a lucky break and spots a strange vessel cruising just below the surface of the water: Dr Null's missiles are being launched from a submarine! A moment later there is a plume of water as a missile is hurled to the surface and rockets skyward, the submarine immediately diving into the shadowy depths.

Heroes face a tough choice: stop the missile or catch the sub before it gets away to launch more missiles later. If they can communicate with the authorities, they are likely to get an earful of frantic demands to somehow do both ("Stop that missile before it creates another cloud, but don't let the sub get away!"). Splitting up may be the only choice.

The missile submarine is fully automated and has no crew. It carries out its preprogrammed instructions, but will defend itself if attacked. With its internal power, it could sit on the bottom of the ocean for decades, waiting patiently until its program tells it to strike.

Finale

Destroying the submarine and the missiles prevents new clouds from being sent into orbit, but does not stop those already in place. Heroes and allied scientists could gain info about how to stop the clouds:

Examine Crystals—Grabbing a sample of the microscopic crystals from a cloud, a destroyed missile, or an intact missile if the submarine is captured. Examination could reveal that the crystals respond to magnetism.

Observe Clouds—Charting the movement of the clouds and noticing correlations to the Earth's magnetic field could also reveal that magnetism affects them.

Dr Null's notes—Raiding Dr Null's old labs (from **Death of Dr Null**) to piece together technical data on the clouds. The authorities might have the data from Null's base locked up in some super-secret research lab.

There are several approaches that could destroy the clouds or just delay the beams until a solution is found:

Block the sunlight—Blocking the sunlight before it reaches a cloud prevents a beam from forming. A massive cloud of mundane dust, or some light-blocking power, placed between the crystal cloud and the sun could keep it from doing harm. It could be hard to maintain as the cloud drifts around, but it only needs to be blocked at noon each day.

Sweep up the cloud—Various superpowers or inventions could eventually gather up all the dust from a cloud, but in most cases this would take too long to save the day. Wind is an obvious approach, but there is no air in space.

Magnetic disruption—The crystals respond to magnetism, and it's Earth's own magnetic field that keeps the crystals aligned properly to create a vast lens from billions of individual prisms. A correctly calibrated magnetic field could disrupt the crystals and cause the cloud to disperse harmlessly, or clump together into a single lump that could be gathered up or burn on re-entry.

To have the correct effect, a magnetic disruptor (whether it is a device or a character's power) has to be positioned between the cloud and the Earth, otherwise the Earth's magnetism will not be interrupted. Unfortunately that's right in the path of the beam if the clock strikes noon. Heroes might have to weather a round or two of the beam before the disruption takes effect. Damage next to the cloud is reduced because the light is more dispersed.

Blast 14 area each round, no reflex save

Intercept the Missile (Action Shtick)

A missile is streaking towards its target, and the hero has to race to catch up and put it out of commission. Sometimes just destroying the missile isn't good enough, since raining debris could cause collateral damage. The hero has to cripple it, push it out into space, or otherwise safely alter its flight.

Like all Action Shticks, the idea is to create an exciting and dramatic sequence that feels like comic book action, instead of just making a few rolls. Take your time. Describe the thinning atmosphere and the dwindling ground below as the hero races into the stratosphere at supersonic speed to save the day.

An "Intercept the Missile" sequence usually breaks down into two stages: catching up with the missile, and then disabling or redirecting the missile. Even if the hero is going to use a ranged attack, he has to match speeds and get close enough to get a good shot—when a missile is traveling at thousands of miles per hour, even a slight lead can put the pursuer several miles behind, beyond the range of most powers.

Catching up to a missile can be a challenge. Missiles are not very maneuverable but they are fast. A surface-to-air missile is faster than a fighter plane, and a rocket has to be fast enough to reach escape velocity.

Compare the hero's Flight to the missile's. Vehicles cannot move All-Out, so the hero has a slight edge:

Equal ranks or greater—hero can catch up, and keep pace with a move action while taking standard actions (like attacking the missile)

1 rank lower—hero can move All-Out to catch up and keep pace, but will fall behind any round he takes another action

2 ranks lower—hero can *almost* keep pace moving All-Out, but will slowly lose ground

3 ranks or more lower—hero cannot catch up

A hero can use Extra Effort to boost speed for a round and close the gap, and it adds tension: can the hero reach the missile before becoming exhausted? If a hero can grab hold of the missile he no longer has to use Flight to keep up.

If your heroes have no chance of catching up with a missile, considering scaling down the missile's Flight to make it a difficult but achievable challenge. You can also have the missile start at a lower speed (such as Flight 6) and accelerate to higher ranks every few rounds (which is also realistic).

A hero desperate to close the final gap can volunteer to fly right into the rocket's exhaust and grab the tail instead of flying alongside and grabbing the hull. The hero has to grit his teeth and endure the raw fury of the missile's exhaust until the job is done.

Consider the hero to have a +1 rank of Flight if that bonus will let him reach the missile that round. Each round the hero takes an automatic Damage 10 from the exhaust for as long as he holds on to the missile.

Once the hero has gotten close enough, he can try to grab the missile or hit it with a ranged attack.

+2 Defense per rank of Flight (moving target), reduced by the ranks of Flight of the pursuer (so firing at a Huge missile from the ground is Defense 28, if you are still in range).

Normal range modifiers apply, or the missile might be entirely out of range. A rank 10 power has a max range of 1000 feet (less than one-quarter of a mile), and a Flight 10 missile moves 16 miles per round.

Perception-range powers ignore speed and range modifiers, and can end the situation very quickly. If you want to draw things out have the missile disappear behind a cloud layer to force the heroes to chase it (Complication, award Hero Point).

Heroes can also try to cripple the missile's thrusters with a carefully aimed ranged attack, but there is always the danger that the whole missile will be accidentally destroyed.

-4 attack modifier to target missile's thrusters. On a Disabled result, the engines are crippled as intended. On a Destroyed result, the whole missile explodes.

Intercept the Missile (continued)

If the hero grabs the missile (by hand or with remote telekinetic powers like wind or force projections), she can try to stop it or change its course instead of destroying it.

Melee Grab—Strength + Flight vs Strength + Flight of missile

Ranged Grab—Power Rank vs Strength + Flight of missile

Failing by less than 5 reduces the missile's Flight by 1, permitting the hero to slowly change its course. Ranged powers like Telekinesis are calculated differently because they have to overcome the missile's thrust but do not get a bonus from the hero's own Flight.

It could be a race for the heroes to fly right into the path of destruction and stop the cloud before it fires, particularly if the cloud is lined up to strike a major city! Simultaneously other heroes might be desperately evacuating the target area below.

If there are multiple clouds, remember that noon is different for each cloud depending on how far east or west it is. Once they find a solution, heroes should be able to deactivate most of the clouds without difficulty, saving the climactic danger for the very last one.

Aftermath

There may be lots of communities to rebuild, burning trenches to refill, and perilous space dust to collect for weeks to come. More importantly, society is forced to wonder that even after his death, can they ever be truly certain they have escaped the wrath of Dr Null?

Variants

“One MILLION Dollars”—Dr Null (or whatever mastermind villain is behind the prismatic cloud) is not dead, and after the first cloud strike he threatens to launch more missiles unless his demands are met. He may even be able to move the clouds using a powerful magnetic ray, positioning them to strike the city of his choice when the sun is overhead.

The Sky is Falling—Instead of launching missiles with prismatic dust, the submarine surfaces to fire a beam into space that draws asteroids (or even chunks of the Moon) hurtling towards Earth. Falling rocks provide a more “concrete” threat for the heroes to intercept (adjust the **Intercept the Missile** Action Shtick for much larger objects to let heroes stop the falling rocks).

Missile Submarine

vehicle / PL 9

STR	SIZE	MOVE	POWERS	FEATURES
50/+20	Colossal	60 mph	Blast 10 autofire, accurate 4, improved range (laser defense pods) Immunity 9 (life support) Impervious Toughness 9	auto pilot navigation system missile tubes
ATTACK	+8 blast 10 autofire		Super-Senses 6 (sonar blindsight radius extended) Swimming 5 (60 mph)	
DEF	2			
TOUGH	+13 (9 impervious)		Onboard AI (construct, Int 20, Wis 20) (combat stats as piloted by AI)	
abilities 0 + features 3 + powers 94 + size 4 + saves 0 + drawbacks 0 = 101 pp / 21 eq				

Orbital Missile

vehicle / PL 7

STR	SIZE	MOVE	POWERS	FEATURES
40/+15	Huge	10k mph	Flight 10 (10,000 mph) Concealment (radar, partial)	auto pilot navigation system
ATTACK	--		<i>Stats are for an ICBM or orbital rocket (like the ones in this scenario) attacked in flight. Payload is not included.</i>	
DEF	8 (28 moving target)		<i>Smaller missiles like surface-to-air missiles should be Large or Medium instead. Adjust Defense, Toughness and Strength.</i>	
TOUGH	+7 (fragile)			DRAWBACKS Fragile (missile explodes on a Disabled or Destroyed result)
abilities 2 + features 2 + powers 22 + size 2 + saves 0 + drawbacks -3 = 23 pp / 5 eq				

The Cornfields

Genetically modified corn crops mutate into towering plant-giants, threatening towns in the heartland of the nation.

Who: Dr. William Bartlett (normal scientist)
Goal: Recognition & Revenge
Method: Science
Scope: Regional

Ashton-Sidera Corp is a world leader in the production of enhanced seed crops, soil fertilizers and pesticides. Their research branch develops new strains of crops more resistant to drought, disease and damaging insects—crops intended to thrive and produce bountiful harvests in even the most adverse conditions. Their mission: eradicate world hunger, feed the world.

Dr. William Bartlett was a prominent member of their agricultural research team, and he believed wholeheartedly in Ashton-Sidera's mission of making world hunger a thing of the past. For years Bartlett's idealism blinded him to the fact that pleasant slogans were one thing, but the company's real goal was a profitable bottom line. When he voiced objections to releasing a new line of genetically modified seed crops because of insufficient research into the long-term effects on consumers, his reservations were ignored. In the weeks that followed, he worked around the clock to identify

what he suspected were key flaws in the genetic code, but the company was banking heavily on this new crop and was not interested in hearing about theoretical problems. Wherever he turned he found closed doors and closed minds.

Frustrated and disillusioned, Bartlett decided to take matters into his own hands. His access to the seed project had already been revoked, so instead he tailored chemical additives in a new line of fertilizers, which he calculated would cause a reaction in the new crops.

Bartlett intended the fertilized seeds to grow into grotesque parodies of normal crops, a very visible and visceral demonstration of the dangers hidden in the genetic code of these modified crops. He would show the world, wake them up to the horrible poison that Ashton-Sidera was feeding them.

What Bartlett did not know was that last minute changes were made to the genetic code of the seeds, changes that would interact in drastic and unforeseen ways with his secretly modified fertilizers.

Revelations

- 1) There is more than one plant-giant, and even more are sprouting.
- 2) The plant-giants stride towards the sun: east in the morning, slowing or stopping around noon, and then west in the afternoon.
- 2) All fields sprouting plant-giants used Ashton-Sidera Corp seeds and fertilizer.

Action

Part 1-Slow News Day

A farmer in the corn belt reports a strange growth in his fields. Corn stalks in the middle of the field have grown bloated and intertwined, a half acre of crops growing into a strange and twisted thatch. There's no explanation for it, and when local media show up to report live, it gets re-broadcast as a "rural oddity" story on a slow news day.

But while all eyes are on this field, an undiscovered patch of mutated crops on a farm eighty miles away has already fully grown. Unseen by anyone, the mass of intertwined stalks rises up and walks away, a gaunt giant lumbering across the lonely fields. It is spotted near a farm, then smashing the roof of a barn, but it isn't until the County Sheriff's car is flattened on a side road that the anyone takes the unbelievable reports seriously.

When the heroes are called in, they intercept the lumbering giant just as it is about to cross the busy interstate: drivers startled by its approach have already skidded to a halt or tangled themselves in multi-car collisions, leaving many civilians stuck and panicked in the path of the menace. The heroes have to stop it before anyone gets hurt.

When the heroes arrive, let them know that at its current speed the plant-giant is five rounds away from stepping on the highway—count down each round so the heroes know how long they have. Some actions may slow it down or divert it entirely.

See **Dr Null: Battle on the Bay Bridge** (free download) for traffic-related Action Shticks.

Part 2-Path of Destruction

The heroes may think that after they defeat the plant-giant they have destroyed the threat, but nothing could be farther from the truth. Panicked reports begin to trickle in from across the state of more walkers rising up and marching through the fields, all walking in the same direction as though driven by some common purpose.

Heroes may race to battle individual plant-giants, or they may take a step back and try to figure out the root of the problem (potentially leading them to Part 3 first). You can set the pace by highlighting specific threats, forcing the heroes to take action and intervene. Some heroes may take an investigative path, searching for a scientific solution, while others fight on the front lines to buy them time.

Observant heroes may notice that the plant-giants always move towards the sun (east in the morning, west in the evening, always curving to the south just as the sun moves), which makes it easier to predict the path of destruction but not necessarily do anything about it.

- One plant-giant is heading towards high tension lines—the electricity might hurt it, but the power lines are critical to nearby communities and the authorities would rather the heroes stopped the creature and prevented the damage.
- A company of National Guard have moved to intercept a group of plant-giants, but their weapons have proved ineffective and now they need the heroes' help before they are overrun.
- A cluster of eight plant-giants is marching straight towards a small town. The authorities are mounting an emergency evacuation, but they could use the heroes' help (use the **Evacuation Montage** Action Shtick). If necessary, increase the number plant-giants to force the heroes to help evacuate rather than just fight.

No matter how many plant-giants the heroes destroy, they get reports of more and more spotted rising up out of the sprawling corn fields all across the Midwest. Despite their powers the heroes are stretched thin to be everywhere at once. If they have not done so before, the scope of the threat should make them look for the source of the problem.

Part 3-Seeds of Destruction

Some detective work (or a tip from a friendly investigative reporter) may turn up the fact that all locations where the mutated crops appear are using new batches of seeds from Ashton-Sidera Corp. Heroes could even rescue a news van as it dashes across the path of the newly risen plant-walker, driven by an intrepid reporter hastily trying to reach the latest farm and confirm her hunch about the seed connection.

If the heroes show up at Ashton-Sidera's front door, company reps feign surprise, but in truth the company has been monitoring the situation closely since it made the news. They had hoped to avoid being implicated, but once confronted they try to appear to cooperate fully. The company already suspects the disgruntled Bartlett and gladly offer him to the heroes as a scapegoat. Bartlett

was fired two weeks ago due to his rising “attitude problem” but the company provides his home address.

Bartlett has become somewhat unhinged, scared and simultaneously exultant at the unexpected fruits of his labors. No one can ignore the truth now! He does not know how his modifications resulted in this, but his notes about the chemical additives in the fertilizers that activated the mutations can be used by other scientists to create a counter-agent that will break down the plant-giants.

Finale

While heroes have been investigating, more and more plant-giants have arisen and set out across the countryside. For a particularly dramatic conclusion, have ranks of plant-giants on the verge of reaching a major city. Heroes battle to hold back the creatures while scientists (lead by scientific heroes if there are any) race to find a chemical agent to neutralize the unnatural growth and break them down into base plant matter.

Researchers could also come up with a solution based on the plant-giants’ attraction to sunlight, such as creating a very powerful source of light to draw the creatures in like moths to a flame.

Aftermath

Despite the best of intentions, Bartlett will doubtless go to jail for his actions if discovered. He may resurface later as a conscientious mad scientist, intentionally inflicting terrors on the world to teach them how man’s actions have injured the ecosystem.

A darker campaign could see Ashton-Sidera try to silence Bartlett before he could testify about potential dangers to the public (see the **Corrupt Corporation** variant in **The Brain-Taker**).



Evacuation Montage (Action Shtick)

Sometimes there is a threat that even the superheroes can't stop, or can't stop in time. When that happens, the top priority is to get civilians out of the path of the danger, leading to an Evacuation Montage.

First describe the scene of the evacuation. Be specific ("The coastal resort town of San Arriba is square in the path of the tsunami!"). The heroes might be the ones to spot the threat and realize evacuation is necessary, or it might come as a plea from the authorities. Generally having heroes spot the danger is more involving.

Have each hero come up with a simple plan of action. Just a basic idea of how they are going to try to help, such as "I'll fly low over the crowds and tell everyone to keep calm" or "I'll use my super-speed to race to the corners of the town and find anyone who might have been missed." Splitting up is almost mandatory, since heroes will be trying to cover as broad an area as possible. Their efforts will usually fall into one of these categories:

Leadership—keeping people calm, telling them the correct thing to do, preventing panic

Communication—spreading word of the danger, particularly to outlying areas that are harder to reach (ideal for speedsters or flyers)

Search & Rescue—finding people unable to save themselves, either because they are trapped, injured, or just lack transportation

Clearing Bottlenecks—eliminating physical hazards that prevent people from escaping (fallen power lines blocking foot paths, stalled cars or trees blocking roads, damaged bridges or overpasses)

Moving People—directly evacuating masses of people by transporting them out of the danger zone (with teleporting portals or just carrying away busses full of people)

Most heroes have powers that can help an evacuation, even if only in small ways (your telekinesis might not be enough to stop the approaching lava, but you can lift stalled cars out of the way when they are blocking the road). Even without superpowers, the mere sight of a well-known superhero can have a calming effect on panicked crowds, or provide leadership and guidance where it is most needed. Heroism is an attitude, a willingness to help, not just a matter of powers.

If you want to determine the impact the heroes make, let each hero make a check for the activity they tried—each hero only checks once for the entire montage. Every success improves the effectiveness of the evacuation, a failure makes no difference, and an exceptionally critical failure could impair the evacuation instead (the hero creates a bigger roadblock instead of clearing it, etc.).

DC 20 default difficulty for all tasks. Easy tasks are DC 15, and more difficult tasks are DC 25. Use appropriate power, skill, or ability. Exceptional successes (rolling far above DC) could count as additional successes if the task is one that could have broad results. No retries permitted—a hero may be able to succeed eventually, but time is of the essence so failure means the hero did not succeed quickly enough.

Scenes that cover a broad scope of action like this can easily become too vague and lose any meaning. To make them real to the players, describe the overall situation but then zoom-in to focus on small details:

- Cars clog the road out of the town, creeping along bumper-to-bumper. Just ahead the evacuation has ground to a halt. A station wagon was rear-ended while trying to change lanes, and the two drivers are arguing, their cars blocking much of the road.
- In a part of town already abandoned, kitchen doors hang open and a suitcase lies in the middle of the sidewalk, clothes scattered around it fallen and forgotten. The silence is broken by a small girl calling "Mister Kitten! Mister Kitttt-ennnn" as she runs from yard to yard, poking her head into bushes or looking up trees.
- One teenage boy is pushing a stalled car down the empty street, while another sits behind the wheel trying to get it started. It's a beautiful car, complete with a detailed paint job and racing stripes, but it doesn't want to run. The boy pushing is starting to grumble and look over his shoulder fearfully, but the would-be driver is loathe to leave his precious ride behind, no matter what the danger.

Mutant Plant-Giant

monster / PL 10

STR	DEX	CON	POWERS	FEATS
38/+14	6/-2	38/+14	Snare 8 touch range (tangling stalks) Growth 16 permanent Immunity 10 (bullets, piercing) limited half damage Regeneration 9 (one bruise and one injury every round) Sensory Shield 5 Speed 2 (long legs)	none
INT	WIS	CHA		
--	14/+2	--		
ATTACK			(immune to mental effects and interaction skills)	SKILLS
+6 strike 14 +6 snare 8 (touch)				none
DEF				
8 (3 flat)				
TOUGH				
+14				
FORT	REF	WILL		
+16	+3	+6		
INIT	GRAP	SIZE		
-2	+38	Colossal		

abilities -12 + skills 0 + feats 0 + powers 84 + combat 40 + saves 11 + drawbacks 0 = 123 pp

Variants

Wild Kingdom (animal variant)—Instead of genetically modified crops, a radical animal rights activist scientist introduces a chemical compound into zoos, circuses, animal testing labs, or wilderness reserves. Animals exposed to the compound rapidly grow to twice their normal size, easily breaking free of their cages or wandering into nearby communities.

Normal animals (M&M Chapter 11), add Growth 4

Unholy Ground (magic variant)—The cornfield is accursed ground, either an ancient burial mound that was plowed flat to make the fields or the site of the more recent defeat of a supervillain sorcerer or demon whose magic leached into the soil. All the plant-giants are originating from this one field, but they are growing from normal crops to towering walkers in the dead of night and then stalking away, requiring the heroes to backtrack and find the source after they realize that the first walker is not an isolated incident. Until the spirits are appeased or the spell is broken, more and more vengeful plant-giants will arise each night.

The Brain-Taker

Mobs of feeble-minded citizens roam the streets, their intelligence stolen and invested in the peerless brain of the Overmind.

Who: The Overmind (Gordon Bockhurst)
Goal: Power
Method: Science / Psionics
Scope: City

Gordon Bockhurst achieved success the old-fashioned way: he stole it from others. In his university days he plagiarized and cheated on exams. When he moved into the scientific community, he became a master of taking credit for the work of others, gracefully using his peers as stepping stones along his path to greater and greater recognition.

It wasn't that Bockhurst wasn't intelligent (he was, above average), but despite his elitist posturing deep down he knew that he didn't have the spark of real genius like some of his colleagues. If anything this bitter knowledge fed his arrogance towards his peers, goading him to hide his inferiority behind spite.

Inevitably his ambition went too far, and he was discovered sabotaging the work of a fellow researcher and taking the real results to further his own work. His

credibility destroyed, he lost his grants and any hope of recognition in the scientific community.

Bitterness and despair gave way to malice and the inevitable desire for revenge. In a series of break-ins he made away with the plans and prototypes for next-generation brain scanners, neurological probes, and other related research by his former colleagues. Combining those designs, Bockhurst constructed the **Mind Siphon**, an apparatus that collects mental energy (theoretical "psi waves") from other creatures over a broad area and then concentrates and invests that energy in the recipient (Bockhurst himself). The device is bulky, but portable enough to be transported in a truck or van, allowing him to move around discretely as he tries it out on the unwary public.

Not intelligent enough? Not for long. So what if there were risks for the unsuspecting "donors?" Gordon Bockhurst would show his former colleagues what true genius looked like.

Revelations

- 1) Abandoned van was stolen from Solomon Center.
- 2) Van was stolen during a theft of psi prototypes. The discredited Gordon Bockhurst was a primary suspect.
- 3) Bockhurst absorbing intelligence, not just draining it.
- 4) Bockhurst has gained massive telepathic powers.

Action

Part 1-Town of Fools

After successful lab experiments, Bockhurst chose an unsuspecting town for his first full power field test. He drives a van loaded with his device into the middle of the town and activates it while the people sleep, departing long before the damage is discovered.

Something has gone tragically wrong in the sleepy community of Hagerstown (population 803). The inhabitants are afflicted with some kind of stupor or brain damage, shambling purposelessly around the streets, mumbling incoherently, or staring uncomprehendingly at door knobs.

The county sheriff made the alarming discovery and notified state authorities, who mobilized a massive emergency medical response. Or you could have a hero who was in the area for some reason (visiting Aunt Gwen) make the chilling discovery.

Is it a virus? An airborne contagion? Some kind of chemical leak? Emergency responders take every precaution, wearing full hazmat suits, quarantining the area, and running every test they can bring to bear. The results are uninformative: there are no physiological symptoms or signs of foreign agents. The only quantifiable data comes from laboratory scans that show unusually low activity in the brain, but no hint why.

Intelligence of victims reduced to 1. Appropriate powers could heal them, but they do not know what happened.

Part 2-Detective Work

Euphoric from his first ingestion of stolen intelligence, Bockhurst is barely able to keep his mind on the road and carelessly drives his van into a ditch on his way out of town. After much cursing he is forced to trudge back to town, steal a truck, and return to load his equipment and resume his getaway. It's a bitter letdown to an otherwise successful night.

The heroes or investigators turn up one clue: a van with out-of-state plates stuck in a ditch alongside the main road leaving town. It would not normally stand out, but it was the middle of the night when the affliction struck the town, so very few vehicles were on the road. Running the plates reveals that the van was reported stolen from the Solomon Center, a medical research facility.

Heroes questioning the Solomon staff about the events in Hagerstown could be met with startled cooperation or cagey reticence, depending on how dark of a corporate angle you want to play. Distrustful or vigilante heroes might infiltrate the facility after-hours and search the records to get the answers they are looking for.

Connection to the break-in—Bockhurst stole the van the same night he broke into the lab and stole the prototypes he used to make his Mind Siphon. Solomon staff should easily connect the van to that break-in.

Connection to Bockhurst—The break-in happened a few weeks after Bockhurst's dramatic downfall, and there has always been suspicion among the staff that he was involved since it was clearly someone with inside knowledge of the facility. Bockhurst disappeared entirely at about the same time, eluding police and private investigators but further cementing his presumed guilt. His former colleagues can give the heroes all the details (from the Introduction), but with a certain distaste since despite everything Bockhurst was a colleague at one time.

Theories on the device—Given the details of what happened in Hagerstown, Solomon researchers could deduce that someone could have combined and altered the stolen designs to create a device capable of draining human psi energy. This could lead to further help in the next scene.

Part 3-Madness in the Streets

Intelligence is addictive. Rather than satiating him, every siphoned thought makes Bockhurst hunger for more. Reason would favor a cautious strategy to avoid detection, but his appetite drives him to gluttony. He recklessly increases the Mind Siphon's power and unleashes it in the heart of the city, consuming thoughts in an ever-widening circle.

At some point while the heroes are interviewing researchers or getting the latest update on the victims, alarming news reaches them: police have spotted crowds of people stricken by the same kind of mental impairment, right in the heart of the city. Whatever the threat, it has reached the crowded metropolis.

On the outskirts the city seems normal, but as the heroes move in they find signs of the same affliction that struck Hagerstown—citizens wandering the streets in an idiotic

stupor, whole sections of the city reduced to nearly mindless zombies. Heroes also have to resist the effects of the Mind Siphon, which becomes more powerful the closer they get to it.

Mind Siphon

Drain Intelligence 1 area burst, alt save Will, subtle 2, save once per minute (Will DC 11). Mind Siphon will not drain Intelligence below 1.

Area radiates out from where the Mind Siphon has been set up. Drain is rank 1 in the outer third of affected area, rank 2 in the middle third, and rank 4 in the center third. Saves are still once per minute.

Solomon techs or an inventor hero could create a jamming device to block the effects of the Mind Siphon over a limited area, shielding the heroes as they investigate. Heroes could use a similar device to cancel out the Mind Siphon entirely, but for it to work they have to find the device and broadcast their counter-signal from there—it cannot be done from anywhere but the epicenter.

Solomon techs can create Mind Shield 5 devices to protect the heroes from the Mind Siphon.

An inventor hero may also try to make an Immunity Mental Effects device, which will also protect the hero from Gorbok's telepathic powers, but not his brutal telekinetic attack.

Crowd Control (Action Shtick)

Beating up thugs and criminals is one thing—restraining basically innocent people without hurting them is another. The challenge of a Crowd Control situation is to keep order with as little force as possible. Even if the crowd cannot harm the heroes (which is often the case) the rioters may harm bystanders or each other unless the violence is quelled. The heroes have to protect the crowd from itself.

Heroes can shirk mercy and just use their full power (which puts their heroic nature in question), or they can metaphorically fight with one hand behind their backs, pulling their punches and carefully using their powers in a way to avoid causing harm. Rather than applying modifiers or just having heroes punch rioters “less hard,” encourage heroes to provide descriptions of how they are being careful not to harm civilians. Holding back may be frustrating for the heroes—let them roleplay that.

If a hero makes attacks that seem overpowered or reckless (throwing a car into the middle of the mob to scatter them), use a Complication to count a hero’s attack as lethal instead of non-lethal. Injured civilians could cast long shadows on a hero’s reputation.

Only use this option if the players are taking advantage of the rules or obviously endangering civilians. Some players will be upset that they involuntarily injured civilians and may have just been confused about the non-lethal rule. Be prepared to negotiate, or let the player “buy back” the injury by spending the Hero Point they got from the Complication—it looked like the civilians were hurt or about to be hurt, but the harm was only superficial or they got out of the way at the last moment.

You can keep the crowd scene interesting with descriptions of small violence. Each round describe a specific detail that drives home the point that every moment that goes by, things are happening: property is getting destroyed, and people are getting hurt. It may be a messy situation, but the heroes have to do something.

- A brick smashes through a plate glass window, raining fragments on the sidewalk and the crowd.
- Half a dozen people rock a car back and forth, and have just begun to tip it on its side. There is a heavy smell of gasoline from the leaking fuel tank.
- A bottle flies past the head of one of the heroes.
- A teenaged boy loses his footing and falls to the ground, and a heel comes down on his hand before he can get up. His cries go unheard as the pressing crowd closes over him.

Depending on the crowd’s motivation, a charismatic hero may be able to defuse the situation with an impassioned plea or scare them off with threats.

Diplomacy check to adjust attitude from Hostile, or use Intimidating Groups options for Intimidate check. If the crowd has a strong motivation, raise the DC by 5 or more. Either check requires people to be able to see and hear you, so it may be impossible to influence a large crowd.

Finding the Cause

As the psychic damage covers more and more of the city, finding the source of the problem becomes an increasingly difficult but not insurmountable task.

- Solomon techs or an inventor hero could create a device to follow the stolen psi waves to their destination. Telepaths or other characters with mental senses could do the same.
- Chart the area affected (from police reports or an aerial survey), plot the center of the circle and start searching there.
- Just charge in and look around, counting on legwork and blind luck (a classic superhero approach).

No matter how precise the method, heroes should have to hunt around a bit and get a good look at the devastation to the populace before they are confronted by Bockhurst.

Confrontation

As part of the draining process, the Mind Siphon expands Bockhurst's awareness across the area he feeds on. He senses the intruding heroes as bright points of undulled sentience and investigates by projecting his consciousness to their location, an easy trick with his new powers.

The heroes may be making their way through the chaos on the streets when the ghostly image of an enormous brain fades into view, hanging in the air above them. A booming voice speaks directly into their minds.

"Intruders? There is no eluding me. I smell your ripe sentience creeping through my domain. Your consciousness will be another morsel feeding my appetite."

If the heroes address him as Bockhurst:

"Gordon Bockhurst is no more. I am Gorbok. I am the Overmind."

Bockhurst uses his mental powers to turn the sapped citizens into a raving mob, determined to tear the heroes to shreds with their bare hands. Drunk with power he controls more and more innocent civilians, turning the city into a howling pit of madness, turning their induced rage against the heroes or, lacking those targets, against each other.

Insane rioters are Bystanders (M&M Chapter 11) with Rage, unarmed or using clubs (+2 damage) or thrown bricks (+1 damage ranged). Use Aggressive Stance constantly, Charge whenever possible, and Aid on attack to reflect hordes surrounding heroes. Trip or Grapple to overwhelm heroes.

The floating brain is Bockhurst's Astral Form. He can use his mental powers through Astral Form, but mental or sensory powers can affect him as well. Because he is using some of his array for Astral Form 4 (range one mile), most of his attacks can only be used at rank 6—he is there to observe and control the crowd, not attack the heroes directly.

Mind Control versus crowds is Continuous Lasting, so it remains in effect even after Bockhurst withdraws his Astral Form from the battle.

Finale

Under Bockhurst's mental domination, madness and rioting spreads across the drained portions of the city, and soon the crazed mobs will spill out and threaten civilians in the untouched areas of the city, assuming the Mind Siphon does not reach them first. The heroes have to stop things at the source before the city is torn apart.

Bockhurst is sitting inside an innocuous utility truck, parked on the street with fat cables running down an open manhole to tap the city's power grid and charge the Mind Siphon. The interior of the truck has been gutted to make room for the device and the countless cranial leads attached to Bockhurst as he sits on the receptor throne, dazed and euphoric.

Destroying the device while Bockhurst is attached causes him to scream in pain and fall to the ground, only to rise again with glowing eyes and veins standing out on his swelling forehead. The absorbed psi power has triggered unexpected biological changes and granted him terrifying telepathic and telekinetic powers. Temporarily driven to near madness by the changes to his consciousness, he lashes out savagely with the full force of his powers.

Bockhurst's mental powers make him a powerful opponent. If you want to keep the battle short and sweet, a climactic finish to the plot instead of a drawn-out slugfest, have him use Extra Effort to increase his power rank or Surge to make two attacks per round. In his arrogance and eagerness to overwhelm the heroes, he pushes his powers too far and will become Fatigued and then Exhausted. It will be a brutal onslaught for the heroes, but if they weather it, the fight will end quickly.

Aftermath

Victims of the Mind Siphon may recover on their own or could remain disabled until heroes and researchers find a cure.

Bockhurst goes to jail, but even without the Mind Siphon, the biological changes set in motion continue to transform his body in the weeks that follow. His head enlarges to a freakish size, his limbs and torso swelling like a grotesque over-sized dwarf. His ties with humanity fully severed, he is now only Gorbok the Overmind.

Variants

Corporate Corruption—The Solomon Center is not as nice as it appears: they were building a machine very similar to the Mind Siphon before Bockhurst stole the plans. They feign ignorance of Bockhurst's activities after the break-in but have been quietly hunting him down. Heroes could cross paths with crack commando squads or even your choice of hired supervillains, sent by Solomon to recapture Bockhurst and the plans.

Commandos use Soldier stats (M&M Chapter 11)

Benevolent Genius—Bockhurst is an idealistic visionary who believes that with his borrowed hyper-intelligence he will be able to understand and solve all the world's problems. Saving the world is too important to let anyone stand in his way.

Dream Eater (magic variant)—A magician has a bowl that captures dreams, which the magician can then drink to increase his mystical power. The dreamless people become mindless automatons the magician can command.



Gorbok the Overmind

villain / PL 11

STR	DEX	CON	POWERS	FEATS	SKILLS
8/-1	10/--	10/--	Mind Control 11 mental link, continuous lasting [45 pp array] (dyn) Mind Control 8 area burst (500 ft radius, progression 3), continuous lasting, mental link (dyn) Paralyze 11 perception (dyn) Telekinesis 11 damaging, perception (dyn) Transfer Intelligence 11 perception, alt save Will (dyn) Telepathy 11 (dyn) ESP 11 (sight & sound) (dyn) Astral Form 5 Force Field 12 Shield 10 Mind Shield 8 Flight 1 Super-Senses 5 (danger sense, sense thoughts ranged, mental awareness) Enhanced Intelligence 20 Enhanced Wisdom 12	none	concentration 6 (+14) intimidate 9 (+12) knowledge-behavioral sci 4 (+16) knowledge-life sciences 4 (+16) knowledge-technology 4 (+16) notice 3 (+11) sense motive 2 (+10)
ATTACK	mind control 11 paralyze 11 telekinesis 11				
DEF	20 (10 flat)				
TOUGH	+12				
FORT	REF	WILL			
+7	+4	+16/+8			
INIT	GRAP	SIZE			
--	+2	Med			

abilities 12 + skills 8 + feats 0 + powers 128 + combat 4 + saves 11 + drawbacks 0 = 163 pp

Luck Be A Lady

The infamous Crimson Claw uses Shang-gong mysticism to steal the luck of others and elevate himself to the level of the Celestial Gods.

Who: Crimson Claw
Goal: Power / Apotheosis
Method: Mysticism
Scope: City, then the Cosmos

Fu-shien Lo, known to the world as the Crimson Claw, has led a successful (and notorious) career as an international criminal mastermind, mercenary, and terrorist-for-hire. Recently he had a change of heart, and began exploring the spiritual teachings of his ancestors with renewed interest—not as part of some moral awakening, but merely as a more effective means of accomplishing the same ends. Sure business is good, but overseeing extortion, blackmail, and the destabilization of Third World governments is hard work. The Claw has learned that money can't buy you happiness, but he's gambling that the powers of the Celestial Gods can.

Months ago, the Crimson Claw was hired by a major Asian government to abduct the Lama of Shang-gong from his safe haven here in the West and return him overseas. Instead the Crimson Claw faked their deaths in a helicopter crash and went underground. With the captive Lama as his unwilling mentor, combined with

his own dabbling in the occult, the Crimson Claw was confident he could unlock the mystical secrets of the ancient masters.

With the teachings he has coerced from the Lama, Lo has devised an ambitious plan. Good fortune comes from the gods. It is their blessing, given unto mortals as a heavenly gift. By stealing the luck of others and taking it for himself, Lo intends to accumulate enough fortune to become like unto a god. In time he will ascend the Heavenly Jade Staircase and sit enthroned among the August Gods in the Celestial Court!

As the first step of his plan, the Crimson Claw opened the Lucky Dragon, a floating casino, as the front for his operations. In a marriage of mysticism and modern technology, the Crimson Claw has meticulously rigged all the games, wiring each roulette wheel and slot machine back to mainframe computers at the heart of the casino. Game results for the entire night are predetermined by the computer before the doors even open. When a gambler sits at the table, they are using their luck to win the game, but because the result is predetermined, their luck has no effect and is left unused. The Claw's

supernatural rituals absorb this stray fortune and draw it into a magical vessel. That magical vessel is the Crimson Claw's apprentice, Mong-si Jin, Golden Lotus Blossom.

Golden Lotus Blossom (Mong-si Jin)

Mong-si Jin was a lowly but gifted student of the ancient fighting arts before the Crimson Claw took her under his wing. He was drawn to her as much by her impressionable loyalty (which he has manipulated masterfully) as by her spiritual strength and potential. She is still new to the Western world and views everything with the xenophobic clarity and confidence that only ignorance can bring. She obeys the Crimson Claw without question: he is her master, she his disciple.

Jin serves as a student, bodyguard, unswerving lieutenant, and now also as the vital link in the Crimson Claw's plans. Debased by a lifetime of immorality and vices, the Claw lacks the spiritual fortitude to absorb the fortune directly. Jin's spirit is disciplined and pure, making her a perfect conduit for the stolen luck. With meditation and careful mantras, she is able to harness and contain this celestial fortune, and then channel the tamed power to her master, the Crimson Claw.

With the Lama's teachings, Mong-si Jin's potential has been unlocked, and she has rapidly developed *chi* powers far greater than her so-called master. Under the Claw's gleeful encouragement, this potential has been channeled into her fighting arts and honed into destructive powers. She can now make her aura tangible, surrounding her whole body in a golden field strangely reminiscent of burning flowers, augmenting both her attack and defense.

The Lama

In his arrogance Lo has deluded himself into believing that he has forced the Lama to impart his secrets. He does not recognize the inherent contradiction of thinking that the Lama could be so spiritually powerful but at the same time so easily imprisoned and manipulated.

In truth, the Lama has remained a prisoner by choice, and has taught Lo in hopes of awakening values and the beginnings of a proper moral teaching within the man. To the enlightened Lama, the nefarious and sinister Lo is little more than a misguided child.

Despite his most patient efforts, it now seems to the Lama that Lo may be beyond saving, at least in this lifetime. Every grain of truth revealed has been twisted by Lo into

a means to achieve his selfish ends. The Claw's greed blinds him to any real enlightenment.

The Lama still sees some potential for good within Lo's disciple, Mong-si Jin, buried though it is under the ignorance and rigid-minded teachings the Claw has instilled in her. Where he has failed with the master, he hopes to succeed with the student. So he remains, seemingly a prisoner, yet really planting the seeds of true wisdom within her to see if they might grow. It is slow, but he is patient. As he knows, one cannot force the petals of the flower to open: they must do so of their own accord.



Shang-gong

"Shang-gong? No farther than a day's walk from here, but it may take you a lifetime to find it."

Shang-gong is a remote valley nestled in the mountains of Asia. Across the centuries it has been ascribed quasi-mystical qualities, and is said to be the home of the foremost spiritual teachers of the world. Others who claim to have been there describe it as a squalid mountain nation, graced with a few stinking shanties and ill-fed goats. Which is real and which is the myth?

Learn more about Shang-gong in **Southside Story** from Lame Mage Productions.

Revelations

- 1) The Lucky Dragon is run by someone called Mr. Dragon, but no one ever sees him.
- 2) The casino games are rigged.
- 3) Gamblers are winning at a reasonable rate, not being ripped off.
- 4) (optional) The second floor of the casino is off-limits to most employees.
- 5) The outcome of the games is predetermined by a central computer.
- 6) Mr. Dragon is really the Crimson Claw, international mercenary and terrorist.
- 7) Crimson Claw is holding the Lama of Shang-gong prisoner.
- 8) Crimson Claw is trying to gain supernatural power by stealing people's luck.

Action

Part 1-Syndicate Meeting

Streetwise heroes learn that a Syndicate lieutenant, Boss Sicanno, is meeting with a representative of another upstart criminal operation to demand a cut, establish turf, and generally assert Syndicate authority. The mob has no idea that the Crimson Claw is behind the Lucky Dragon, or anything about his schemes. They just want a cut of the gambling profits.

To integrate the scenario into your existing game, a hero could already be shadowing the Syndicate lieutenant to link him to other crimes. This lets the hero unintentionally stumble across the Crimson Claw's plot.

The Syndicate controls most organized crime in the city, making it an ongoing point of interest for any street-justice / vigilante heroes.

The meeting takes place after hours at a closed pool hall (a business Sicanno controls). There is no crime being committed that the heroes know of, yet, so heroes should expect to snoop (or even intimidate the criminals vigilante-style) but not get their hopes up about sending anyone to jail.

How much the heroes see or hear depends on how they approached the situation. Sicanno's guests arrive via limousine and enter from the back alley. The leader is a woman in a fashionable executive skirt suit (the Crimson Claw's disciple, Mong-si Jin), escorted by four dark-suited bodyguards, all Asian (Agents of the Claw in plainclothes). She introduces herself as "Mr. Dragon's representative," saying that her name is not important, to the amusement of the hardened mafioso.

Boss Sicanno smugly demands a cut of the casino's profits, leaving the unpleasant alternative up to the imagination with an inelegant shrug. Mong-si Jin feigns concern, but then grudgingly responds that Mr. Dragon recognizes the fairness of the offer and accepts the arrangement. She tries to conceal it, but she was instructed to accept whatever protection price the Syndicate demanded—the Crimson Claw has bigger fish to fry, so paying off the Syndicate is the simplest way to keep them from becoming a distraction.

Sense Motive DC 15 to spot that Mong-si Jin is not as upset about paying protection money as one might expect.

When the discussion is concluded, Mong-si Jin thanks Sicanno and leaves as she came. You can keep things eventful by having a lurking hero spotted at an inopportune moment (possibly while trying to creep away after the meeting is complete), precipitating a fight

with the startled gangsters. If fighting does break out, Mong-si Jin uses her powers to defend herself before making an escape.

Use Thug stats for Sicanno's men (no leather jackets), and Crime Lord stats for Sicanno, from M&M Chapter 11.

Part 2-Lucky Dragon Casino

What the heroes do at this point is fairly open-ended. The Syndicate meeting should arouse their curiosity about the Lucky Dragon Casino, but there are several ways they could go about looking into it:

Legal Investigation—The Lucky Dragon is a riverboat casino, possibly the first in the city. If city law had not allowed such a thing in the past, investigation might reveal questionable donations to city council officials to temporarily try out new less restrictive gambling ordinances. It was these efforts by "Mr. Dragon" that drew the Syndicate's attention in the first place. Useful information, but no closer to the truth.

Breaking & Entering—The heroes sneak into the casino after hours and snoop around. It's illegal, but that would not stop a true vigilante. More traditional heroes might balk at breaking in with so little evidence that there is anything going on, beyond extortion by the Syndicate.

Night on the Town—The heroes decide to check out the gambling at the Lucky Dragon first hand, going for a night on the town in their secret identities but keeping their eyes open for suspicious dealings.

A group of heroes might also mix and match, some gambling "undercover" while simultaneously others break-in to the employee-only areas and search for clues.

The **Night on the Town** option is probably the most fun. Players get to roleplay their "normal" identities for an extended period, blending in with the crowd, trying their luck at the tables, and interacting with the usual motley bag of casino patrons.

If you want to force this option, you can coincidentally stage a black tie gala at the Lucky Dragon and have the heroes invited in secret identity. The Lucky Dragon has just opened, so it is the toast of the town. Specific reasons for invitations will depend on the characters. A wealthy character has society connections, another might have a significant other who was invited as a perk from work, the reporter-hero has press connections that gets her in, and so on. It is also a perfect opportunity to have cameos by other prominent city figures, jilted love interests, etc.

Depending on your group, the heroes might not even know they are all there. If they do not know each other's secret identities, they could meet and interact at the casino without knowing who they were talking to. Set it up and let your players have fun with it.

Social pitfalls aside, an observant hero may eventually recognize that the games seem rigged (the fall of that roulette ball just doesn't look right) but at the same time gamblers do not seem to be losing more than at any other casino.

Spot rigged games—DC 30 using Bluff, Knowledge (Streetwise) or Search (possibly other skills or abilities as appropriate). Assume heroes "Take 20" since they are spending all evening observing.

Heroes with mystical, spiritual, or similar senses may feel the subtle effects of magic but not be able to distinguish more detail from the main floor.

Sense magic—DC 20 Notice with Awareness (Magic), Detect (Magic), or similar power. Can "Take 20" if intentionally looking for magic.

Inside the Casino

The Lucky Dragon is steeped in Oriental kitsch, from faux cinnabar lattice screens to the gilded foo dog statues. Everything is bright red or brilliant gold. Gambling takes place on the main floor which is crowded with roulette tables, craps, wheels of fortune and slot machines (no card games).

The staff is predominantly Asian. They wear dramatized traditional garb (slit silk dresses on the women and button-down tab collared jackets on the men) and humbly bow when addressing any patron. The majority of the public staff have no idea what is really going on at the casino, but they do know that most of the second floor is off-limits to all but a select few (the Claw's elite operatives). Most have never seen the reclusive Mr. Dragon, getting their orders through Mong-si Jin instead.

The second floor is where the real business of the casino is conducted. The corridors are the same plush red carpet and elegant decor as the main casino, but beyond certain doors are dust-free mainframe computer labs, ticking away behind glass partitions. They control every gambling machine in the casino, verifying that all results match the predetermined script. White-coated techs with clipboards watch over them.

Other chambers are decorated in a more authentic Oriental style, including those that make up the Claw's inner sanctum. It is here that he will usually be found, sitting upon a low dais, the implacable Lama to one side and Mong-si Jin floating in the center of the chamber,

surrounded by a golden aura and locked in meditation as she absorbs the fortune from the gamblers below.

The entire casino is under video surveillance (just like most casinos) and any intruders are dealt with by the Claw's elite commandos, leftovers from his mercenary days.

Getting Into Trouble

If the heroes learn that the second floor is "off-limits," they are almost certain to want to take a look. They may sneak up in plainclothes (leading to all sorts of interesting situations such as being unable to switch to hero identity after being captured without blowing their secret identity) or just switch to hero form and sneak in.

Heroes may just wind up fighting their way to the Claw (less interesting) or get momentarily captured and brought before the Claw, providing a great chance to roleplay and reveal his master plan.

- Intruders should get a glimpse of the packed computer rooms (reinforcing the idea that the games are rigged) before security forces catch up with them.
- Plainclothes heroes may walk right into the waiting arms of the Claw's submachine gun wielding commandos and be taken prisoner.
- If you want to capture heroes, have the guards watching the concealed security cameras flood a chamber with odorless knock-out gas when the heroes are snooping around inside.

The Crimson Claw has two types of agents: modern commandos, armed with submachine guns, and ninja assassins, trained in the ancient fighting styles and using martial arts and traditional weapons. The two groups are culturally and tactically different, so the Claw does not mix them: in a given encounter he will send in either commandos or ninja. The right tool for the right job.

Commandos use Soldier stats (M&M chapter 11), submachine guns with silencers, add knife, gas masks

Ninja use Assassin stats (M&M chapter 11), change Attack Focus to melee, add Strike 4 (martial arts), remove rifle

Protecting the Innocent

If there are still crowds of civilians gambling the night away, conscientious heroes should be reluctant to provoke a major battle and bring the casino down on their heads. A no-holds-barred supers fight could put a hole in the floating casino and turn it into a water rescue.

Part 3-Lair of the Dragon

Whether they kick down the door or are brought in as prisoners, the heroes eventually confront the Crimson Claw. He remains smug in the face of opposition, confident that nothing can stop his scheme for divine ascension. In classic mastermind fashion, he savors the opportunity to reveal the true grandeur of his plans so his enemies can see just how magnificently they have been out-maneuvered. The casino is only the beginning—after this success he has plans to draw fortune from all the world!

If fighting breaks out, the Claw lets Golden Lotus Blossom and a pack of his stealth assassins do the dirty work while he gloats at ease on his dais. Despite this vanity he can be a lethal opponent if forced into combat. He is calculating and vengeful, redressing any slight or insult the heroes may have offered.

Words of Wisdom

"Fu-shien Lo is a learned man, and it is the curse of learned men to see the world through closed eyes. He believes he steals the heavenly fortune from others and so attains divinity for himself, like a man who gathers rain in a barrel and expects to become a cloud. That is what he believes, for that is what he desires. But what are the gods and the heavens but the ideas of men, illusions we make for ourselves?"

-- *Lama of Shang-gong*

While the Crimson Claw gloats, the Lama remains seated in meditation, inert and unresponsive.

The Lama may unexpectedly address one of the heroes directly (probably the one who seems the most receptive to wisdom). Though he appears to merely look up and speak calmly and clearly, only the individual he addresses will perceive it, and all that he says seems to fit in an elongated pause in the speech and actions of everyone else in the room. Time is not frozen, and yet the Lama can speak slowly and say all that he wishes to say while the Claw pauses to sneer smugly at his foes, the ninja's adjust their stance, etc. To the listener it seems as though the universe waits politely for the Lama to finish, and the listener can likewise respond without anyone noticing or interrupting. This tranquility, his immunity to the chaos around him, is one gift of the Lama's search for enlightenment.

The Lama can advise the heroes and provide a counterpoint to the Claw's gloating, as well as explain his own motives for remaining an apparent prisoner.



Stolen Luck

"Luck? Fortune? Do not count a man blessed until all is said and done, for a turn that seems fortunate now may lead to greater hardship still."

-- *Lama of Shang-gong*

The Crimson Claw is confident that the fortune he has already stolen assures his success, but his scheme is still young and he has not yet absorbed enough to gain any tangible benefits, let alone elevate him to godhood.

Even without actual luck powers, the Claw may presume any setback his enemies suffer has been caused by his new celestial favor. With enough gloating, the heroes may come to believe that his luck really is working against them.

You can instead choose to enforce his stolen good fortune and have fate work out in the Claw's favor. Have the heroes suffer small misfortunes that favor the Claw, but do not award those Hero Points until after the heroes break the Claw's spell.

Finale

"Fu-shien Lo is a man of violence. Do you expect to teach him something new with violence, or is it he that teaches you? If a dog growls and barks at me, should I crouch and bark back?"

-- *Lama of Shang-gong*

The Crimson Claw believes he has gained all the fortune that was expended by the gamblers, but is it true? How do you know when a lucky streak is really your luck or just chance? Was it ever really *your* luck or was it just coincidence? There is certainly some mystical power at work, but the Lama may imply that Lo is misinformed. Either way, the heroes will want to put a stop to the Claw, now!

Clobber Him!—The old favorite. Capturing the Claw and shutting down his operation stops him for now, but it does not address the fortune he has already stolen.

Beat Him At His Own Game—Instead of just defeating the Claw with violence, which proves nothing, the Lama may suggest that to break the spell and return the stolen luck, they must show that their own fortune is stronger than his designs. Heroes may call for a truce and then challenge the Claw to a game of chance in his own casino. If they can demonstrate their own fortune carries the day despite his belief that he controls the games, his vision of glory will crumble around him.

Break the Spell Directly—If you want a simpler solution, provide a material focus for the mystical ritual (an engraved jade urn or a mandala tapestry) that the heroes can destroy to break the spell. Or permit a mystical hero to dispel the ritual directly once it is understood.

Escape Sub

A concealed elevator shaft in the Claw's sanctum runs straight to a four-man mini sub docked beneath the casino. This is the Crimson Claw's secret escape plan, and he will not hesitate to abandon Mong-si Jin or his agents if doing so will ensure his survival.

Aftermath

Only a small amount of fortune was stolen from each gambler in the casino, but could that be enough to cause spiritual harm if it is not returned? Could one or more of the Claw's victims who gambled too long now be bereft of their own fortune, leaving them with no future in the celestial scheme of things? With literally nothing to lose, these "outcasts of destiny" could be helpless innocents or desperate people ready to go to any lengths to regain a future for themselves.

Variants

Enlightenment Now—The Claw really has turned over a new leaf, and he wants to make up for the sins of his past by achieving Celestial power and then using it to impose peace on earth. If humanity won't attain enlightenment on its own, he'll force it on them, now.

GrandEquation(sciencevariant)—Insanemathematician believes that what we see as random is really a reflection of the hidden shape of reality. There is no chance! Everything is part of the grand design! These mismatched socks mean something! If he can collect enough data by seeing how reality reacts to controlled random situations, he can unlock the secrets of the universe.

Crimson Claw

villain / PL 10

STR	DEX	CON	POWERS	FEATS	
12/+1	16/+3	16/+3	strike 6 (martial arts) [6 pp array] (alt) nauseate 10 full round, tiring (chi strike) (alt) paralyze 6 full round (nerve strike) device 4 (easy to lose)	blind-fight defensive roll 6 dodge focus 5 equipment 10 (HQ, vehicles) grapple finesse improved critical 2 (strike) improved throw improved trip master plan	
INT	WIS	CHA			
20/+5	16/+3	18/+4			
ATTACK	DEF	TOUGH	+10 strike 6 crit 18-20 +10 pistol 8 (+2 sneak damage)	STANDARD DEVICES (20 pp total) ray pistol (blast 8) 16 pp smoke pellets (obscure 4 sight, 5 uses) 4 pp	
FORT	REF	WILL		ALTERNATE DEVICES	
+6	+9	+9		dragon's claw gauntlet (strike 10 electricity) 10 pp force field belt (force field 6 impervious) 12 pp gas pellets (stun 4 area cloud, ranged, 5 uses) 12 pp black lotus powder (paralyze 10, alt save Fort, poison, 5 uses) 20 pp	
INIT	GRAP	SIZE	+3	+13	Med

abilities 38 + skills 27 + feats 45 + powers 20 + combat 32 + saves 15 + drawbacks 0 = 177 pp

Golden Lotus Blossom

villain / PL 9

STR	DEX	CON	POWERS	FEATS
10/--	20/+5	14/+2	Golden Aura Strike 6 penetrating, affects insubstantial Force Field 8 Impervious Immovable 4 Flight 1 levitation only Strike 2 (martial arts) Super-Senses (danger sense, mystical awareness) Leaping 2 (5x distance)	acrobatic bluff all-out attack attack focus melee 4 blind-fight evasion improved throw
INT	WIS	CHA		
10/--	14/+2	14/+2		
ATTACK	DEF	TOUGH	+10 strike 8 penetrate 6 (power, all-out)	
FORT	REF	WILL	18 (14 flat)	
INIT	GRAP	SIZE	+10 (8 impervious)	
+5	+10	+8		
+5	+10	Med		

abilities 22 + skills 13 + feats 15 + powers 41 + combat 28 + saves 14 + drawbacks 0 = 133 pp

Ice Age

Using an invention to shift the Earth's orbit farther away from the Sun, Dr Null plunges the world into a new ice age.

Who: Dr Null
Goal: Global Extortion, Recognition, Revenge
Method: Science
Scope: World

Revenge is a dish best served cold, and what better way to ensure that than to plunge the world into a new ice age?

Dr Null has created a machine that interferes with the normal gravitational attraction between the Sun and the Earth, actually reversing a fraction of that force to repel the Earth instead of attracting it. Using this **Negative Mass Device**, Dr Null has pushed the Earth out of its normal orbit, sending it farther and farther away from the life-giving warmth of the Sun.

While the distance is relatively minor in terms of astronomy (only half a million miles, less than a one percent increase), the change is enough to cause drastic disruptions in the Earth's climate. If it continues, the Earth's temperature will continue to drop until all life on the planet is in jeopardy.

Revelations

- 1) Temperature change is global, not local.
- 2) Earth is being pushed away from the Sun.
- 3) Dr Null is behind it.
- 4) Device must be captured (not destroyed) so Earth can be returned to its regular orbit.

Action

Part 1-Winter in July

It is mid-summer in the heroes' city, but overnight the balmy weather turns unexpectedly cold. A hero patrolling in the dead of night might notice the inclement chill and think nothing of it until the first snow flake drifts in front of his nose.

In the hours that follow, the astonished city grinds to a halt as freezing temperatures, icy winds, and driving

snow clamp down on it. Heroes have their hands full helping people wherever they can:

- A commercial airliner approaching the city airport finds its wings have iced up, reducing lift and causing the plane to descend out-of-control (use **Airplane Mayday** Action Shtick).
- Ice-covered streets and countless fender-benders cause traffic gridlock across the city, blocking access for police, utility crews, and ambulances. Heroes can clear the cars from critical intersections or help emergency crews get where they need to go some other way.
- Falling trees or ice on major power lines cause black-outs in sections of the city, fostering more chaos at night and endangering those relying on electric heat. Heroes may use superpowers to clear fallen trees or wreckage of fallen electrical towers, or just patrol the darkened icy streets to enforce order. Heroes clearing

power lines have to be careful to avoid touching live wires—direct current makes muscles go rigid, freezing victims in place until they burn to a crisp or break free.

Damage 12 electrical, linked Paralyze 8 alternate save Fort

- Isolated looting by opportunistic street thugs or supervillains, taking advantage of the crisis to score quick cash. **Red Herring**—If you have a favorite ice or weather villain, consider letting him go on a brief gleeful spree in his excitement over the unexpected blizzard. He may even falsely take credit for the sudden weather, at least until the heroes pounce and beat the truth out of him.

Heroes will want to find the cause of the unnatural weather and nip it in the bud, but the immediate crisis should keep them busy and give them little time for investigation.

Airplane Mayday (Action Shtick)

A plane is in distress, and unless it gets assistance it is going to crash. The problem could be mechanical failure in the engines or controls, ice on the wings, a lightning strike, a bomb or some other direct attack. An Airplane Mayday can be an encounter unto itself, or it could be background action in a fight sequence when a stray laser cuts into the wing of a passing jetliner.

Heroes need to intervene to get the plane on the ground safely before it is too late. The direct approach is to fly up and grab the plane, using superhuman strength to compensate for the plane's missing thrust.

For a minor failure (some engine or minor mechanical failure), Strength required is 10 less than amount to lift plane. For major failure (serious engine failure), Strength required is 5 less than amount to lift plane. If the plane has failed completely and is falling out of the sky, required Strength is the full amount required to lift the plane.

Strength required to lift planes:

70 Str—Large airliner
65 Str—Medium airliner
50 Str—Fighter jet
45 Str—Lear jet
30 Str—Small propeller plane

Extra Effort can be used to raise Strength, forcing heroes to tough it out and resist fatigue until the plane can be brought in for a landing.

Hero must be able to fly and match speed of the airplane (Flight 5 or higher moving All-Out to catch up) or affect it with a remote power like Telekinesis.

Specific kinds of damage may let the heroes save the plane in other ways. A plane that has had its hull breached by an explosion could be plugged by a magical force wall or similar creation. A hole in a wing could be fixed the same way. Fire powers can be used to carefully melt away ice build up on the wings.

De-icing wings requires a fire attack or heat powers such as Environmental Control. If the power is one that causes damage, hero must make a DC 15 power check to melt ice without damaging the plane.

Part 2-Global Peril

Heroes are likely to think the unnatural weather is a local phenomena, and while they are running around dealing with the crisis they will not have much opportunity to keep up with the news. But as soon as they have things marginally under control in their own city, they are in for a rude surprise: reports of dropping temperatures are pouring in from around the globe. News flashes from around the world show snow blanketing the Eiffel Tower and the first faint flurries at the Pyramids of Giza. The southern hemisphere, where it was winter already, is being hit even harder. New temperature records are being set by the hour, with no end in sight.

Meteorology experts appearing on television are deluged with questions they cannot answer, but it is the astrophysicists who discover what is really going on, though it may take some time for them to get the attention of the authorities or get acceptance for their unbelievable claims that the Earth is moving farther from the Sun.

If any scientist heroes have pertinent skills and look into the matter, they could be the ones to make the astounding discovery. Or the discovery could be made by a scientist NPC who is close to the heroes, and he asks the heroes' help to get the press and authorities to listen to his claims.

All around the world, people have been clamoring for answers, but this explanation is more terrifying than anyone could have guessed. Debates rage on about what can be done and who is responsible, and the air waves burn with furious demands that "something must be done." What, no one knows. There would be panicky rioting in the streets if it wasn't so cold outside.

Revenge of Dr Null

In the midst of the fear and confusion comes a voice of clarity, but it is not reassuring: Dr Null broadcasts worldwide to take credit for the peril he has put humanity in.

"Revenge, they say, is a dish best served cold. And I have ensured that my revenge will be very cold indeed."

"Oh, don't think that extinction is my goal. Doubtless some of you will survive, safe in controlled climates deep beneath the frozen surface, generations eking out a squalid existence under artificial light, locked away from the bitter, bitter cold. In fact I'm counting on it—how else will there be any to remember that it was I who exacted this revenge, I who had the last laugh?"

"Bundle up..."

Finding the Source

Knowing that Dr Null is behind the crisis motivates the world as no natural disaster could. Gone is any vague hope that the situation was a temporary anomaly and that it might eventually correct itself.

All efforts go towards finding Dr Null. Law enforcement agencies worldwide leave no stone unturned. The heroes may be recruited (or decide on their own initiative) to double-check old bases Dr Null has used in the past, but the searches prove fruitless.

Scientists, armed with the knowledge that the change in the Earth's orbit was induced artificially, work feverishly to discover how it could have been done. Almost by accident, seismologists discover an unusual pattern of activity in the Earth's crust. Scientists theorize that these minor "compression ripples" are a secondary effect of the same monumental force that is pushing the Earth away from the Sun, a force they can now positively identify as some sort of inverted gravity. From the data it is clear that whatever machine Dr Null has invented is still operational and moving the planet.

Most importantly the analysis succeeds in isolating the epicenter of the ripples: a remote island in the South Pacific.

As above, if any of the heroes are scientists or have close scientific allies, they should be involved in the discovery.

The navies of several nations immediately steam to attack positions, but there is concern that any military assault could damage Dr Null's machine and ruin any chance of reversing the damage to the Earth's orbit. A more surgical strike is needed—cue the superheroes, if they haven't already jumped at the chance.

World War III (Optional)

To ratchet the tension even higher, a distrustful foreign power might be unwilling to just leave things in the hands of superheroes from another nation. There is concern that their battleships will bombard the island as soon as they get in range, foolishly thinking that destroying Dr Null's machine will end the threat. Other nations might try to stop them. The heroes have to race to capture Dr Null's machine before it is destroyed or a full-scale naval war breaks out.

A nation with nuclear capability might even launch a missile to destroy the island entirely (use the **Intercept the Missile** Action Shtick from **High Noon**).

Part 3-Island of Dr Null

Dr Null's Negative Mass Device is hidden on a remote island, near Borneo in the South Pacific, that has remained largely untouched and overlooked by civilization. Jungle clings to nearly every inch of land, broken by the forbidding spire of an active volcano in the center of the island and the crude outlines of an ancient stone temple smothered by vines. The island's position on the Equator and the abundant power provided by the volcano made it a perfect location for the Doctor's operation.

Even here in the tropics the weather change has begun to be felt, and the jungle leaves wither almost visibly with each passing hour.

The entrance to Dr Null's facility is concealed in the ancient temple, located in the shadow of the volcano. Creeper vines cover the stone ziggurat and massive holy statues. To the casual observer the place looks like it has remained undisturbed for centuries, but the "ancient" idols are actually disguised robotic sentinels, whose stone joints creak as they arise to crush intruders.

Colossal Robots (M&M Chapter 11), add +6 attack ranged, Blast 10 eye lasers

Some time ago Null experimented on the large apes indigenous to the island, implanting them with cybernetic control chips and treating them with serums to make them stronger and more ferocious. They can be found in and about the base performing menial tasks, and they attack intruders viciously.

Ape (M&M Chapter 11), add Enhanced Strength +4, All-Out Attack and Mental Shield 4

Some natives still dwell on the southern reaches of the island, but most fled long ago out of the fear of the "gods that walk" and other unwholesome experiments Dr Null has let loose since his arrival. They have a superstitious dread of the interior, and of the temple and volcano specifically.

Hanging By Your Fingernails (Action Shtick)

When there is a ledge overlooking a pit of magma, it is mandatory that someone gets thrown in or almost thrown in. No points for throwing in a character who is immune to the fantastic heat, unless of course it is the villain who (surprisingly) emerges later after everyone presumed he was dead.

A hero who is nearly knocked into the magma pit can cling to the edge by her fingernails, at least until the gloating villain approaches to step on her fingers...

Climb DC 18 each round to cling to the crumbling ledge (increase or decrease as desired by having the rock crumble more or less). Exceeding DC by 5 means you can pull yourself up.

Hanging over magma inflicts Fatigue 8 each round. Falling into magma inflicts Damage 16 each round.

Finale

Gleaming corridors stretch from beneath the temple all the way to the bowels of the volcano, and it is here that both Dr Null and his massive planetary gyroscope can be found, in a huge cutaway control room overlooking the seething magma pits.

The heroes need to capture the device intact so they or allied scientists can reverse the effects, but that is the last thing Dr Null wants. He would rather destroy the device or overload it, sending the Earth hurtling irrevocably into the cold, cold void.

The Real Dr Null

It may be the real Dr Null in the control room, or it may not—he has used clever duplicates before to fool his persecutors. If it is a duplicate, it could be a simple clone or android decoy to oversee things while Dr Null is elsewhere (a fact heroes may never discover if he falls into the magma or is crushed by a falling girder), or it could be an Atomic Super Clone, prepared to look like Dr Null and give the heroes a bitter surprise when they try to overpower the "helpless" Doctor.

If you have **Death of Dr Null**, use stats from the default Atomic Super Clone. Otherwise use the Powerhouse stats (M&M Chapter 1).

The real Dr Null is described in **Dr Null: Battle on the Bay Bridge**, a free download from Lame Mage Productions.

And then the volcano erupts...

If you want a particularly dramatic finish, at the peak of the battle the increased power of the Negative Mass Device starts to bring the volcano down around the heroes, sending debris crashing down from the chamber's ceiling and causing gouts of magma to churn up from the pits (if you have **Day of Dr Null**, use the Falling Debris Action Shtick).

If you are using the **World War III** option, a rogue nation could start shelling the island, threatening to collapse the cavern on top of the heroes.

No matter what, the heroes have to try to save the Negative Mass Device. Without it, there may be no way to return the Earth to its correct orbit.

Negative Mass Device is a gargantuan object, Toughness 11, Defense 1, 50 feet across, weighs 50 tons (Str 60 heavy load)

Aftermath

Even if the heroes lack the scientific knowledge to operate Dr Null's machine and return the Earth to its regular orbit, civilian scientists can be brought to bear later so long as the device is captured intact. It could take weeks of careful study to completely reverse the damage, leaving the world shrouded in an unnatural winter for months.

If you want an apocalyptic twist in your game, let the Earth stabilize at a more distant orbit, making the freezing climate change a permanent state of affairs (for now anyway). Huge sections of the globe become

nearly uninhabitable, forcing mass migrations towards the equator. Nations shift and collapse.

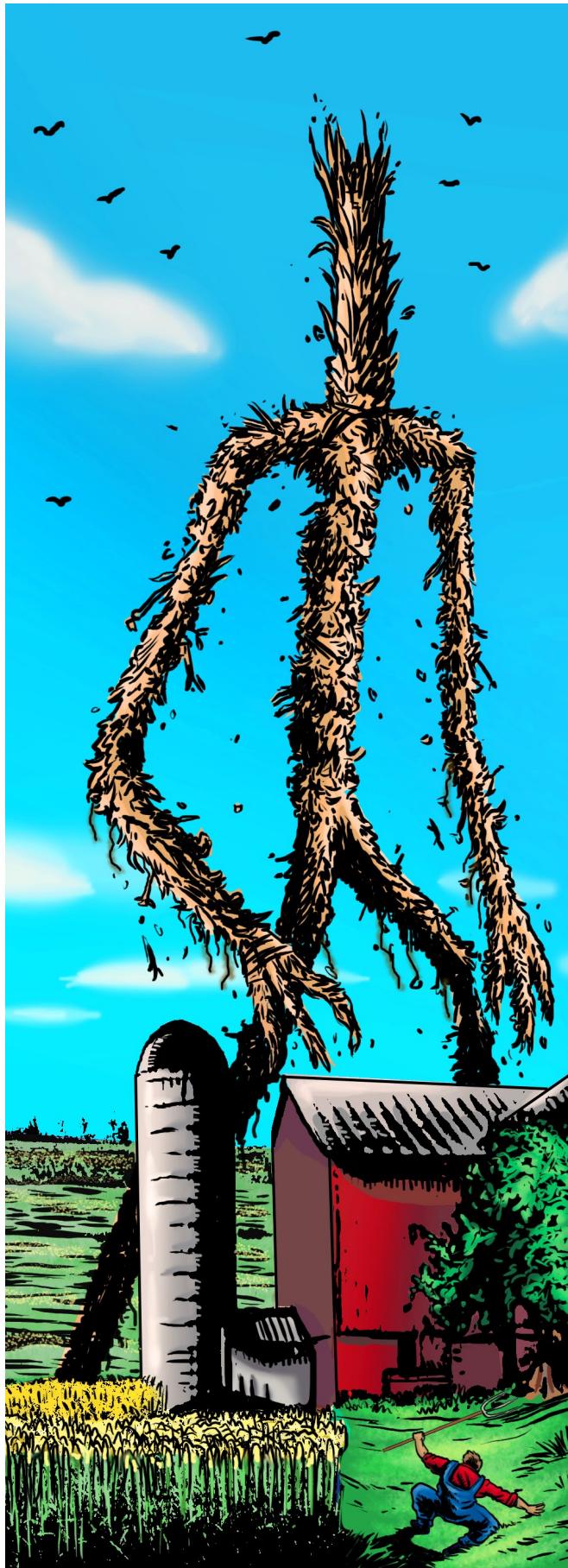
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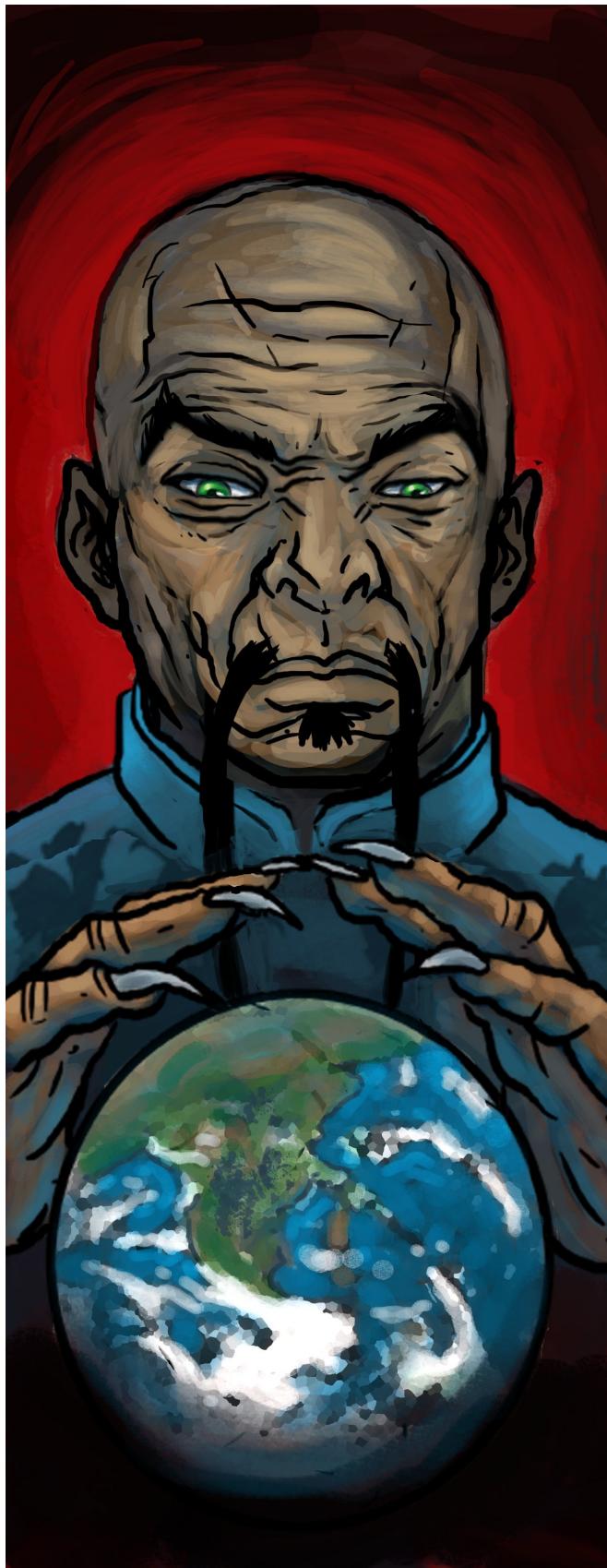
Global Warming—Instead of pushing away from the Sun, Dr Null pulls the Earth closer, causing record heat waves around the world. Crops wither and forest fires spread, and before long the ice caps start to melt, raising water levels and flooding coastal cities.

From Beyond the Grave—Dr Null is already dead (at least for now), and just like **High Noon** the entire plot is an automated doomsday device.



Player Handout Illustrations





STORM

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