



CRIMSON EMPEROR

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE CRIMSON VEIL



A SERIAL ADVENTURE FOR

THRILLING TALES

OR ANY PULP D20 CAMPAIGN

CRIMSON EMPEROR, CHAPTER THREE:

THE CRIMSON VEIL

by
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INTRODUCTION

"The Crimson Veil" is the fifth and final adventure in The Crimson Emperor serial. It is designed to continue from the previous adventure "Escape from the Crimson Palace." This adventure can also be used as a standalone. Due to its placement in the overall serial, "Escape from the Crimson Palace" begins with Chapter Thirteen. "Escape from the Crimson Palace" is designed for characters of 11th-13th level.

There are many character types that would fit in this adventure. If this adventure is used as part of the overall serial, then the PCs are already established. For a standalone adventure, most urban-based PCs are suitable, especially if they have scuffled with the local mobs before. The mobs will want to set them up to take the fall.

Also, events in Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen take place in "the City," which is the PC's home city. For ongoing campaigns, established mobs can substitute for the Marciano and Duffy mobs (and their respective leaders).

Chapter Order Note: While there is a rough order to the three chapters, there may be cases where the chapters can get shuffled around or intermingled (especially if used as a standalone adventure). The Game Master should thoroughly read each chapter to handle these circumstances. If at all possible, the final chapter (Chapter 15) should remain at the end, although even this is not absolutely necessary.

BACKGROUND

It is January, 1937. President-elect Stuart Morrison is preparing to take office. He promises to crack down on organized crime and end the economic depression. In a gesture of unity, Morrison has asked Franklin Roosevelt to be his Vice-President ("demoting" his running mate to Secretary of War). Oddly, President Roosevelt has accepted.

What the world does not know is that Morrison is not who he claims to be. The insidious Crimson Emperor has orchestrated Morrison's election and has disguised himself as the former Senator. The Crimson Emperor plans to turn America into an Empire, one that will ally itself with Germany and Japan.

To further his goals, the Crimson Emperor has developed a chemical weapon, the Crimson Mist. He plans to spray this weapon over a major American city (read: campaign city) and blame it on organized crime. He will use this as a pretext to grab emergency powers in his inaugural speech.

Dark times are ahead unless the PCs can stop the machinations of the Crimson Emperor!

STAND-ALONE ADVENTURE

As the culmination of the serial, "the Crimson Veil" will require some reworking in order to accommodate standalone play. Certain elements of this mini adventure, such as a completely fictitious president, may be too awkward to use in a standalone scenario.

The easiest way to use this mini adventure as a standalone is to ignore the presidential angle. Instead, the Crimson Emperor may be played as (or replaced by) a typical megalomaniacal pulp villain that wishes to use the Crimson Mist to further his nefarious plans. In this case, he would be working with the local mob bosses to implicate the PCs as the perpetrators of the crime. The Crimson Emperor will use the Crimson Mist as an example to blackmail other cities into acquiescing to his demands, whatever they may be.

This scenario should start with Chapter Fourteen. The PCs will be imprisoned and learn of the scheme prior to making their escape. They will then confront their duplicates, as outlined in Chapter Thirteen. Finally, the PCs will confront the main villain. Chapter Fifteen may be used as a guide in designing an appropriate climax.

SERIAL ADVENTURE

In "Escape from the Crimson Palace," the PCs learned about the Crimson Emperor's plans. In this final segment of the serial, the PCs will have to clear their name and expose the president as a fraud. GMs who wish to add new chapters to the serial should consult the Plot Complications section at the end of this mini adventure. A few options are offered to extend the campaign into a radical, yet pulpish, diversion from established history. It will be up to the PCs to define this new direction.

SECRET SQUADRON MEMBERS:

Set your Decoder to Code X-4:

3-18-18 21-26-17-21-23-22-15-1-

19-15-16-5-21 12-15-18-18

17-7 7-4-19-7-5-20-7-20

19-14-22-16-26-8-14 5-7-4-19

2-7-3-22!



CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE CRIMSON PLOT

In "Escape from the Crimson Palace," the PCs learned that their duplicates are planning to unleash a horrific weapon upon their city. The PCs will have to hide their presence while uncovering the whereabouts of their evil doppelgangers.

The Crimson Emperor's sinister plot is relatively simple. The Crimson Mist is being produced in an old illegal brewery just outside of town. During this production, the duplicates are trying to maintain their covers, offering just enough evidence to the outside world that they are here (the fact that they are acting a bit strangely works to their favor when later framing the PCs). Once the Crimson Mist is ready, the duplicates will be summoned to a local private airfield where they will fill the tanks of crop dusters with the poison. The duplicates will fly the crop dusters over the city, spraying the Crimson Mist on unsuspecting citizens.

The Crimson Emperor hopes to use this plot to declare emergency powers and effectively become a dictator under the guise of protecting America. He will implicate the PCs as well as the mobs, arguing that stronger police powers are necessary to break the back of organized crime and that more direct federal action is necessary to end the Depression. If the PCs don't stop the Crimson Mist, the Crimson Emperor may very well succeed.

NERVE AGITATOR POWDER

PCs who have played through "Escape from the Crimson Palace" may have access to Dr. Clark Marcel's formula for Nerve Agitator Powder. This fine yellow powder, when applied to skin treated by the Mirror Machine, will cause the skin to itch and revert to its natural state (the pre-duplicated face).



In order for the powder to work, the PC must apply it to the affected skin. This can be achieved by scoring a hit in combat if the target is not immobilized. The powder acts quickly; causing the affected area to itch for 2d4 rounds. During this time, the target is at a -2 circumstance penalty due to the itching. The target also needs to make a DC 10 Fortitude Save; failure makes the target unable to do anything but scratch for 1d4 rounds (or the end of the itching, whichever comes first).

Being an irritant, the Nerve Agitator Powder will affect anyone who comes in contact with it. While this potentially gives the PCs a powerful new weapon, the powder is limited by availability (to be determined by the GM; a batch typically gives 10 doses), range (it needs to be thrown), and effectiveness (against skin untreated by the Mirror Machine the powder only itches for 1d4 rounds).

KEEPING A LOW PROFILE

The Crimson Emperor has ordered the local mobs to keep an eye out for the PCs. The duplicates have been given a code phrase so that the mob will not mistake them for the PCs. The GM should feel free to introduce mobsters (or corrupt police officers) to harass and engage the PCs in order to kidnap him. PCs that are captured in this manner will be taken to the tenement containing the Mirror Machine in Chapter Fourteen. It is important to remember that the Crimson Emperor wants the PCs to be taken alive in case he has further need of the duplicates.

Since the Crimson Emperor has taken control of the mobs, it will be very difficult for the PCs to maintain a low profile if they go to a public place. There are mob agents in the train stations, ports, and airports. They will also be prevalent in places where the PCs would frequent in their normal lives.

One way for the PCs to keep a low profile is to rely on a trusted friend or romantic interest. It is likely that this contact will have noticed something odd about the duplicate and will be willing to help out his or her true friend. This contact could also smuggle the PCs around in a car to get them around the city. This contact is probably being watched, so if the PCs aren't careful to be discreet and "shake the tail," contacting their friend could get them captured early on.

THE UNDERWORLD ANGLE

If the PCs look into the seedy underbelly of the city, they may discover information about the Crimson Mist. A Gather Information check at DC 20 will alert the PC that there is something going on at an abandoned brewery in a wooded area just outside the city. The illegal brewery kept the Duffy mob in business during Prohibition but was abandoned once the Eighteenth Amendment was repealed. The PCs may use a Streetwise check at DC 15 to determine the location of the brewery.

The brewery is well-protected by Duffy and Marciano enforcers who remain out of sight. The Crimson Mist is being placed in barrels and stored in the back of a pickup truck. Inside, the brewing apparatuses have been converted to manufacture the mist, overseen by a duplicate of Dr. Grigory Janovich.

The PCs could decide to destroy the Crimson Mist before it leaves the brewery. In this case, the GM should play out the battle normally. The PCs may be able to Intimidate the duplicate Janovich into giving the location of the secret base. If not, then they will either have to convince their duplicates to provide the information or use another Gather Information check at DC 25 to discover the location of the tenement in Chapter Fourteen.

GMs who wish to run the airfield battle regardless of what the PCs do should either have the truck pulling away as they approach or allow them to Intimidate a guard into telling them that they're too late. The Crimson Mist is on its way.

IF I WEREN'T ME, WHERE WOULD I GO?

The duplicates have had at least a week or two to utilize their stolen identities. They have been living those lives as best they can, trying not to draw too much attention to themselves as they prepare for the plot. For PCs who live solitary lives, this isn't much of a problem. Duplicates who have taken over the lifestyle of a PC with an active social or professional life will have to make excuses to keep people from discovering their secret. Thus, the PC may no longer show up to work, forget to call his girlfriend, or skip classes. This could cause quite a bit of trouble for the real PC once he tries to resume his normal life; alternatively, it could alert a trusted friend that there is something "wrong" with the duplicate.

All of the duplicates are waiting in various locations for the telephone call that will lead them to the airport. At least one duplicate has been taking flying lessons in order to determine the best path to fly (if one of the PCs is an Air Ace or pilot, he will not be the duplicate taking the lessons. Another duplicate will take the lessons). PCs can discover this information with a Gather Information check (DC 15 or DC 10 if the analogous PC is making the check). If the PCs contact the private airfield and can change the owner's attitude from Indifferent to Friendly, the owner will tell them that the duplicate is a natural. In the event of a failure the airfield owner will tell the duplicate that someone is looking for him.

If the PCs do not uncover the airfield information, then they will have to follow one of the duplicates when the phone call comes. This will require appropriate Hide checks to keep the duplicate from noticing that he's being watched. The duplicate rarely leaves his home (or office, if the job is insular enough).

AIRFIELD ASSAULT!

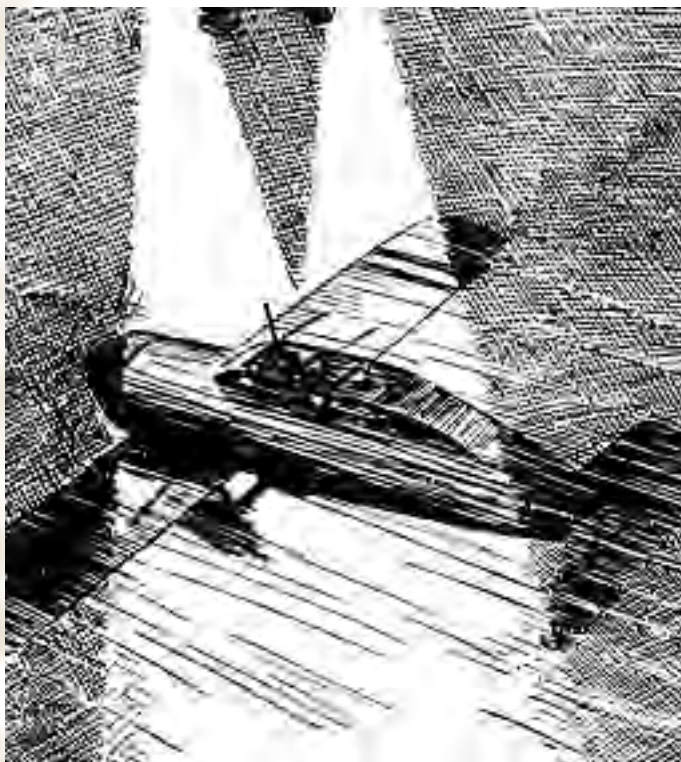
The private airfield is a former farm just outside the city limits. The owner runs a crop dusting operation for the surrounding farms, making it ideal for the Crimson Emperor's purposes. The Emperor will first send mob enforcers to secure the airfield (bribing the owner to look the other way). The truck will arrive next and the mobsters will start filling the crop dusters (one for each duplicate) with the Crimson Mist. Finally, the duplicates will arrive and pilot the airplanes. If they aren't stopped, the duplicates will spray the Crimson Mist all over the city.

The GM should time the attack of the Crimson Mist with the approach of the PCs. This will allow for at least one duplicate-piloted crop duster to get into the air, allowing for some Air Ace action (alternatively, the GM may wish to have the planes being fueled if no PCs are pilots). The duplicates are armed and will have no qualms shooting their originals, as the distribution of the mist takes precedence over keeping the PCs preserved.

There should also be as many mob enforcers as necessary to make the battle interesting. Some enforcers will be stationed at the airfield entrance; others will be guarding the truck and ensuring that the pilots get off the ground. There are also two Model-A Fords, as well as any PC vehicles that the duplicates used to arrive there.

The Crimson Mist needs a precise application in order to be effective. As long as the PCs can down a plane before it makes its spraying run, the mist will harmlessly disperse.

PCs can Intimidate captured duplicates into giving the location of the Mirror Machine in Chapter Fourteen.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN: MIRROR IMAGES

The Mirror Machine and the imprisoned originals of the duplicates are located in an abandoned tenement building in a depressed part of the city. The tenement is a four story building with a “dumbbell” design. The first floor is manned by enforcers. The upper floors contain the prisoners and the Mirror Machine is in the basement.

How this chapter proceeds largely depends on the circumstances. For GMs using this adventure as a standalone, the PCs should start as prisoners on one of the upper floors. Even serial PCs who start the adventure with Chapter Thirteen may find themselves at the tenement prior to the conclusion of that chapter, especially if they are taken prisoner.

The key objectives of this chapter are to disable the Mirror Machine, free the captives, and prepare to unmask the Crimson Emperor. The GM should hold off Chapter Fifteen until all of these goals are met.

GROUND FLOOR

The ground floor is occupied at all times by six mob enforcers. One apartment belongs to Dr. Janovich and contains many paintings and relics of Tsarist Russia. All of the staircases to the basement save one have been boarded up.

UPPER FLOORS

The upper floors have been divided into cells. The doors are made of strong wood (Hard 5, HP 10, Break DC 23) with high quality locks (Hard 5, HP 10, Break DC 20). All of the windows have been boarded up (Hard 5, HP 10, Break DC 13) and covered with steel bars (Hard 10, HP 15, Break DC 30). Each floor is guarded by at least two mob enforcers.

There are three prisoners of note on the upper floors. The first two are the mob bosses Marco Marciano and Seamus Duffy. They have been imprisoned for several months but look no worse for wear. They are willing to negotiate any reasonable offers to help them escape. The mobsters can easily be convinced to help the PCs expose and eliminate the Crimson Emperor.

The third prisoner is a different matter. He is the President-elect of the United States, Stuart Morrison. Steamboat Stu is bedridden with a mutated cancer running through his body. The Mirror Machine treatments have actually enhanced the spread of the cancer (an ailment which Morrison was careful to keep out of the hands of the press, for fear that it would hurt his campaign).

If the PCs participated in “Politics of Terror,” then Morrison will recognize them. Even if he doesn’t, Morrison knows that the Crimson Emperor has usurped his presidency and that he will be unable to retake it in his present condition. He also knows that another treatment from the Mirror Machine will kill him and that the Crimson Emperor plans on taking over the Vice-President next. Morrison is willing to undergo the procedure one last time to enable a PC to take his face. This should

enable the PC to get close enough to the Crimson Emperor and expose him as a fraud. Morrison suggests that the PCs approach the Crimson Emperor during a public event so that the exposure cannot be covered up.

BASEMENT

The Mirror Machine sits in the basement. It consists of two tables with restraining belts and a large T-shaped machine between them. Characters that have been through earlier parts of the serial will recognize it as a duplicate of previous machines. This is actually Dr. Janovich's third machine, hastily built after the events of "the Scorpion Syndicate."

Dr. Janovich is here as well. This is the actual Dr. Janovich and he is protected by Crimson Scorpion martial artists (the actual number should be determined by the GM). If his bodyguards are defeated, Dr. Janovich will beg for his freedom. He genuinely wants to help his native Russia return to its former glory and he can't do that if he's dead. If this adventure

is a standalone, or if the PCs lack the capacity to make more Nerve Agitator Powder, then Dr. Janovich will offer to operate the Mirror Machine or give them the formula in return for his release. Unfortunately for the Doctor, any deal he makes will be moot. The mobsters will kill him before he can leave the city.

USING THE MIRROR MACHINE

The PCs will probably want to use the Mirror Machine to disguise a PC or two (probably Senator Morrison, although Dr. Janovich or mobsters may also be duplicated). With Dr. Janovich's help, the process takes a few hours and is an automatic success. PCs trying to operate the Mirror Machine without Dr. Janovich's help must make a Knowledge (technology) check at DC 25 to figure out the device. GMs using the Thrilling Tales Companion may substitute a Superscience check at DC 20. These checks may be lowered or disregarded if the PC had a chance to examine the other versions of the Mirror Machine.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN: THE VILLAIN UNMASKED!

Once the Crimson Mist plot has been foiled and the Mirror Machine has been disabled, the PCs will want to unmask the Crimson Emperor. Chances are that the Crimson Emperor is aware of the PC's activities and is taking steps to insulate himself from them. The Crimson Emperor will only be vulnerable when appearing at events he cannot cancel, such as the swearing-in ceremony or other state events.

Between appearances, the Crimson Emperor has rented a suite at an upscale hotel. He is always accompanied by his bodyguards and has extra security in the hotel.

For serial campaigns, this is the final chapter in a long story. The PCs are finally about to confront the mastermind behind it all! GMs should do all they can to ensure that this final scene is a

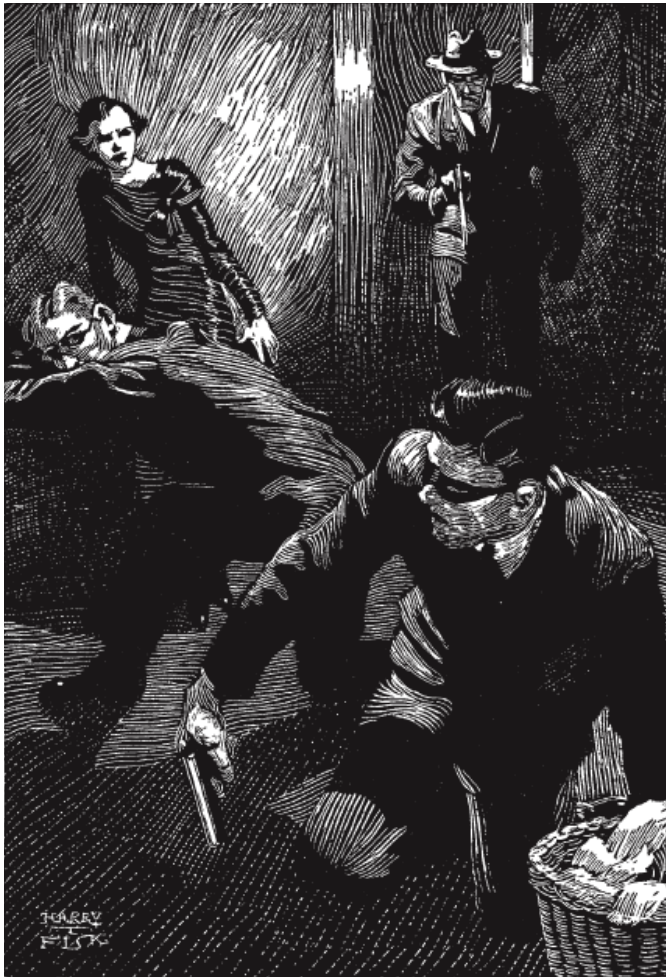
memorable one, with the villain conversing with the PCs as they fight (remember, the Crimson Emperor organized the mobs into a syndicate under his control, manipulated an election and became President, made allies of hostile

governments, and developed a deadly weapon). The Crimson Emperor is also upset that the PCs just foiled his attempt to wrest emergency powers under the guise of protecting the country.

TRAVELING TO THE CAPITAL

Since the Crimson Emperor is in Washington, DC, the PCs will have to travel there. How they get there is up to the PCs. The agents of the Emperor will be watching, and the GM is encouraged to design an encounter or two along the way if desired.

The Crimson Emperor is very reclusive when out of the spotlight, using his stance against organized crime as a cover for his aloofness. He prefers to let Vice



President Roosevelt act as his mouthpiece. Both men are surrounded by security (in reality Caucasian members of the Scorpion mob).

THE EASY WAY

The easy way for the PCs to get to the Emperor is for one of the PCs to disguise himself as Morrison. While the Crimson's inner circle may be aware of duplicates, the standard security guards will not. Steamboat Stu was a very colorful and recognizable person in life; no security guard would stop him and force him to produce his credentials. By the time someone spots the disguised PC, the PC should be close enough to use the Nerve Agitator Powder.

THE HARD WAY

The hard way for the PCs to get to the Emperor is to use the brute force approach. This approach can be effective if the PCs have help from one or both of the mobs. In this case, the PCs will have to fight their way in (leaving room for moral ambiguity in dealing with regular security guards who are just doing their jobs). They will then have to get close enough to use the powder on the Crimson Emperor.

DRAMATIC CLIMAX

The GM should provide a suitable moment for the PCs to attack the Crimson Emperor. A classic scene is the taking of the Oath of Office. The PCs, especially one disguised as Morrison, can get on the platform just as the Crimson Emperor is putting his hand on the Bible. The shocking moment is captured on film.

The Crimson Emperor is a good recurring adversary for the PCs. Once the ruse is up, the Crimson Emperor will do anything he can (including taking hostages) to make his escape. He has a submarine waiting for him in the Potomac. He will not fight to the death even if all hope of escape is lost (a Mastermind of his caliber won't be in prison for long).

WHAT IF THE PLAYERS DECIDE TO TAKE OUT THE CRIMSON EMPEROR DISCREETLY?

Let them. As long as the Mirror Machine has been disabled and Dr. Janovich is out of the picture, the PCs can try to waylay the Crimson Emperor in his hotel and send him packing. With his disguise foiled, the Emperor will have no choice but to flee. The real President Morrison is dying and Vice President Roosevelt will take his place.

EPILOGUE

This is the final adventure in the serial. If the PCs fail to stop the Crimson Emperor, then the GM could craft a new campaign about an America run by a criminal mastermind (see Plot Complications, in the next section).

If the PCs do stop the Crimson Emperor, they may have gained a formidable arch-nemesis. The Crimson Emperor will not let any setback, even one this big, prevent him from hatching further schemes.

The PCs will also gain the gratitude of the real President Morrison, who will die shortly after the plot is foiled. They will also gain the trust and gratitude of newly returned President Roosevelt. Two mob bosses may also owe the PCs a favor or two.

PLOT COMPLICATIONS

The following plot complications are optional variations on the serial. The GM should consider each option carefully before adding it to his campaign.

A LITTLE HELP FROM THE PRESS

PCs who survived “Politics of Terror” may remember Gladys Price, the reporter who shared a special relationship with then-Senator Morrison. While the default assumption is that the Crimson Emperor sent her packing once he took Morrison’s place, the GM may wish to utilize her to help the PCs. She could be investigating the strange circumstances surrounding President Morrison’s sudden change in personality and is either in the PC’s home city or in Washington, DC trying to uncover the truth. GMs can use her to provide information to assist the PCs if they are getting stuck. She can also give them a good story to ensure that their reputations aren’t harmed by attacking what seems to be the president.

PRESIDENT MORRISON REMAINS

The subplot regarding the real President Morrison’s cancer was designed to allow GMs to put history back on track at the conclusion of the adventure. At the GM’s discretion, this need not be the case. The real President Morrison could retake his position, offering intriguing possibilities, as the pulp campaign will diverge from actual history and allow all

involved to reshape the future.

GMs who wish to pursue this option should disregard the references to President Morrison’s cancer. The Crimson Emperor will also not conveniently ask Franklin D. Roosevelt to be his Vice-President. Instead, President Morrison will simply retake his position after the Crimson Emperor is exposed.



UNDER THE CRIMSON HEEL

Chapter Fifteen is designed to provide closure to the serial. However, having an imposter as President of the United States can make for an interesting campaign, especially as time moves closer to World War II. The PCs would be outlaws in their own country, fighting to overthrow the corrupt government.

NAZI DEATH WEAPON

In “Escape from the Crimson Palace,” the Nazis were interested in procuring the Crimson Mist. They also know

that the PCs were duplicated to unleash the Crimson Mist on the City. When the PCs return to the City, they may discover Nazi agents following the same leads they are. This could lead to an interesting three-way shoot-out at the airport in Chapter Thirteen.

Alternatively, the PCs could arrive at the airport in Chapter Thirteen only to find that their duplicates are dead and the Crimson Mist is missing. At the same time, a German U-Boat is taking the weapon back to Germany in order to be analyzed and duplicated.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

“The Crimson Emperor”

Fu Dao, the Crimson Emperor, claims to be the latest descendent of the Fusan emperors. No one has challenged his claim. While one might expect that centuries of isolation and exile would produce a leader mired in his own past, nothing can be further from the truth. Fu Dao is very much a student of modern culture and believes that “Western ways” must be adapted in order to ensure that his new empire will stand the test of time (ironically, China is fated to pursue a similar course by the end of the next decade). Toward that end, he wears his hair short, keeps his face shaved, and has adopted European military dress.

The one trait that the Crimson Emperor has inherited from his ancestors is megalomania. He truly believes that he is destined to rule, and has seized on current world events to further his goals. He is secretly funding the Chinese Nationals in the hopes of creating a new China beholden to him (and create a balancing force against his “ally” Japan). The Emperor has also forged ties with the Germans and the Italians, promising them that his ambitions lie no further than East Asia and keeping America out of the war. In truth, the Emperor plans to conquer them all in time.

The “Crimson Emperor” that the PCs meet in this adventure is actually a duplicate. The true Crimson Emperor is masquerading as the President-Elect of the United States of America.

The Crimson Duplicate's stat block uses **Advanced Class: Mesmerist and Advanced Class: Mastermind** from Adamant Entertainment. Relevant special abilities from that work are asterisked (*) and reproduced below.

Charismatic 3/Mesmerist 7/Master-

mind 5: CR 15; Medium-size human; HD 5d10+10d6+15; hp 80; Mas 13; Init +7; Spd 30 ft; Defense 21 (+3 Dex, +8 class); BAB +6/+1; Grap +8/+3; Atk +8/+3 melee (1d4+2 lethal or nonlethal, unarmed strike); Full Atk +8/+3 melee (1d4+2 lethal or nonlethal, unarmed strike) or +8/+3 with weapon or +9/+2 ranged (by pistol type); FS 5ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft; AL None; SV Fort +6, Ref +13, Will +15; AP 131; Rep +12; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 18.

Occupation: Criminal (bonus class skills: Disguise, Knowledge (streetwise)).

Skills: Bluff +25, Concentration +11, Diplomacy +26, Disable Device +8, Disguise +18, Escape Artist +8, Forgery +8, Gather Information +21, Hide +10, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (Arcane Lore) +11, Knowledge (Behavioral Sciences) +11, Knowledge (Streetwise) +13, Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) +9, Listen +9, Move Silently +10, Read/Write Language +4 (English, German, French, Japanese), Research +14, Sense Motive +14, Sleight of Hand +10, Speak Language +4 (English, German, French, Japanese), Spot +9.

Feats: Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Combat Expertise, Combat Martial Arts, Deceptive, Defensive Martial Arts, Educated, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Renown, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Stealthy.

Talents: Charm, Coordinate.

Class Features: Hypnotic Ability*, Hypnotic Trance*, Trick*, Command Word*, Lengthy Trance*, Winning Smile, Compulsion*, Minions, Ill-gotten Gains, Crime Network, Nefarious Influence*, Lair.

Possessions: In his own house, the Crimson Emperor has access to everything he needs. When wearing his military uniform, he prefers to carry a German mauser pistol and a samurai sword (a gift from the Japanese Emperor).

Hypnotic Ability: A number of times per day equal to the Mesmerist's class level + Intelligence modifier, a Mesmerist can attempt to place a target (a GM character) in a hypnotic state, using any of the abilities listed below.

Hypnotic Trance: A Mesmerist can place a target in a hypnotic trance. A Mesmerist does this by making a hypnosis check with a bonus equal to his Mesmerist class level + his Intelligence modifier against a DC equal to the target's Wisdom. If the target is resisting the attempt at hypnosis, the target's base Will save modifier is added to the target's Wisdom (Note that the target's Wisdom modifier is not added to the DC). An attempt at hypnosis requires a full-round action, and an object, such as a pocket watch or fob, is required to gain the target's attention in order to place them in a hypnotic state. A Mesmerist and the target must be able to speak the same language. If a Mesmerist has 5 or more ranks in Concentration, he gains a +2 bonus on hypnosis checks. If a Mesmerist has 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (behavioral sciences), he gains a +2 bonus on hypnosis checks.

On subsequent rounds, once the target is in a hypnotic state, the Mesmerist may either question the target or give them a suggestion. A hypnotic trance lasts for a number of minutes per Mesmerist class level. If the Mesmerist spends an action point, the duration is increased to 10 minutes per level.

Questioning: The Mesmerist may ask a number of questions equal to $1d3 +$ his Mesmerist class level. Each round, the Mesmerist will learn the answer to one question, to the best of the target's knowledge. The Mesmerist may spend an action point to increase the number of questions. Any action points spent to increase the duration or extent of this, or any other hypnotic ability, would be in addition to any action points spent on the hypnosis check.

Suggestion: The Mesmerist suggests a course of action (limited to a sentence or two) to influence the target's actions. The suggestion must be worded in such a manner as to make the action sound reasonable. Asking the target to stab himself, throw someone dear to them out of a window, or some other harmful act automatically negates the hypnotic state.

However, a suggestion that a vat of acid is actually pure water and that a quick dip would be refreshing is another matter. A common suggestion is that the target go to sleep. Stage magicians often implant the suggestion that the target is another person or an animal, such as a chicken. A target will remain under a hypnotic suggestion for a number of minutes equal to the Mesmerist's class level.

Command word: Beginning at 4th level, a Mesmerist is able provide a target with a command word that will make it easier to put the target into a hypnotic state at any time over the next few days (equal to the Mesmerist's class level). The Mesmerist should strive to provide a command word that the target is unlikely to hear during the normal course of her day. A command word allows a Mesmerist to remotely direct a target by speaking over a telephone or radio. While a command word is in effect, the Mesmerist will still need to make a hypnosis check to activate the target's hypnotic state, but the DC will be halved.

Lengthy trance: At 5th level and above, a Mesmerist's hypnotic trance lasts for 10 minutes per Mesmerist class level. If the Mesmerist spends an action point the duration is increased to hours per level.

Compulsion: A Mesmerist of 7th level or higher can direct a target to carry out longer and more elaborate tasks than under a Hypnotic Suggestion. The commands given to a target still need to be simple and unambiguous (such as "go, take the jewels from the safe, and bring them back to me"). The Mesmerist may need to monitor the target and provide further direction to ensure that tasks are carried out as intended. A Hypnotic Compulsion will last for a number of hours equal to the Mesmerist's class level. The duration may be increased to days per level if the Mesmerist spends an action point.

If the target is directed to take an action that goes against his nature, he may attempt a Will saving throw to come out of the hypnotic state (DC equal to $10 +$ Mesmerist's class level + Mesmerist's Intelligence modifier).

Nefarious Influence: At 4th level, the Mastermind is capable of extending his power to influence others. He gains a +4 bonus to all Bluff, Diplomacy and Intimidate checks. In addition, opponents with fewer Hit Dice than the Mastermind's total class level suffer a -2 morale penalty to attack rolls against the Mastermind and a -2 morale penalty to all Will saves during the encounter.

“Dr. Grigory Janovich”

Dr. Grigory Janovich is an older Russian scientist who laments the loss of Tsarist Russia and loathes the Communist Soviet Union. He has joined the Crimson Emperor in the hopes of overthrowing the Revolutionary government and bringing Russia into a new Tsarist golden age. Dr. Janovich is a tall, stocky man with a balding head and a full beard. He wears a monocle.

Dr. Janovich's stat block uses Advanced Class: Mad Scientist from Adamant Entertainment. Relevant special abilities from that work are asterisked (*) and reproduced below.

Smart 3/Dedicated 3/Mad Scientist 4: CR

10; Medium-size human; HD 6d6+4d8+10; HP 47; Mas 12; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; Defense 13 (+3 class); BAB +5; Grap +5; Atk +5 melee (1d4 nonlethal, unarmed strike), weapon); Full Atk +5 melee (1d4 nonlethal, unarmed strike) or +5 (by weapon) or +5 ranged (by pistol); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; AL Tsarist Russia; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +7; AP 79; Rep +6; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Occupation: Technician (Craft (electronic), Craft (mechanical), Knowledge (technology)).

Skills: Craft (chemical) +16, Craft (electronic) +23, Craft (mechanical) +17, Craft (pharmaceutical) +10, Craft (structural) +13, Demolitions +9, Disable Device +13, Knowledge (Earth and Life Sciences) +13, Knowledge (Physical Sciences) +10, Knowledge (Technology) +19, Listen +7, Read/Write English, Repair +15, Research +15, Speak English, Spot +7, Superscience +18.

Feats: Alertness, Confident, Educated (Knowledge (arcane Lore), Knowledge (technology)), Gearhead, Meticulous, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Renown, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Studious.

Talents: Savant (Craft (electronic)), Savant (Craft (chemical)), Skill Emphasis (Craft (electronic)), Empathy.

Class Features: Weird Science, Scientific Improvisation*, Inspiration*.

Possessions: Dr. Janovich carries tools and a pistol in his lab coat.

Scientific Improvisation: At 2nd level, a Mad Scientist gains the ability to improvise solutions using common objects and his scientific know-how. This ability lets him create objects in a dramatic situation quickly and cheaply, but that have a limited duration.

By spending 1 action point and combining common objects with a Craft check that corresponds to the function desired, the Mad Scientist can build a tool or a device to deal with any situation. The DC for the Craft check is equal to 5 + the purchase DC of the object that most closely matches the desired function. So, to improvise a weapon that deals the same damage as a shotgun, the DC for the Craft (mechanical) check is 22 (5 +17).

Only objects that can normally be used more than once can be improvised. For example, a Mad Scientist cannot use scientific improvisation to build an explosive, since that's an object that can only be used once.

Electronic devices, special tools, weapons, mechanical devices and more can be built with scientific improvisation. It takes a full-round action to make an object. The object, when put into use, lasts for a number of rounds equal to the Mad Scientist's class level, or until the end of the current encounter, before it breaks down. It cannot be repaired.

Inspiration: At 4th level, the Mad Scientist gains the Inspiration ability. Once per day per total class level, the Mad Scientist may benefit from a flash of inspiration and ingenuity, gaining a +4 bonus to any skill check. This can also be used when taking 10 or taking 20 with a skill.

The Mirror Machine: Dr. Janovich's creation is a large machine that rests between two tables. Given a few hours, the machine can copy the facial and hand features of one person onto another. This ability requires certain nervous stimulation, and the duplicate must redo the process once a week. Dr. Janovich has also developed a solution that, when exposed to a duplicated face, will cause the face to revert to its original shape (a plot device used later in this Serial).

Senator Stuart

“Steamship Stu” Morrison

Stuart Morrison is a very colorful character. Though short in stature, he makes up for it in presence and attitude. Steamship Stu is proud of his humble beginnings and how he pulled himself up by the bootstraps. He grew up in a slum as his mother worked long hours in a sweatshop. His father was a boxer who didn't know when to quit and died in the ring when Stu was very young. Morrison enlisted and fought in the Great War, and when he came back he swore he'd make something of himself. He joined a labor union, during which he met Marty Bloom. The two became fast friends and Morrison harbored a desire to attain a leadership position within the union. That hope was dashed when the anti-communist “Palmer Raids” purged the union of its current leadership and led to the dissolution of the union. When Attorney General Palmer's feared “Communist Revolution” failed to take place on May 1, 1920, Morrison seized an opportunity.

He spoke out against the government's treading on people's rights, which propelled him to the city mayor's office. With Marty at his side, Morrison's appeal grew and he eventually became state governor. He turned his eye toward the U.S. Senate just as the economy was collapsing, and he was a vocal opponent of President Hoover. While initially a supporter of President Roosevelt, Morrison hoped to capture the presidency for himself. He succeeded. Unfortunately, he was abducted soon after winning and replaced by the Crimson Emperor.

While imprisoned, Morrison's past came back to haunt him. Just prior to the presidential campaign, Morrison was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. Fearing that it would hurt his chances, Morrison covered it up. Not even news reporter Gladys Price, Morrison's mistress during the campaign, had ever discovered his ailment. Unfortunately, the treatments from the Mirror Machine advanced his cancer. It now riddles his body, and he is bedridden and dying as a result.

The statistics below are for a healthy Morrison (in case the GM wishes to ignore the cancer subplot). With the cancer, Morrison's Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution drop to 6, 6, and 5 respectively, and all affected stats should be changed to reflect that.

Charismatic Ordinary 5/Dedicated Ordinary 4: CR 8; Medium-size human; HD 9d6; hp 30; Mas 10; Init +5; Spd 30 ft; Defense 16 (+5 class, +1 dexterity); BAB +5; Grap +6; Atk +6 melee (1d6+1 nonlethal, unarmed strike); Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+1 nonlethal, unarmed strike) or +6 (by weapon) or +6 ranged (by weapon); FS 5ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft; AL Himself; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +6; AP 0; Rep +9; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 15.

Occupation: Celebrity (bonus class skill: Diplomacy).

Skills: Bluff +16, Diplomacy +21, Gather Information +16, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (behavioral sciences) +7, Knowledge (civics) +9, Knowledge (current events) +7, Knowledge (streetwise) +11, Sense Motive +17.

Feats: Athletic, Attentive, Brawl, Confident, Deceptive, Improved Initiative, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Simple Weapon Proficiency, Renown, Trustworthy.

Possessions: Stuart carries a pistol in a shoulder holster. He is always impeccably dressed and fond of a gold pocket watch he picked up in France during the war.

Gladys Price

Gladys Price is a dedicated young journalist who is fascinated by Senator Morrison. She first interviewed him when he was a governor and found herself captivated by his presence. She has populist leanings, which garnered her his respect due to her favorable reporting of him. When Sen. Morrison announced his intention to run for the presidency, Gladys asked to accompany him. Always happy to have favorable press, Morrison readily agreed.

Gladys is an attractive young woman with flame red hair. While she had no designs on the Senator, she reciprocated his advances when offered. She realized that this could hurt her journalistic integrity if word got out, but Morrison's smooth words and the promise of a future job in the White House has enabled her to continue the affair. Unfortunately for Gladys, she was dismissed as soon as Morrison won the election. Scorned, she knew that she couldn't publish her affair, for it would ruin her as a journalist. Instead, she is trying to dig for anything that could explain Morrison's shift in behavior.

Gladys Price's stat block has been updated from "Politics of Terror" because, if she is used, she will doubtless play a more prominent role. This stat block uses **Advanced Class: Ace Reporter** from Adamant Entertainment. Relevant special abilities from that work are asterisked (*) and reproduced below.



Smart 3/Dedicated 3/Ace Reporter 4: CR 10; Medium-size human; HD 6d6+4d8+10; hp 47; Mas 12; Init -1; Spd 30 ft; Defense 14 (+2 class, -1 dexterity); BAB +6; Grap +6; Atk +6/+1 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed strike); Full Atk +6/+1 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed strike) or +6/+1 with weapon or +5 ranged (by weapon); FS 5ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft; AL Morrison; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +12; AP 75; Rep +6; Str 10, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 15.

Occupation: Investigative (bonus class skills: Craft (writing) Gather Information).

Skills: Bluff +14, Craft (writing) +12, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +11, Forgery +4, Gather Information +16, Knowledge (civics) +10, Knowledge (current events) +12, Knowledge (streetwise) +10, Listen +13, Research +14, Search +16, Sense Motive +16, Spot +10.

Feats: Alertness, Attentive, Confident, Creative, Dodge, Educated, Focused, Iron Will, Meticulous, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Simple Weapon Proficiency, Studious.

Talents: Savant (search), Trick, Empathy, Skill Emphasis (gather information)

Class Features: Press Pass*, Expense Account*, Taking Notes*, Well-Traveled*, Check the Facts"

Possessions: Gladys Price always carries a paper and pen with her. She also keeps a typewriter nearby.

Press Pass: Even a starting Reporter is known by the paper they work for. Your Press Pass immediately identifies you as a Reporter, therefore your Press Pass lets you automatically pass the Recognition Check as a 'Reporter' (and thus incur either the +4 bonus or -4 penalty, depending on their bias towards reporters, for Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidate and Perform.) Note that, if you want to use your personal reputation and Name, you must do a Reputation Check as usual-- this only identifies you as 'a member of the Press'.

Expense Account: Upon becoming a Reporter, you are given additional support when working on a story. You may temporarily gain a Wealth Bonus equal to your level as an Ace Reporter for any rental or service needed to advance the article you're working on. You have to be able to contact your editor (by phone, telegram, or in person) to use this. Note this allows rental (not purchase) of items such as formal wear as well as cash to cover a bribe, bail, travel bill, or hotel stay necessary for your story. The GM serves as your 'editor' in deciding if it's truly an article-related expense. You can only use this ability once per day, and can only use it for a number of times equal to your Ace Reporter level, after which you must file the story with your editor before another Expense Account is drawn up for you.

Taking Notes: Ace Reporters of level 2 or higher know how to report on a fight—even if they're in it. At the start of any fight where you are not personally under immediate attack, you can declare you are simply staying put and Taking Notes. While you write, the fight will continue-- but anyone who wants to attack you has to make a Will check at a DC of 25 or else find someone else to attack, until all other opponents are eliminated. Mind you, if you're the last of the good side still standing, you'll definitely have to put down that pencil. You, of course, can take no other action than 'take notes' during the fight.

Check the Facts: By level 4 and later, Ace Reporters are experts at piecing together the facts of a story-- and are unafraid of interviewing antagonists directly. By Checking the Facts, you can induce opponents into boasting by stating your current theory about what is happening.

The villain must make a Will saving throw at a DC of 10 + Ace Reporter's class level + Ace Reporter's Charisma modifier. If they fail the save, they must either confirm your theory, or state at which point your theory breaks down. They need only state where your theory errs (if at all), and do not have to give you further information, but they must be truthful. And if you're fortunate, the villain may be prone to monologuing at length once they get going. This talent may only be used once per villain in any given adventure.

“Don Marco Marciano”

Don't let the name fool you. This is the duplicate of mob boss Don Marco Marciano. He looks exactly like him, short black hair, deep-set eyes, and olive complexion; but beneath the skin he is one of the Crimson Emperor's trusted henchmen. He is trained to mimic Don Marco's speech and mannerisms, and he continually receives information from the real Marco Marciano to play his role.

Tough Ordinary 4/Charismatic Ordinary 4:
CR 7; Medium-size human; HD 4d10+4d6+24; hp 60; Mas 16; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; Defense 15 (+4 class, +1 dexterity); BAB +5; Grap +6; Atk +6 melee (1d4+1 lethal or nonlethal, unarmed strike); Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+1 knife) or +6 ranged (by weapon); FS 5ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft; AL Crimson Emperor; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +4; AP 0; Rep +1; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Occupation: Adventurer (bonus class skills: Bluff, Intimidate).

Skills: Bluff +13, Diplomacy +15, Disguise +12, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (any) +8, Move Silently +7, Read/Write English, Sense Motive +5, Speak English.

Feats: Combat Martial Arts, Confident, Deceptive, Defensive Martial Arts, Improved Combat Martial Arts, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Toughness x1, Trustworthy.

Possessions: Don Marco usually carries a pistol, but he will carry a Tommy gun if he feels he needs it.

Mobster Thugs

This stat block is for the various thugs in the adventure. The GM should feel free to modify this if he needs to adjust the power level. GMs with the Thrilling Tales: Gamemaster's Guide to Pulp Adventure may wish to substitute the Mook rules by ignoring the hit points stat.

Fast Ordinary 2/Tough Ordinary 2: CR 3; Medium-size human; HD 2d8+2d10; hp 26; Mas 11; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; Defense 16 (+6 class); BAB +2; Grap +2; Atk +2 melee (1d6 nonlethal, unarmed strike); Full Atk +2 melee (1d4 knife) or +2 ranged (by weapon); FS 5ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft; AL Chopper Charlie or the Sultan; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AP 0; Rep 0; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Occupation: Military (bonus class skills: Knowledge (Tactics), Move Silently).

Skills: Climb +2, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (Tactics) +2, Listen +2, Move Silently +5, Search +3, Sense Motive +2, Spot +4, Survival +2, Tumble +2.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Brawl, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Toughness.

Possessions: Thugs typically carry a pistol (use the Colt M1911 as a default) and a knife. Some thugs will carry a Tommy Gun

Crimson Thugs

This stat block is for the unnamed Asian martial artists in this adventure. The GM should feel free to modify this if he needs to adjust the power level. GMs with the Thrilling Tales: Gamemaster's Guide to Pulp Adventure may wish to substitute the Mook rules by ignoring the hit points stat.

Strong Ordinary 3/Fast Ordinary 3: CR 5; Medium-size human; HD 3d10+3d8; hp 30; Mas 11; Init +4; Spd 30 ft; Defense 16 (+6 class); BAB +5; Grap +6; Atk +6 melee (1d4+1 lethal or nonlethal, unarmed strike); Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+1 knife) or +5 ranged (by weapon); FS 5ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft; AL Boss; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +3; AP 0; Rep +1; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Occupation: Athlete (bonus class skills: Balance, Jump, Tumble).

Skills: Balance +8, Climb +6, Hide +6, Jump +12, Move Silently +7, Read/Write English, Sleight of Hand +4, Speak English, Tumble +9.

Feats: Acrobatic, Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Combat Martial Arts, Defensive Martial Arts, Improved Initiative, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Stealthy.

Possessions: Crimson thugs generally carry swords and knives unless gunplay is expected.

Typical Security Officer

Not all of the security guards surrounding the "President" are Crimson Thugs. Most are ordinary people just doing their jobs. This stat block is for any security officers outside of the Crimson Emperor's immediate presence.

Tough Ordinary 2/Strong Ordinary 2: CR 3; Medium-size human; HD 2d10+2d8+4; HP 22; Mas 13; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; Defense 16 (+2 Dex, +4 class); BAB +3; Grap +5; Atk +5 melee (1d6+2 nonlethal, unarmed strike); Full Atk +5 melee (by weapon +2) or +5 ranged (by weapon); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; AL none; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +0; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Occupation: Law Enforcement (Diplomacy, Intimidate)

Skills: Diplomacy +6, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (Tactics) +5, Listen +2, Profession +2, Spot +4

Feats: Brawl, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Simple Weapons Proficiency

Possessions: Security Officers carry pistols, clubs, and handcuffs.

New Skill

Superscience (Int)

Trained Only

This is the pulp version of the Computer Use skill. Use this skill to figure out how to use superscience devices or shut them down.

Check: Most superscience is based on (or at least presented as) sound scientific theory. Because it is presumed to have a rational basis, a character with this skill should be able to examine a device and recognize its key components, such as an on/off switch, the power source, how it is controlled, etc. These uses of the skill do not require a Superscience check (though you might have to make a Search or Spot check if something is well-hidden on the object).

Understand Utility: This application of the Superscience skill allows you to understand what the device is capable of doing beyond the immediately obvious. The GM should set a Difficulty Class based on how complex or obscure the device is. For example, a rocket pack attached to a body harness and an accompanying helmet would have an Easy DC (5). A warehouse-sized device that sends particles into the clouds to make rain might be Formidable (DC 25) or Heroic (DC 30). You need to understand the utility of the device before you can attempt to control or thwart it.

Control Device: Once you understand the device, you may attempt to control it. Again, the GM should set a DC based on the actual complexity of controlling the device as well as any other circumstances that must be overcome (such as the original operator of the device already working the controls).

Thwart Device: Once you understand the device, you may attempt to thwart it. The DC for the attempt is normally 15, although the GM may adjust this. Success does not destroy the device; it merely gives you the information you need to thwart it. For example, you may learn that the death ray gun needs the quartz crystal to operate, but you're going to have to figure out how to pry it out of the gun.

A Superscience check to thwart a device is only necessary if the weakness isn't obvious. For example, if a giant robot is approaching, you don't need a Superscience check to figure out that destroying one of its legs is a good way to stop it.

Special: You can take 10 or 20 when using the Superscience skill. You cannot take 20 if you need to make immediate assessments.

Time: Superscience requires at least a full-round action. The GM may determine that some tasks require several rounds, a few minutes, or longer.

Class Skill: Smart Hero, Field Scientist, Mad Scientist, Paragon, Techie.

Feat Note: The Gearhead Feat adds +2 to the Superscience skill.